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**THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM:  
JAMAICAN RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS**

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**ABSTRACT**

Despite the acknowledged importance of tourism to global economies, and the attention given to empirical research in developed countries, very little attention has been given to research in less developed countries, particularly those in the Caribbean. In this study, residents in the tourism resort communities of Negril, Montego Bay, and Ocho Rios, Jamaica, West Indies rated their perceptions of the economic impact of tourism on their community. The mean scores indicated that residents perceived an overall slightly positive economic impact of tourism. However, ANOVA results showed statistically significant difference in the degree of positive perceptions based on the socio-demographic variables of community, employment, placed of employment, and length of residence. The implications of these findings for the host residents and the tourist industry is discussed.

**INTRODUCTION**

For a number of countries, travel, tourism, and hospitality are primary sources of income, and more importantly, effective levers for tilting

the balance of payments. This is important in order for governments to have the necessary funds to improve infrastructure and ultimately the quality of life for the residents of the host community. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council's 1992 report, the travel and tourism and hospitality industry is the world's largest: (a) approaching \$3.5 trillion in gross output; (b) employing 127 million people; (c) leading the world as industry contributor, producing 6.1% of the world's gross national product, (d) leading in the production of tax revenue; and (e) expecting to grow 50% faster than any other sector of world employment (24).

In 1987, the Caribbean Tourism Research Center in Barbados reported that the Caribbean attracted more than nine million visitors, including those on cruise ships (18). For many of these islands, tourism has become the backbone of the economy. The Bahamas, for example, received 70% of its income from tourism (18). For the Caribbean region, overall growth in tourist arrival during 1992 was estimated at 3%. This demonstrated a modest recovery from the effects of the Gulf War and the economic recession that was experienced in the major tourism markets in 1991 (26). In

recent years, Caribbean countries are joining together to promote the region as a single tourist destination to boost the total economy of the region (29). Historically, political leaders in small Caribbean areas have subscribed to the notion that tourism provides developing and poor countries with the capital for investment and modernization, and have viewed tourism as a powerful agent for socio-cultural change within the host community (12).

Jamaica is among the Caribbean Islands that is heavily dependent on tourism for economic stability. As a result, the industry has experienced substantial growth over the last decade. The estimated foreign travel receipt was U.S. \$850 million in 1992 (25). Hotel room occupancy for 1992 was an average of 60.1% nationally, compared to 57.9% the previous year, while in the major resort communities of Negril, Montego Bay and Ocho Rios, occupancy during winter was 72%, 58% and 62% respectively. The number of persons directly employed in the accommodation sub-sector of the industry increased by 12.4% between 1991 and 1992. The three primary resort communities of Negril, Montego Bay, and Ocho Rios accounted for approximately 90% of the total employment in the tourism sector. This growth has been further reflected in new hotel investments creating additional employment and successful expansion of a variety of ancillary activities (14). While Jamaica in the 1990s appears to be a tourism haven, history will show that tourism as an industry is a relatively recent phenomenon.

## ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

Agriculture could at one period in Jamaica's history be considered the heart and sole of the economy. However, the position of agriculture in the Jamaican economy has shifted drastically since World War II. As recently as 1938, the

agricultural sector accounted for 39% of Jamaica's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but only 9% in 1972 (15). "At the same time, however, its share of the classifiable labor force declined from 45% in 1943 to 34% in 1972, not nearly enough to compensate for the decline in relative productivity" (p. 21).

Following the decline of agriculture, bauxite mining in particular, became a mainstay of the Jamaican economy. During the 1960s Jamaica emerged as the world's largest supplier of bauxite (the raw material for aluminum). It accounted for a considerably large portion of exports, and from the industry's development in the early 1950s, rose to account for 60% of total goods exports by 1969. As a direct rural employer, however, the sector accounted for less than 1% of the labor force (6). It became obvious that the relationship between bauxite and agriculture was inevitably a competitive one. In support of this notion, Stone, (27) wrote:

The extensive acquisition of agricultural land to facilitate bauxite mining had easily predictable consequences. These included the displacement and dislocation of farmers and their families; the alienation of good agricultural land; the acceleration of large concentration of land holdings and decline in small peasant holdings; the direction of infrastructure such as roadways and water supplies to facilitate the bauxite industry without reference to or regard for the needs of local rural communities; and the uncontrolled pollution and deterioration of the quality of land without concern for the enviroing communities.

The periods of economic growth, fueled by the bauxite industry, did not bring about reductions in the social problems that existed. Par-

ticularly because of the growth in population, the level of unemployment, and despite the broadening of its base, the economy remained vulnerable. The dependence upon agricultural exports was exchanged for bauxite and tourism. These were precisely the growth sectors which proved to be most sensitive to fluctuations in global economic trends (5).

The outstanding structural weakness in Jamaica's economic development can be summed up by the absence of those linkages which would feed development in one sector back into other sectors. The most obvious reason for this was the great extent of foreign control of investments and the particular nature of the bauxite and tourism industries. The consequences have been serious, especially for agriculture. Migration to cities or large towns, fed by the development of the new industries, resulted in the creation of serious urban problems and the concentration of employment (15).

In the early 1940s the government of Jamaica took positive measures to stimulate the development of tourism by enacting the Hotel Aid Law of 1944. This law granted remission of custom duties on building materials and equipment for hotel construction and permitted accelerated depreciation of capital in the industry (21). In 1954 the Jamaica Tourist Board was established by law to promote and stimulate the development of the tourist industry.

In the course of the 1960s and 1970s Jamaica became an increasingly popular tourist destination, as prosperity in the countries of the Western hemisphere and falling air fares made international travel more feasible. With the influx of visitors from the United States, Canada, and Europe, tourism became the largest source of income after bauxite (5).

The tourist industry produces a service, the demand for which is largely external, but which is determined by both domestic and foreign factors. The domestic factors include not only the beauty of the country but also less romantic things such as ideology of government, the cost of service, and most importantly the attitudes of the host community residents. The external determinants include the level of living of the potential tourists, the attitudes these tourists' governments have towards the country producing the tourist service, and the communications and transport link between the two (21). Today, tourism represents the fastest growing sector of the Jamaican economy (5), and as such, there is a need to assess the multiple facts of the tourism industry in a Jamaican context.

#### AN OVERVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE

A large portion of studies that examine the significance of tourism for less developed countries attempted to isolate ways in which tourism can contribute to the process of economic development (19). Faced with high levels of unemployment, governments of less developed countries are concerned to establish activities that will provide regular productive jobs (8). Therefore, one of the main arguments advocating the establishment, or expansion of a tourism sector in less developed countries is that tourism, as a service activity, creates a high level of job opportunities (8, 13, 19, 27). This sector is labor intensive, and the principal type required is semi-skilled and unskilled - the type that is required in abundance in most less developed countries (8). This idea was supported by Mathieson & Wall (19) who argued that it may be possible to absorb a large proportion of the work force from traditional sectors of the economy with a minimum of training. Moreover, tourism seems to be more

effective than other industries in generating employment and income in the less developed, often more outlying regions of the country where alternative opportunities for development are limited (27).

During the past decade, researchers have given increased attention to the impact of tourism (2). The most probable reason is that perceptions and attitudes of residents toward the impact of tourism are likely to be important planning and policy considerations for the successful development, marketing, and operation of existing and future tourism programs and projects. Recognition of the size of the impact of modern tourism prompted a re-orientation of tourism research. This was evidenced by a noticeable shift towards a more balanced perspective incorporating the costs or negative impact of tourism with the more dominant positive impact research (19). Positive impacts of tourism have been cited throughout the literature as the ability to: (a) improve the balance of payment situation especially in less developed countries, (b) improve income levels, (c) generate employment, (d) bridge income level gaps, (e) bridge the gap in differences in educational opportunities, (f) create upward social mobility, (g) promote world peace, (h) preserve or conserve the environment, (i) restore archaeological sites, (j) improve accessibility, and (k) improve infrastructure.

On the other hand, negative impacts have been cited as: (a) leakages in the local economy, (b) degradation of historic sites, (c) degradation of language and customs, (d) trinketization, (e) polarization of population, (f) development of attitude of a consumption oriented society, (g) prostitution, (h) drug abuse, (i) alcoholism, (j) delinquency, (k) pollution, (l) destruction of flora and fauna, (m) conflicts, (n) loss of potential economic benefits if many tourist facilities are owned by outsiders, (o) creation

of local elites if facilities are owned by only a few local persons or families, (p) reduction of potential foreign exchange earnings when imported goods and services are utilized in tourism (q) economic distortion geographically if tourism is concentrated in only one or a few areas of the country or region, and (r) loss of natural landscape.

There are several factors that influence peoples' attitudes towards tourism. People employed in tourism-dependent businesses are likely to be familiar with the impact of tourism, and they more frequently identify those impacts (7). These people see the impact of tourism more strongly than their peers employed in non-tourism related jobs. According to Allen, Long, Perdue, and Kiesselbach (1), lower to moderate levels of tourism are perceived as beneficial to the community, but as development continues, residents' perceptions tend to take a downward trend. Thompson, Crompton, and Kamp (28) found that positive attitudes toward tourism's impact on a community increase along with an individual's economic dependency on tourism. Ap and Crompton (3) found that residents who were direct beneficiaries of tourism exhibited embracement by their unqualified, effusive praise, usually accompanied by enthusiasm for more visitors.

In addition, the literature points to the influence of socio-demographic variables on residents' perceptions of tourism impact. Milman and Pizam (20) found that gender influenced the level of support residents had for the tourist industry, whereas Seid, (23) found no significant difference. However, both researchers found education to have a significant influence on residents' perceptions. Caneday and Zeiger (7) found that employment and place of employment had a significant effect on residents perceptions of tourism

impact. In contrast, Lanford (16) found no significant difference.

The body of literature on tourism impact is rapidly expanding, especially in the United States and other developed countries. It is evident that in an era of global inter-dependency, economies will be inextricably linked, especially through trade. With tourism emerging as a significant part of this global relationship, attitudes and perceptions towards tourism's impact take on additional significance. Despite this recognition the existing literature has not addressed any systematic plan to study residents' perceptions of the impact of tourism in Jamaica.

The purpose of this study was to investigate residents' perceptions of the economic impact of tourism in Jamaica. More specifically, the study examined the perceptions of residents of Negril, Montego Bay and Ocho Rios on the economic impact of tourism, and explored whether differences in perceptions existed based on the socio-demographic variables of community, employment, place of employment, age, length of residence, interest in tourism, gender, education, and income.

## METHODOLOGY

The respondents for the study were chosen from Negril, Montego Bay and Ocho Rios because these communities best represent the tourism centers of Jamaica, as evidenced by the high level of development and employment in the tourism sector and visitor arrivals. For the purpose of this study, cluster sampling was used. Cluster sampling may be used when it is either impossible or impractical to compile an exhaustive list of elements composing the target population (4). In selecting the sample, households were initially stratified according to measures of social class (upper, middle, and

lower), as defined by the Parish Council. Once the primary sampling units were grouped according to relevant social classes, a systematic sampling technique was used to select the cluster samples. The following were the stages of cluster sampling used: (a) creating a grid of community blocks; (b) identifying blocks and randomly selecting sample blocks; (c) visiting each selected block and listing each household in order; and (d) for each block selected, surveying each household member 18 years and older.

The questionnaires for this study were delivered in person. Ten local volunteers, recruited and trained, assisted in the delivery of questionnaires. This method of delivery approximated the mail survey method. This was necessary because of the relatively unreliable postal system, and feasible because of the relatively small geographic areas covered. A self addressed stamped envelope was delivered with each questionnaire. Completed questionnaires were returned to a local address in Jamaica. A total of 900 questionnaires were equally allocated to the communities of Negril, Montego Bay and Ocho Rios. This method of sample allocation was chosen because using a proportionate sample would yield a sample for Negril that would be too small. As noted by de Vaus (1991), the size of the population from which the sample is drawn is largely irrelevant for the accuracy of the sample--it is the absolute size of the sample that is important. This approach also represented elements of a modified Dillman (1978) total design method. The response rate was 45%. To determine whether the relatively low response rate biased the results, a follow-up survey of non-respondents was conducted. This was accomplished by randomly selecting 10% of non-respondents and re-surveying them. Thus, an additional 50 residents were surveyed. The tourism impact perceptions of non-respondents' mean scores were compared to respondents' mean scores in

terms of gender, education level, employment, place of employment, income, age, length of residence, and interest in tourism, and no significant differences were found.

A six point Likert-type scale response format was used to collect the data (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree). The items were similar to those in an instrument used by Liu and Var (1986) in their study of Hawaii, and also represented a slight modification of other instruments used by other researchers in tourism impact studies (7, 16, 22, 23). The scale included items related to employment, income, cost of living, expenditure on tourism promotion, opportunities for financial investment in tourism, residents' involvement in planning, and survivability without tourism. The reliability coefficient alpha of the economic impact scale was .7135. Validity was established through a pilot test, previously developed research literature, and a panel of experts.

Data analysis was accomplished using two primary steps: (a) calculating mean scale scores for the economic scales (scores 3.5 and above reflected degrees of positiveness in perceptions of tourism impact, while scores 3.49 and below reflected degrees of negativeness); and (b) performing one-way ANOVA of respondents based on the three communities (Negril, Montego Bay, and Ocho Rios), gender, education level, employment, place of employment, income, age, length of residence, and interest in tourism, on their perceptions of the economic impact of tourism.

## RESULTS

Table 1 illustrates the demographic profile of the total respondents as well as respondents from each community. Of the total respon-

dents to the survey, 48% were males, while 52% were females. Approximately 29% of the respondents had some college education. The employment rate was 82%; approximately 28% worked directly in tourism, while 31% were employed in a tourism dependent business. Forty-one percent were in the lowest income group, while 58% were in the young age group. Eighteen percent of the respondents were short term residents, 15% were medium term residents, while 67% were long term residents. Three percent of the respondents indicated no interest in tourism, 31% indicated some interest in tourism, 35% indicated much interest in tourism, while 31% indicated extreme interest in tourism. The mean scores ranged from 3.6 to 4.47 indicating a slightly positive perception of the economic impact of tourism.

As table 2 indicates, Negril ( $X = 4.47$ ), Montego Bay ( $x = 4.15$ ), and Ocho Rios ( $X = 4.36$ ) residents had a slightly positive perception of the economic impact of tourism (mean 3.5 or greater in all three communities). The total perception rating was also slightly positive ( $X = 4.32$ ). Table 3 indicates the ANOVA test results which showed no significance for gender, education level, and income. However, there was significance for community ( $p < .01$ ), employment ( $p < .05$ ), place of employment ( $p < .05$ ), age ( $p < .01$ ), length of residence ( $p < .01$ ), and interest in tourism ( $p < .01$ ). The Schefé follow-up test was performed to delineate where the differences in residents' perceptions of the economic impact of tourism existed. The results, substantiated by mean scale scores illustrated in Table 4, showed that residents of Negril were more positive than residents of Montego Bay. However, residents of Ocho Rios were not significantly different from Negril and Montego Bay in their perceptions. Employed residents were more positive than unemployed residents. Retired residents were not signif-

icantly different from their counterparts. Residents who were employed in a business directly dependent on tourism were more positive than those who worked in a business not directly dependent on tourism. There was no difference with these groups and those who worked directly in tourism and those who worked in a business totally independent of tourism. Both adults and seniors were more positive than young adults. Long term residents were more positive than recent residents. Finally, respondents who indicated much interest, and extreme interest in tourism, were more positive than residents who indicated some interest, and no interest in tourism.

## DISCUSSION

This study attempted to determine residents' perceptions of the economic impact of tourism in Jamaica, and to see if differences existed based on the socio-demographic variables of gender, education level, employment, place of employment, income, age, length of residence, and interest in tourism. Despite the slightly positive perceptions of the economic impact of tourism, the degree of positiveness varied based on certain socio-demographic variables. Moreover, an average of 4.32 on a six point scale appears to be a relative low score. The varying degrees of positiveness are evidenced by the fact that Negril residents were more positive than Montego Bay residents. This may have been influenced by the fact that Negril is a relative small community, its residents are more dependent on tourism, and were reluctant to express any displeasure with tourism. This observation is supported by Thompson, Crompton, and Kamp (28) who found that positive attitudes towards tourism's impact on a community increased along with an individual's economic dependency on tourism.

Employed residents were more positive about the economic impact of tourism. It could be inferred that if unemployed residents feel disenfranchised, their confidence in tourism as a panacea for upward mobility will be eroded resulting in resentment of tourism. Residents who worked directly in the tourism industry were more positive than those who did not work in the tourism industry. This could be attributed to the fact that they may have greater awareness of tourism's impact. This positive result was consistent with the findings of other researchers (1, 9). The fact that young adults were less positive could be so because they are more likely to be educated about tourism as a holistic phenomenon and may be aware of the potential negative economic impact. It was ironic that long term residents were most positive considering quality of life issues such as traffic congestion and over-crowding, and the fact that shorter term residents usually move to resort communities primarily to work in tourism. Then again, shorter term residents may be more aware of the drawbacks of tourism because of their direct affiliation with the industry. Lastly, it was not surprising that residents with the highest level of interest in tourism were more positive, indicating that although this study was not specifically examining levels of attachment, there were implications for further studies in the area of attachment.

## CONCLUSION

This study revealed a slightly positive perception of the economic impact of tourism by Jamaican residents. There were significant differences for community, employment, place of employment, age, length of residence, and interest in tourism. One major concern to emerge was that although residents were slightly positive about their perceptions of tourism's impact, their scores were at the low

end of the positive indicator on the tourism impact scale. If this trend continues, the long term consequence may be negative for the communities and the Jamaican tourism industry as a whole. Nevertheless, the results of this study have laid the foundation for an increased awareness of residents' perceptions of the economic impact of tourism in Jamaica. Growth and development should undoubtedly bring the topic to the forefront of future discussions. Among the implications of the findings are the need for government involvement

in improving positive perceptions of tourism impact by: (a) providing an educational program for residents, and (b) disseminating information on the value of tourism to the economy. In addition, further studies are recommended to establish a theoretical framework for explaining why Jamaican residents respond to the economic impact of tourism the way they do, and to examine changes in residents' perceptions of the economic impact of tourism over time.

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**TABLE 1**  
**PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

Socio-demographic variables	Value Labels	Negril		Montego Bay		Ocho Rios		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Employment	Working	108	83.7	121	81.2	101	80.4	330	81.8
	Unemployed	18	13.9	24	16.1	18	14.4	60	14.9
	Retired	3	2.3	4	2.6	6	4.8	13	3.2
Place of Employment	Directly in tourism	57	51.3	19	15.7	25	24.2	101	27.7
	Business directly dependent on tourism	37	33.3	37	22.3	20	19.4	114	31.2
	Business not directly dependent on tourism	10	9.0	53	43.8	42	40.7	105	28.1
	Business totally dependent on tourism	7	6.3	22	18.1	16	15.5	45	12.3
Age	Young Adults	69	53	97	65	67	53	233	57.8
	Adults	32	32	38	26	36	29	106	26.3
	Seniors	15	15	14	9	22	18	51	12.6
Length of Residence	Short Term	32	24.8	16	10.7	24	19.2	72	18
	Medium Term	28	27.7	24	16.1	10	8.0	62	15
	Long Term	69	53.5	109	73.2	91	72.8	269	67
Interest in Tourism	No Interest	2	1.6	6	4	5	4	13	3
	Some Interest	26	20.2	61	40	38	30.4	125	31
	Much Interest	50	38.8	44	29.5	46	36.8	140	35
	Extreme Interest	51	39.5	38	25.5	36	28.8	125	31
Gender	Male	78	60	68	45.6	47	37.6	193	48
	Female	51	40	77	54.4	78	62.4	206	52
Education Level	No College	117	90.6	96	64.4	83	66.4	297	73.4
	College	12	10.4	53	35.6	42	33.6	107	26.6
Income	Low	73	56.5	58	38.9	47	37.6	178	41.1
	Middle	35	27	50	33.5	41	32.8	126	31.3
	High	21	16.5	41	27.6	37	29.6	99	24.6

**TABLE 2**  
**ECONOMIC IMPACT PERCEPTION SCORES**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Perception Rating</b>
Negril	129	4.47	Slightly Positive
Montego Bay	149	4.15	Slightly Positive
Ocho Rios	125	4.36	Slightly Positive
Total	403	4.32	Slightly Positive

TABLE 3  
ANOVA RESULTS

<u>Variables</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>F Probability</u>
Community	4.5049	.0116
Employment	4.2060	.0156
Place of Employment	3.2578	.0218
Age	12.6338	.0000
Length of Residence	5.0056	.0071
Interest in Tourism	13.8947	.0000
Gender	.287	.751
Education Level	.728	.394
Income Level	.467	.562

TABLE 4

MEAN SCALE SCORES OF PERCEPTION OF ECONOMIC IMPACT  
BASED ON SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Socio-demographic variables	Value Labels	Perceived Economic Impact Mean Sores
Community	Negril	<u>4.47</u>
	Montego Bay	4.15
	Ocho Rios	4.36
Employment	Working	<u>4.36</u>
	Unemployed	4.12
	Retired	4.19
Place of Employment	Directly in tourism	4.41
	Business directly dependent on tourism	<u>4.54</u>
	Business not directly dependent on tourism	4.18
	Business totally dependent on tourism	4.25
Age	Young Adults	4.13
	Adults	<u>4.59</u>
	Seniors	4.51
	Total	
Length of Residence	Short Term	4.06
	Medium Term	4.21
	Long Term	<u>4.41</u>
Interest in Tourism	No Interest	3.52
	Some Interest	4.02
	Much Interest	<u>4.42</u>
	Extreme Interest	<u>4.58</u>
	Total	
Gender	Male	4.29
	Female	4.36
Education Level	No College	3.9
	College	4.0
Income	Low	3.87
	Middle	3.91
	High	4.03