Social impacts of tourism as perceived by state-planned tourism destination residents: the case of Huatulco, Mexico

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Abstract: Drawing from primarily quantitative data collected in 2010 among adult residents (n = 204) in the state-planned tourism destination of Huatulco, Oaxaca, Mexico, this paper examines the ways in which local residents perceive the social effects of regional tourism development. Currently, socio-demographic impacts of tourism are insufficiently addressed within developing economies and within tourism development initiatives crafted and implemented under state control. Field-tested questionnaire data and ethnographic fieldwork indicate that among Huatulco residents tourism is not viewed as positively associated with increasing rates of crime, prostitution, or drugs. However, increasing variables such as traffic, noise, littering, or population size are associated with Huatulco's tourism economy. Huatulco residents' views on population mobility are mixed. The results presented herein support previous findings within the literatures on tourism impacts, as well as challenge some existing assertions on the correlations between tourism development and social changes within host communities.

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1   Introduction

The expansive growth of touristic activities over the last several decades has positioned the tourism industry as one of the top performers within export economies. Governments within the global south, or developing nations, increasingly look to tourism expansion in order to create jobs, generate national wealth, and develop regions that are logistically too isolated for more traditional forms of industrial development and export. In many cases, government agencies aggressively promote tourism as a panacea for economic underdevelopment [Smith, (1989), p.xi]. The result is an expanding development system with profound economic, cultural, and environmental implications. In response, anthropologists have documented in various contexts the ways in which the expected positive effects of tourism on local communities often fall short of expectations or predictions. For example, tourism may bring severe dislocating impacts and yield minimum relative benefits for local people when large-scale facilities are introduced by outside developers (Cohen, 1984).

Beginning in the 1980s, in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca, local and national government agencies worked to create Huatulco as one of five new tourist destination sites within the country. The initial expectancies established by government projections for tourism growth in Huatulco have largely not been met. The region has experienced several difficulties since its creation in 1984, including environmental damage, underperforming economies, state political instabilities, and notably for this analysis, various understandings of the social impact of tourism. However, since governments have increased interests in tourism development for future economic growth, various social scientists – anthropologists and sociologists in particular – have raised legitimate concerns on the ways in which tourism development agencies attend to or ignore the concerns expressed by local communities affected by this unique industry.

In order to correct past mistakes and plan for more socially, culturally, and environmentally sustainable future development, local-level analyses are needed on the ways in which communities affected by tourism perceive the industry. Notably, local communities increasingly play a relevant role in the assessment of tourism impacts, as much anthropological and sociological work on tourism impacts has revealed. Additionally, it may be argued that sociological and anthropological research within host communities may reveal which community-level variables might complicate the successful creation and management of tourism industries by national governments. While the results of these data are unique to Huatulco, Mexico, it is believed the results presented here hold relevance to other state-led tourism development initiatives within developing economies.

2   Literature review

2.1   Tourism social impacts as a research topic

Social impacts of tourism have been described as the changes in the quality of life of residents within tourism destinations that are a consequence of any kind of tourism in that destination [Wall and Mathieson, (2006), p.227]. More broadly, tourism social impacts have been regarded as the manners in which tourism and travel effect changes in collective and individual value systems, behaviour patterns, community structures,

lifestyle, and the quality of life (Hall and Lew, 2009). Social impacts are difficult to categorise for the edges of cultural, environmental, economic and social dimensions of local communities are difficult to disentangle. For example, issues such as tourism impacts on local employment are listed as an economic impact (Ryan, 2003), while for others they are analysed as social effects (Brunt and Courtney, 1999). Researchers have attempted to mediate such complications through the use of compound adjectives in which two dimensions are usually mixed, such as socio-economic impacts (Broughman and Butler, 1981) and sociocultural impacts (Dogan, 1989; Spanou, 2007).

Although the limits of tourism dimensions have not been accurately defined, several efforts have been made to identify how tourism changes social and cultural aspects of local communities. In fact, research on tourism's diverse impacts has grown rapidly over the past two decades as the field of study became viewed as legitimate scientific inquiry within various disciplines. For anthropology and sociology, the study of the social impacts of tourism may be tracked to the late 1970s (Ap and Crompton, 1998; Nuñez, 1989). Undoubtedly, the first edition of *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism* (Smith, 1977) was a pioneering compilation of case studies around the world that documented both theoretically and empirically the impacts of tourism; particularly, the potential psychological and social conflict among hosts, as well as between hosts and guests (Nash, 1989). Since then, the impacts of tourism, particularly the social, have become the focus of broad academic and research attention.

Studies have shown that the social impacts of tourism are numerous and diverse, and to some extent contradictory, depending upon factors such as the type and number of tourists, and the level of tourism and economic development. Additionally, it is argued that the impacts of tourism are not equal for those residing in the destination. While tourism frequently benefits those directly involved in it, it may cause hardship for the rest of the local community (Cohen, 1984). However, certain social consequences of tourism have been repeatedly identified in different contexts. Specifically, traffic congestion, litter, noise, individual and organised crime, increased price for goods and services, reduction in quality of life, drug abuse, alcoholism, prostitution, migration, social stratification, overcrowding, and reduced local outdoor recreation opportunities have been reported as negative impacts of tourism on the community. On the other hand, perceived benefits and costs of tourism reveal that tourism also impacts positively on the residents' quality of life, increased community pride, income of residents, standards of living, opportunity for shopping, and increase of recreational facilities (Aguiló and Roselló, 2005; Akis et al., 1996; Andereck et al., 2005; Andriotis and Vaughan, 2003; Cohen, 1984; Dyer et al., 2007; Fredline and Faulkner, 2000; Gu and Wong, 2006; Lepp, 2007; Milman and Pizam, 1988; Perdue et al., 1987; Pizam, 1978; Spanou, 2007; Tyrell and Spaulding, 1984).

Of course, the type of tourism may considerably shape tourism's impacts. In ecotourism communities, for instance, while the positive effects of tourism have been reflected in opportunities to gain skills and leadership, heightened self-esteem, new gender roles, expanded support networks, and better organisational capacities, the costs are identified in the restrictions on time, the erosion of reciprocity and other traditional relationships, and the rise of conflicts related to restricted resource use (Campbell, 1999; Stronza and Gordillo, 2008; West and Carrier 2004). From a more anthropological perspective, sociocultural phenomena such as the demonstration effect, acculturation, cultural drift, cultural symbiosis and assimilation are also relevant aspects in the study of

tourism impacts. However, these phenomena are by no means proven by strict empirical research evidence [Burns, (1999), pp.107].

From a detailed review of the literature it is concluded that tourism impacts are diverse and depend widely upon various factors such as the type of tourists, the tourism development, the economic, sociocultural, and political conditions of the local community and, it is argued, the level of government intervention in the planning and management procedures. Furthermore, the degree of the social impact will vary depending on the type of change in a community and its capacity to embrace such transformations (Beeton, 2006). It is also noted that most literatures draw from case studies in developed countries. The impacts of tourism have been neglected in Latin American economies, and in particular, within tourism development initiatives designed and implemented under state control. This study therefore aims to contribute to fill in this gap by analysing the social impacts of tourism in a Mexican state-sponsored destination.

2.2   Assessment issues

Identifying tourism's social impacts are necessary in order to sustainably develop the industry, as local communities increasingly play a relevant role in assessing tourism impacts. According to Richards and Hall (2000, p.5), local communities are a central pillar in the framework of sustainability, which embraces and integrates environmental, economic, political, cultural and social considerations. Furthermore, local communities are central within anthropological analysis on the sociocultural impacts of tourism, such as acculturation processes caused by the intrusion of tourists, consumerism, and the commodification of the local culture (Stronza, 2001). By identifying the perceived social impacts of tourism, programmes can be developed to minimise conflict between locals and residents or the government itself. Ayres and Potter (1989) note that the more attention development and tourism planners pay to residents' concerns, the more support development initiatives are likely to receive from local communities. However, Brougham and Butler (1981) recognise that tourism benefits do not equally accrue to all residents of a community, which produces uneven enthusiasm for tourism's development and growth. As Andriotis and Vaughan (2003, p.172) claim: "…awareness of residents' perceptions of tourism development and its impacts can help planners and developers to identify real concerns and issues for appropriate policies and action to take place, optimising the benefits and minimising the problems". In this way, the unwanted impacts of tourism development, particularly at the local level, should occupy a central position within tourism planning and government intervention [Hall, (2008), p.10] and have become a main focus of ethnographic research methodologies (Stronza, 2001). Systematic analyses of tourism impacts can help government planners, local decision-makers, and tourism promoters identify real concerns and issues in order for appropriate policies and action to take place (Lankford and Howard, 1994).

However, as Wall and Mathieson (2006) highlight, identifying the impacts of tourism is a difficult task. First, it is problematic (even if possible) to reconstruct the environment before human intervention. Anthropologists and social scientists have increasingly attended to the historically deep interactions between human and nature and now recognise that most of what is considered 'natural' is in fact anthropogenic in nature. Second, it is difficult to disentangle the role of human from the role of nature. That is, many tourism impacts result from normal environmental processes and these may be

exaggerated through human intervention. Third, the complex interactions of tourism make total impact almost impossible to measure. Fourth, there exists a spatial and temporal discontinuity between cause and effect. Lastly, it is a challenge to identify the variables that best indicate the changing situation. Nonetheless, such conceptual or methodological dilemmas do not diminish the need to assess tourism-induced social changes in local communities. Therefore, researchers have searched for methodological approaches that can somehow identify such changes. Traditionally, social impacts of tourism have been assessed through the perceptions or attitudes of local residents or through ethnographic accounts of 'hosts' and 'guests' encounters. However, this has mostly been conducted on the basis of developed economies and the social impacts of tourism in developing countries, particularly in the case of Mexican coastal destinations, have been under researched. Analysing the social impacts of tourism in the context of the developing world may enable the realisation of tourism's broader developmental objectives by optimising the benefits of tourism while simultaneously keeping the costs of tourism development to a minimum [Telfer and Sharpely, (2008), p.174].

The above discussion suggests that although certain social impacts of tourism have been commonly identified, these are not universal and may be reflected in a wide variety of local structures. A particular aspect that has not been sufficiently addressed within the literature, for example, is the socio-demographic impacts of tourism, namely "the actual effects or consequences on the local structure of population caused by second home developments" [Casado-Diaz, (1999), p.223]. Casado-Diaz presents evidence that tourism involves a rapid increase in the size of the population through the significant growth of elderly groups and the arrival of a large number of national and international people. The effect of tourism on socio-demographic structures may sharpen the differences between the local population and immigrants with regard to social distance, educational level, average income, and age. However, socio-demographic effects will be shaped considerably by factors such as the type of tourism, other forms of travel such as immigration, and the particular social and demographic conditions Social impacts of tourism as perceived by state-planned tourism destination residents of the local community. The actual socio-demographic effects, nonetheless, still need further exploration in different destinations, particularly in the context of developing economies.

Yet, it is expected that local residents' attitudes towards tourism and its impacts will vary within the same community. Although resident clusters can be identified based on the type of perceptions held, it should be recognised that local perceptions are heterogeneous, and this has implications for planning purposes. It is advisable to assess the tourism-induced social change in each destination, for the perceptions of tourism's impacts will widely depend not only on the economic, social, cultural, natural, and political circumstances and the type of development of the destination, but also on the particular characteristics of the population and the type of tourists.

3 The setting

Huatulco is one of the most recent state-planned tourism destinations on the Pacific coast of Oaxaca, Mexico, funded by the National Fund for Tourism (Fondo Nacional de Fomento al Turismo – FONATUR) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1   The location of Huatulco

While the original plan sought to increase the number of international tourists in the destination, Huatulco is actually more frequently visited by domestic tourists. Through its international airport, Huatulco received over 380,000 passengers in 2009, of which 323,000 were national and 65,000 international. Tourists visiting Huatulco are primarily the conventional sun and sand type (see Figure 2) and the cruise tourism segment plays a relevant role in local economic activity (Cuellar-Río and Kido-Cruz, 2008).

Figure 2   An average day in one of Huatulco's nine bays, as the high 'sun and sand' tourist season approaches (see online version for colours)

Source: Photo by Monterrubio, October 2010

The plan to transform Santa Maria Huatulco into a tourism resort emerged within broader 1970s Mexican federal government policy. A new national economic model relied upon tourism to diversify national exports, generate foreign exchange earnings in the short term, and reduce deficit balance of payments in the long term. From a microeconomic perspective, the tourism development model aimed to create permanent job opportunities, increase both public and private investment, and foster the agricultural, industrial, and construction sectors (Orozco, 1992). From the macroeconomic view, the Mexican government assumed the task of developing large, integrally planned resorts, of which Huatulco is one, financed mostly by borrowing from abroad (Jiménez, 1993; Brenner, 2005). The focus of the tourism development policy was to attract international tourist flows, mainly from the USA. While the Mexican state invested in the creation of tourist centres, it was assumed that the private sector would take over future expansion and operation (Jiménez, 1993).

The federal government primarily presented economic arguments to justify tourism expansion. Most policy documents focused on tourism as a tool for regional development because it creates jobs, attracts investment, and has multiplier effects that benefit farming and regional manufacturing. Essentially, these policy claims reflect 'development pole theory', the dominant economic paradigm that has supported tourism in Mexico since the 1970s [Brenner, (2005), p.142]. The Mexican state viewed tourism as a strategic activity that would encourage regional economic dynamism and attract foreign currency. Furthermore, the Mexican government optimistically expected that tourism's benefits would reach all social classes, encouraging an equitable distribution of national wealth (Jiménez, 1993).

As most tourism development initiatives targeted economically underdeveloped regions, the government openly expressed its intention that local fishers and farmers (the often majority of the original population) would integrate into the tourism sector. Government policy sought to assist local communities' attempt to establish small hotels, restaurants, and tour guide businesses, or remain fishers and farmers and provide food to hotels, restaurants, or other tourism stakeholders. Integration into tourism intended to raise their standard of living (Jiménez, 1993). However, despite the federal government's plans and strategies to promote tourism in the 70s and 80s, the social and economic outcomes that were expected through the development of tourism resorts were not achieved (Brenner, 2005; Gullette, 2007; see also López-López et al., 2006). For example:

1   In state-planned resorts some local communities have received marginal benefits: they have abandoned their traditional activities (agriculture and fishing); many lack the capital, experience, and knowledge to do business in areas related to tourism and have instead found informal employment, which lacks job security.

2   The planned tourist centres have failed to link with other sectors in the area (e.g., farming), and therefore have become enclaves with little to none regional economic multiplier effects.

3   Many tourism sector jobs require little training and therefore pay low when compared with national standards.

4   Tourism jobs suffer high volatility due to high and low tourism seasons. Thus, standards of living may decrease as job stability declines and housing prices increase due to the demand created from a growing labour body.

Within the Mexican Government's tourism development plans that took shape in the 1970s, Huatulco was the fifth and last of the integrated resorts, beginning in the mid 1980s. In the case of Huatulco, data also indicate a failure to achieve the federal government's original goals. For example, by 2000 only 8% of the original settlers who were engaged in fishing and agriculture before the project began continued to engage in such traditional activities; 73% were employed in tourism (Brenner, 2005). In this case, tourism introduced profound social and economic transformations, with primary activities being replaced by often marginal, unstable tertiary ones. Those remaining in local fishing and farming often do not supply food stocks to local restaurants and hotels, which often import food from other regions of Oaxaca or states within Mexico. Such patterns counter government efforts to create regional integration or multiplier effects through tourism development.

Additionally, the local population that lived in the area prior to tourism development (the *originarios*) has often operated at a disadvantage in relation to national migrants moving to Huatulco seeking work. Low levels of education and training relative to at times better-educated and bilingual migrants translated into patterns where *originarios* obtain the lowest paid jobs and struggle to maintain their own businesses (Brenner, 2005; Gullette, 2004). An unfortunate consequence of such social inequalities is increasing evidence of social polarisation and socio-spatial segregation (see also López-López et al., 2006). Residential areas of the upper and middle classes stand in contrast to the settled slums existing on the periphery of the development zone.

Finally, Gullette (2009) argues that equitable tourism development was hampered by the limited or inexistent participation of the local community in tourism planning and management phases. The participation of local communities was enacted after the government established the goals for development. Local participation was therefore passive and, although the government presented the development of the destination as a project founded on the local community, the project did not fully consider community concerns. Various complications emerge from this process, one of which was the forced dislocation of local people from land occupied sometimes for generations (Wilson, 2008). Understandably, local resistance and complaints of exploitation and insufficient compensation for residents' lands have emerged as typical narratives when discussing tourism with 'original' communities (Evans, 1994).

Ultimately, it is noted that Huatulco's expansion as a tourism destination is complicated. Most notably, the region arguably entered an early stagnation phase from the 1990s to the early of 2000s as tourism growth failed to meet expected levels. Since 2003, the government has implemented new growth strategies to position Huatulco to enter a new reorientation phase (López, 2010). Yet, despite such efforts, marked inequalities continue, where some benefit from tourism development and others struggle within this economic system. And as discussed above, there are numerous reasons for the unevenness of Huatulco's tourism development. Such unevenness would likely translate into a complex, heterogeneous interpretation among residents on the benefits and costs of tourism. Therefore, this study presents the perception of tourism impacts among Huatulco's increasingly diverse and stratified populations.

4   Methodology

The aim of this research was to identify local residents' perceptions of tourism's sociocultural impacts in Huatulco. In-depth methodological reviews were carried out to select the most suitable approach. A detailed review of the literature reveals that perceptions towards tourism impacts have been approached through both qualitative and quantitative methods. As Stronza and Gordillo (2008) recognise, both emic and etic methods are relevant in the study of perceived tourism impacts; while emic data can be fruitful for case studies, etic data can allow for more comparative research, and when possible to obtain a representation of the whole population. From a qualitative perspective, it has been stated that the emic paradigm is required to understand community reactions to tourism (Pearce et al., 1996). Therefore several authors have used in-depth interviewing and participant observation in their studies (Ap and Crompton, 1993; Brunt and Courtney, 1999; Cooke, 1982; Hughes et al., 2010; Lepp, 2007; Sebastian and Rajagolpalan, 2009; Spanou, 2007).

On the other hand, studies have adopted quantitative instruments for assessing residents' attitudes towards tourism. The usefulness of quantitative methods, particularly the survey method, has been acknowledged since the 1970s (see for example Andereck et al., 2005; Andriotis and Vaughan, 2003; Dyer et al., 2007; Getz, 1994; Haralambopoulos and Pizam, 1996; Husbands, 1989; Liu and Var, 1986; Mason and Cheyne, 2000; Perdue et al., 1990; Pizam, 1978; Thomason et al., 1979; Tyrell and Spaulding, 1984; Smith and Krannich, 1998). Thus, combining both perspectives may be useful in understanding not only how people perceive tourism but also in making comparisons among residents and destinations.

Considering the strengths of quantitative methods – measurement, causality, generalisation and replication (see Bryman, 2008) – and the need to obtain reliable data, this survey method was adopted as the primary data collection instrument. Quantitative data collection occurred in 2010 with adult local residents residing in Huatulco. However, to recognise the importance of qualitative data in the study of tourism, qualitative data collected during pilot studies in 2009 and regional ethnographic research as performed by Gullette since 2002 were used to inform the construction of the questionnaire and primarily to interpret the results. Thus, the questionnaire was based on

1   indicators identified in a review of previous research on the same topic

2   a series of 38 semi-structured interviews with local people in November 2009

3   the judgement of five experts.

The pilot instrument was made up of 60 items and administered by three research assistants to 60 local residents. Based on the observations of the pilot study, depuration of the instrument took place; some items were reworded and seven removed. The final instrument therefore consisted of 53 items, divided into four sections:

1   sociodemographics (10 items)

2   perceptions towards tourism and local economic change (13 items)

3   perceptions towards tourism and local social change (21 items)

4   perceptions towards local cultural change (9 items).

Except for the section on sociodemographics, all questions were based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = totally agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, 5 = totally disagree). Statements included such examples as "Crime rates have increased due to tourism in the locality", and "Employment has increased due to tourism in the locality" or "Local traditions are strengthened by tourism in the locality."

Table 1   Sociodemographic profile of informants

Variable	n	%	Variable	n	%
Gender			Educational level		
n = 203			n = 203		
Female	119	59	No studies	3	2
Male	84	41	Primary	20	10
			Secondary	47	23
Age			High School	69	34
n = 191			Technical degree	15	7
Less than 18	1	1	University	42	21
18 to 30	81	42	Postgraduate	7	3
31 to 44	67	35			
45 or older	42	22	Income reliance on tourism		
			n = 202		
Length of residence (years)			90% to 100%	40	20
n = 203			50% to 89%	45	22
0 to 3	28	14	Less than 50%	69	34
4 to 9	35	17	None	48	24
10 to 15	28	14			
16 to 21	38	19	Contact with tourists		
22 or more	74	37	n = 204		
			Very frequent	25	12
Place of birth			Frequent	61	30
n = 203			A bit frequent	67	33
Huatulco	59	29	Not frequent	51	25
Other place within the state	65	32			
Other state of the country	75	37			
Other country	4	2			

A total of 204 questionnaires were administered to local residents in October 2010. According to Bryman (2008, p.168), a comprehensive sampling frame is the listing of all units in the population from which the sample will be selected, and it is necessary for an accurate representation of the population. However, in the case of this study, strictly speaking no such list exists and the total population is widely spread in isolated communities, which commonly fall out of national census. Therefore, a non-probability

sampling methodology was employed in this study. However, based on previous ethnographic research in the region, questionnaires were distributed within various neighbourhoods and communities in order to obtain a wide diversity in sociodemographic profiles. A special attempt was made to obtain the views of residents with different backgrounds regarding age, length of residence, occupation, place of birth, education, tourism related income, and contact with tourists (see Table 1). Also, additional effort was made to distribute questionnaires at different times of the day and within different strata of the community in order to ensure that questionnaires were distributed to different portions of the population. These methodological steps were employed to both recognise the bias that exists in non-probability sampling within questionnaire distribution and to correct for this to an acceptable degree. Thus, the results herein presented should be cautiously taken and, strictly speaking, do not represent the whole population. Although the large majority of questionnaires were administered face-to-face, others were self-administered.

Due to the large amount of data, the results herein presented are those corresponding only to the social dimension of tourism impacts, and are presented in terms of univariate analysis (Bryman, 2008). It is important to state that the presentation of results in terms of frequency tables, measures of central tendency, and measures of dispersion is due to the fact that the study, at this stage, did not aim to identify relations among the different variables. This statistically descriptive approach has proven useful in the area of tourism impacts as evidenced by existing investigations (see for example Casado-Diaz, 1999; Getz, 1993; Mason and Cheyne, 2000; Sebastian and Rajagopalan, 2009).

5 Findings

As indicated in the above table, the number of females (59%) participating in the survey was higher than that of males (41%). The majority of informants were between 18 and 30 years old, although those between 31 and 44 were also considerable. It is of relevance to note that a notable number of residents have resided for a significant time (22 years or longer), but very few (29%) were actually born in the destination. This aligns with state statistics which indicate that over 70% of the population originates from outside Huatulco. Therefore, the locality is an amalgam of various social and cultural backgrounds. Regarding their educational level, the three highest levels were high school, secondary and university, with 34%, 23% and 21%, respectively. Also, it was found that the income of 42% of informants widely relies on tourism activity and almost a quarter does not have any dependence on it. The figure of people with no reliance on tourism concurs with that of not having contact with tourists. Yet, over 70% reported a degree of resident-tourist contact.

The first four questions regarding tourism-related social change were designed to determine whether specific social problems, as revealed in previous studies, have increased in the destination. These aimed to identify the perceptions of local people towards crime, prostitution, drugs and vandalism. Interestingly enough, the increase of these indicators, together with emigration, were not perceived as a consequence of tourism (see Table 2). That is, most of the informants declared that crime, prostitution, the use of drugs and vandalism have not increased because of tourism in their locality. These findings initially contradict existing assertions. The unperceived increase of crime

by local residents contradicts the fact that many residents perceive a relationship between tourism and crime, for it seems to them that, as tourism increases, so does crime (Milman and Pizam, 1988, Lawson et al., 1998). While the study of Milman and Pizam (1988) found that the mean score regarding crime was between 'Worsen somewhat' and 'Significantly worsen', this study found that 60% of the sample disagreed with the suggestion that tourism has increased crime rate in the location. A similar pattern occurs with prostitution. Because tourism was not perceived as being the cause for increasing prostitution, the hypotheses suggesting that "The processes of tourism have created locations and environments which attract prostitutes and their clients [and] Poor people with few economic opportunities are forced into prostitution to survive and tourists are a convenient clientele" [Wall and Mathieson, (2006), p.242] are not confirmed in the conditions of this destination.

Table 2   Overall responses of social impact tourism statements (in percentages)

	Indicator	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
1	Crime rate has increased due to tourism	5	23	10	52	9	3.39	1.13
2	Prostitution has increased due to tourism	6	20	14	46	14	3.44	1.16
3	The use of drugs has increased due to tourism	10	26	13	38	12	3.21	1.27
4	Vandalism has increased due to tourism	5	16	14	51	15	3.59	1.10
5	Tourism has increased the number of buildings	28	63	4	4	1	1.93	0.89
6	Tourism has increased the size of local population	24	69	2	5	1	1.94	0.85
7	Tourism has changed the traditional use of land	12	33	16	38	2	2.86	1.15
8	Tourism creates overcrowding in public places	43	49	3	5	0	1.72	0.81
9	Tourism has improved infrastructure	18	51	16	13	2	2.32	1.01
10	Tourism has increased traffic congestion	27	57	6	8	1	2.01	0.93
11	Tourism decreases parking space	36	45	8	10	2	2.05	1.13
12	Tourism has increased the number of schools	3	34	23	35	5	3.09	1.06
13	Tourism has increased the number of clinics and hospitals	6	35	24	32	4	2.96	1.06
14	Tourism has increased leisure opportunities	12	51	14	20	3	2.55	1.12
15	Tourism has improved the tourism destination image	49	40	4	6	2	1.75	1.00
16	Tourism has increased noise	20	46	19	15	0	2.33	1.02
17	Tourism has increased the amount of litter	29	57	9	5	1	1.93	0.83
18	Tourism has impacted negatively the way local people live	9	20	12	50	11	3.4	1.21
19	Tourism has increased immigration to the community	19	53	8	20	1	2.39	1.14
20	Tourism has encouraged emigration	7	15	21	52	5	3.36	1.06
21	Tourism has increased the purchase of local real state by foreign people	33	57	5	5	0	1.86	0.83

Notes: 1 = Totally agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree,
       5 = totally disagree, M = mean score, SD = standard deviation

Another set of questions aimed to explore how tourism has impacted the physical environment. In so doing, statements regarding the increase of number of people in public spaces, traffic congestion, decrease of parking spaces, noise, and littering were assessed. According to the majority of respondents, all these variables have shown an increase. Out of these, litter and crowding in public spaces were reported as having the highest increase in the locality. The former presented a mean score of 1.93 (Totally agree-Agree) with a statistical dispersion of 0.83; the latter showed a mean of 1.72 and a *Std Dev* of 0.81 – the lowest variability score among all variables. The perceived increase of litter in the location as a consequence of tourism was similar to that of previous research. In the study undertaken by Haley et al. (2005) the mean score for this issue was 3.79 also on a five-point Likert scale but in inverted direction (1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree). There was a perceived increase in traffic congestion by 84% of the sample, in noise by 66% and decrease in parking spaces by 79%.

With regard to demographic changes, three aspects were assessed, namely the size of local population, immigration and emigration. The three were assessed in terms of their increase as a consequence of tourism. Local residents were aware that as a consequence of tourism, the number of inhabitants has increased in the destination. 92% of informants reported this perception, and the variability of the sample responses was small (*Std Dev* 0.85). The important consequences of tourism in terms of the increase in the population size does not seem to be exclusive to Huatulco, since other coastal resorts such as Torrevieja in Spain have also experienced massive and rapid demographic growth as a result of tourism (Casado-Diaz, 1999). This demographic change seems to be related to the immigration phenomenon perceived in the community. According to 70% of the sample, tourism has been responsible for outsiders settling down in the destination. This finding concurs with the investigation of Brenner (2005) who states that in less than 20 years the population increased from 2,500 to 14,000, which means that immigrants outnumbered locals. The socio-demographic characteristics of these immigrants are still unknown but may be similar to those found in the study of Casado-Diaz (1999); that is, immigrants are composed of people looking for employment and retired migrants. It should be noted that the issue of immigration may be related to the purchase of real state by outsiders; 89% (*Std Dev* 0.83) of respondents perceived this to be taking place within their community. As for emigration, 56% of people did not perceive tourism as responsible for local people leaving the destination and living in other parts of the country or abroad. This finding differs from that of Sebastian and Rajagopalan (2009) who report that in the case of Kumarakom, India, out-migration is high due to economic gain via increased land values. A possible cause of this perception not taking place among the sample in this study is that in the case of Huatulco access to land is restricted, as argued by Gullette (2007, 2009). Further, much of Gullette's research in various labouring communities within Huatulco followed social networks among families sending migrants to the USA to access new sources of capital so they might return to purchase land or start a business. Therefore, the sampling locations within this study might account for the incongruence between how local respondents perceive emigration and the actual increased rates of regional emigration.

Finally, the study also identified the perceptions towards the effects of tourism on the services and facilities created in the location. It was noted that tourism development has increased the number of constructions in the community; 90% agreed with this statement. However, examining which types of infrastructure benefited from tourism produce varied

understandings. For example, when asked whether tourism led to the improvement of infrastructure, 69% supported this position. Yet, when asked whether tourism led to the creation or increase of schools and hospitals, the mean score was 3.09 and 2.96 (3 = Neither agree nor disagree), respectively, suggesting that the perceptions of tourism impacts on the construction of educational and health services are ambivalent within the community. In connection, the increase in leisure opportunities was also examined. 62% of respondents considered that tourism has increased local people's opportunities for entertainment. This concurs with Getz' (1993) findings in Spey Valley where tourism was recognised by residents as benefiting the community in terms of leisure opportunities. If Getz' (1993) assertion that negative attitudes to tourism is consequence of leisure opportunities declination, positive attitudes may then be expected in the case of Huatulco, although special attention should be paid to the percentage of population that did not perceive the positive benefit in leisure opportunities.

6   Conclusions

Collected data in the case of Huatulco's tourism development illustrate several complications as perceived by residents within the tourism zone, and both quantitative and qualitative findings support and challenge existing research on tourism's social impacts. First, contrary to the assertion that tourism is positively associated with understandings on increasing crime, drugs, or prostitution (see for example Wall and Mathieson, 2006), it was found that these activities, to what degree they occur within Huatulco, are not associated exclusively with tourists. This divergence from traditional assertions within tourism literatures may be explained through the ethnographic data of Gullette (2004), who finds that among some respondents drugs and crime are more commonly associated with trafficking and criminal behaviour that exists partially in rumour and broader Mexican culture.

Second, it is perhaps unsurprising that, as suggested by the Social Exchange Theory, as economic dependency increases on tourism related activities, one would more favourably view tourism growth. While this is the case in Huatulco, as seen in these data sets and ethnographic data collected by Gullette (2004, 2009), such residents simultaneously hold critical opinions of tourism and the way in which local governments promote the industry. For example, while many residents might agree that infrastructural development occurs regionally due to tourism investments, these areas of growth often exist outside of local residents' neighbourhoods and communities. This often emerged as a source of conversation among some residents in marginal communities and can be seen in the highly uneven allocation of running water, electricity, or adequate roads throughout the region.

Furthermore, the unevenness of infrastructure serves as an analogy on the unequal distribution of employment options within local tourism industries. As over 70% of the local population comes from outside the region and holds diverse educational, class, and cultural backgrounds, many of the 'original' fishing and farming communities that lived in the region prior to development have struggled to obtain employment outside of positions that are characteristically labelled as menial. Thus, the socio-demographic changes resulting from tourism development are salient variables that partially explain positive or negative views of tourism development in the region and should certainly be considered within this and future tourism development initiatives.

In addition to the theoretical implications stated above, these findings challenge some of the government's optimistic intentions. From both ethnographic and numerical evidence, it seems that while the benefits of tourism are perceived by most of the population, such benefits are not perceived as equally distributed among local residents. In particular, the expected multiplier economic effect of tourism in the destination did not fully become a reality. This is evidenced in the number of locals who still depend considerably on the limited income generated within marginal, service sector jobs or within fishing and farming activities. There is not a clear indicator that, as 'promised' by the government, the living standards of all local residents have increased by integrating into the tourism sector.

This suggests that national, regional and local governments should ensure that the policies implemented in the destination have a real benefit for all members of the local community, regardless of their status and economic and social condition. State plans in Mexico should guarantee that the advantages of tourism are equitably distributed among locals and monitor that the economic, social and cultural benefits are indeed achieved.

Finally, this study recognises the value of combining qualitative and quantitative methods for identifying perceived impacts of tourism. While the survey method allowed for the collection of a wide variety of views within the community, the ethnographic work both informed the construction of the questionnaire and assisted in interpreting the quantitative data generated within this study, thereby producing a more holistic understanding of local peoples' experiences with and views of tourism. From this perspective, traditional, qualitative anthropological research is essential to explore not only what tourism destination residents perceive, but also how and why they perceive tourism impacts the way they do. Of course, such an approach becomes fortified when supported by numerical evidence.

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