

The Dilemma of Authentic Tourist Experiences and Residential Life in Urban Areas

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The dilemma of authentic tourist experiences and residential life in urban areas

Traditionally, tourists spend their holidays in tourist spaces that provide the needed infrastructure for their experiences (i.e., hotels, restaurants, sight-seeing spots). However, nowadays tourists often occupy more residential space than in the past; this development is fuelled at least by two important trends in tourism. First, destination marketing organizations (DMO's) increasingly seek to intertwine tourists' paths with local neighbourhood in order to create perceived tourist authenticity (e.g. the 'localhood' strategy of various city tourism organizations; Wonderful Copenhagen, 2017). Second, shared economy offerings, such as Airbnb, create tourist spaces in residential areas (Gutierrez et al., 2017). Both developments result in the integration of tourists into the residents' living sphere, and anecdotal evidence indicates that this does not come without friction between residents and tourists (e.g., Andereck et al., 2005; Gutierrez et al., 2017; Yang et al., 2013).

Specifically, residential infrastructure as well as residents' cultural identity may be impaired by tourism that digs its way through residential areas (Yang et al., 2013). As a consequence, residents often perceive urban tourism in their neighbourhood as 'overtourism', overall leading to low support for tourism development. This might negatively influence the tourism of the place, since the friendliness and hospitality of the local people are an important factor of the touristic experience (Kim, 2014). While the two mentioned developments of DMO's 'localhood' strategy and Airbnb are likely to further fuel this trend, surprisingly little is still known about the perceptions of both tourists and residents, and the consequences for tourism performance.

Against this background, the present research sets out to investigate the potential dilemma between the localized (and allegedly authentic; Lu, Chi and Liu 2015) tourist experience and the effect on residents' predispositions towards tourists and tourism itself. An initial question this research aims to answer is whether tourists indeed prefer and seek the authentic experience of 'localhood'. Examining the issue of tourists' perceived authenticity is crucial because it is the underlying assumption of DMO's 'localhood' strategy. Second, this research sets out to investigate both residents' and tourists' perceptions of this development, mapping out potential consequences in a structural equation modelling approach. Specifically, this study aims to understand what drives residents' perceptions of 'overtourism' and how this in turn affects their predispositions towards incoming tourists and tourism itself. In a third step, the consequences of these predispositions on tourists' experience in the residential tourist space are analysed.

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