

Abstract

Many of the tourist destinations are affected in several aspects by the development of tourism, including the socio-cultural one. The present work aims, based on a review of the literature of concern, to present the socio-cultural impacts of tourism on the rural area and to determine how the consequences are perceived by the local community. The most frequent social and cultural effects generated by tourist activities carried out in rural areas involve items related to: the interaction between tourists and residents; quality of life and local cultural activities (crafts, music, art, traditions); ethnic and cultural identity of the host community; quality of public services and general infrastructure; recreational opportunities and facilities. Towards the development of rural tourism, residents generally have a favorable attitude and are aware of the social and cultural benefits to their community. The specialized literature highlights that the impact induced by tourism in the socio-cultural environment, can be positive, as well as negative. In the most cases, residents believe that the advantages brought by tourism for the rural community outweigh its negative impact. While some studies have found that positive non-economic (socio-cultural and environmental) impacts are considered to be more important than positive economic impacts, other researchers have concluded that economic benefits of rural tourism come first in residents' perceptions. The influence of some of the socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, level of education, dependence on tourism etc.) on the benefits perceived by the local population can differ greatly between regions or countries due to the particularities and diversity of the rural communities (customs, beliefs, local specific etc.).

Keywords: rural tourism, tourism development, socio-cultural impacts, residents' perception