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Learnings from ‘Resident Attitudes towards Tourism’ for Tourism City Management Activities

Session 3. Employment: a Key Aspect of the Social Dimension of Sustainable Tourism

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“Even the best destinations need supportive, happy and positive residents to convey the identity of the destination in a positive way.”

With both visitor and resident numbers growing fast in many cities, the tourism carrying capacity of the city is getting more and more attention. Tourism managers understand that focusing on the principles of sustainable development in tourism activities will help them to preserve, create and market tourism cities where tourist and residents can live in harmony. Our recent study (end 2016), looks at one of the aspects of the carrying capacity of the sustainable tourism city: the residents’ attitudes towards tourism in a European heritage city: Bruges, Flanders.

The results in Bruges imply the consideration for tourism managers to include in their actions these elements that empower citizens, in order to boost the support for tourism. In practice, empowered residents that support tourism strengthen the tourism activities in a city, they are better ambassadors, spokespersons of the city, mini marketers and they are better host. The more residents feel empowered (are proud, feel connected, feel they have a voice and they can participate in policy making and planning), the less they see negative impacts from tourism activities, the more they see positive impacts, the more they support tourism. And as a consequence the more they might have a positive effect on the journey of a tourist. Tourism managers should understand that working on residents’ psychological, social and political empowerment will have a positive effect on their attitudes towards tourism and thus on the general development of tourism. Since this model is composed of an easy and ready to use set of statements, we offer Destination Management Organizations to apply the same model to enhance benchmarking possibilities and to make use of the power of the residents in a positive and participative way.

Keywords:

Carrying capacity, over tourism, residents’ attitudes towards tourism