

What determines residents' support of tourism development in rural wine regions? Evidence from Central Portugal

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Objectives | Sustainable development of rural wine tourism and wine routes requires the effective involvement and hospitality of local communities, co-creating with visitors and agents of supply unique and appealing tourism experiences (Carvalho et al., 2021; Figueiredo et al., 2014; Kastenholtz et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2016). A supportive attitude towards tourists and tourism is not necessarily expected, especially in more isolated rural communities. Some communities, though, may actively strive for economic and community development through tourism, particularly if well connected to other endogenous activities and resources (Saxena et al., 2007). No wonder there is still a debate on the factors that drive residents' support of tourism development. This is particularly true when researchers write about wine destinations since they use to analyze either wine tourists or wine producers (and connected tourism agents) and not the local communities (Xu et al., 2016). This study contributes to filling this gap by exploring determinants of residents' support for tourism development in their home region.

Methodology | Previous research showed the role of perceived tourism impacts and working in tourism on residents' support for tourism (McGehee & Andereck, 2004). The present study additionally explores residents' interaction with tourists, their involvement with the place, community, and regional wines, and working in wine production as possible determinants of tourism support in rural wine destinations. These variables were assessed using relevant scales and a questionnaire directed at residents of three Portuguese rural wine regions, each characterized by a (more or less developed) wine route, namely Bairrada, Dão, and Beira Interior, in the country's Central region.

In total, 882 valid responses were obtained from residents of these wine-producing regions using a quota sampling approach. PLS-Path modeling was applied to assess the potential impact of the factors mentioned above on residents' support of tourism.

Main results and contributions | The model revealed the most relevant factors driving residents' support of tourism development, namely: residents working in tourism, their perception of positive economic tourism impacts, their involvement with regional wines and with the community, as well as interaction with tourists. They all relate positively to a supportive attitude, while a negative perception of social impacts decreases the likelihood of residents showing a supportive attitude towards tourism development. Other relationships tested did not reveal any significance. These results leave space for debate and reflection on the most determinant factors communities will demand for a tourism development strategy that they consider desirable. Hence, destination planners should strive if they want to develop a truly sustainable and inclusive destination. Apart from integrating communities into more participatory destination development approaches generating increased benefits for all involved, sensitization campaigns for residents may be important. These could show and discuss the diverse, both positive and negative, impacts of tourism and the importance of all getting involved to help optimize results. In this respect, residents should also understand their role in co-creating unique and appealing destination experiences by connecting positively with tourists through mutually enriching, respectful, and meaningful interaction with destination visitors.

Limitations | As some respondents live in areas with relatively limited wine tourism development, some perceptions and views may not relate to actual experiences but rather to hopes and fears. Nevertheless, their assessment is also important (Kastenholz et al., 2023). Research in other wine regions could further consolidate our findings, as well as additional qualitative research, to better understand underlying ideas and context variables driving residents' perceptions and attitudes towards tourism and tourists.

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