

**FURTHERING SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY IN
THE STUDY OF RESIDENT IMPACT
PERCEPTIONS: THREE APPROXIMATIONS TO
THE LIMITS TO TOURISM GROWTH**

Vanessa Muler González

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**FURTHERING SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY IN THE STUDY OF RESIDENT IMPACT PERCEPTIONS:
THREE APPROXIMATIONS TO THE LIMITS TO TOURISM GROWTH**

Vanessa Muler González

Dipòsit Legal:



Universitat de Girona



DOCTORAL THESIS

**FURTHERING SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY IN THE STUDY OF RESIDENT IMPACT
PERCEPTIONS: Three Research Paths in the Limits to Tourism Growth**

Compendium of Publications

Vanessa Muler González

2020

Doctoral Program in Tourism

Directed by Dr. Núria Galí

Doctoral thesis submitted to obtain the title of doctor by the University of Girona



Girona, 29 de septiembre de 2020

La Dra. Núria Galí Espelt, de la Universitat de Girona,

DECLARA:

Que el treball titulat *Furthering Social Exchange Theory in the Study of Resident Impact Perceptions: Three Approximations to the Limits to Tourism Growth*, que presenta Vanessa Muler González per a l'obtenció del títol de doctora, ha estat realitzat sota la meva direcció.

I, perquè així consti i tingui els efectes oportuns, signo aquest document.

Signatura

Núria Galí Espelt

List of publications derived from the doctoral thesis

The doctoral thesis titled “Furthering Social Exchange Theory in the Study of Resident Impact Perceptions: Three Approximations to the Limits to Tourism Growth” is a compendium of publications comprising three articles following the same line of research. These publications have been previously accepted or sent to the respective journals and their quality indexes are indicated below.

Article 1: Accepted and published

This article earned the prize of ***Outstanding Paper in the 2019 Emerald Literati Awards*** as it was one of the most exceptional pieces of work the editorial team reviewed that year.

<https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/authors/literati/awards.htm?year=2019>

Title: Overtourism: residents’ perceptions of tourism impact as an indicator of resident social carrying capacity-case study of a Spanish heritage town

Authors: Muler, V., Coromina, L. & Galí, N.

Journal: Tourism Review

JCR (2018): Impact Factor: 1.060 Quartile: Q4 Hospitality, Leisure, Sports & Tourism (Ranking 46/52) SCOPUS 2018 Impact Factor: 1.83 Quartile: Q2 (Ranking: 144/628) H Index

Reference: Muler, V., Coromina, L., & Galí, N. (2018). Overtourism: residents’ perceptions of tourism impact as an indicator of resident social carrying capacity-case study of a Spanish heritage town. *Tourism Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/tr-08-2017-0138>

Article 2: Under review

Title: Exchange constructs: social relations in the host-guest exchange (2020)

Authors: Muler, V., Galí, N. & Coromina, L.

Journal: International Journal of Tourism Cities

SCOPUS 2018 Quartile: Q3 Tourism Leisure and Hospitality Management (Ranking: 68/102) H Index 8

Article 3: Accepted

Title: How do degrowth values in tourism influence the host-guest exchange? An exploratory analysis in heritage towns (2020)

Authors: Muler, V. & Galí, N.

Journal: Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change

JCR (2018): Impact Factor: 1.82 Quartile: Q3 Hospitality, Leisure, Sports & Tourism (Ranking 34/52) SCOPUS 2018 Impact Factor: 1.82 Quartile: Q2 (Ranking: 38/102) H Index 23

List of conferences, colloquiums and workshops

In addition to the preceding publications, the research carried out provided other outcomes which are listed here below:

Paper: Muler, V. & Fauró, M. (2019). *Case study: Besalú. United Nations*. World Tourism Organization. <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284420643>

Conference: Muler, V. & Galí, N. (2019, June 10-13) *Rescuing Social Exchange Theory in the Host Guest Exchange*. [Conference presentation]. 15th Annual International Conference on Tourism, Athens, Greece. (Abstract book not published, yet)

Conference: Muler, V., Coromina, L. & Galí, N. (2017, June 6-9). *Social Carrying Capacity in European Heritage Towns: A Case Study in Besalú* [Conference presentation abstract]. I Conference of Pre-doctoral Researchers of the UdG, Girona, Spain. http://www2.udg.edu/portals/118/pdf_cataleg/i_conference_predoctoral_researchers-66f8a32e-bf10-49ce-9bcf-7a7e0d1a2e58-d8ca7335-ec77-4158-beaf-8181666d1986.pdf

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Finally, I would like to dedicate my thesis to all the people that are suffering now in these times of quarantine and COVID-19 pandemics. May our efforts in this work contribute to build a better world.

Vanessa

List of abbreviations

ANOVA: Analysis of Variance

EFA: Exploratory Factor Analysis

IRIDEX: Irritation Index

SET: Social Exchange Theory

SCC: Social carrying capacity

TALC: Tourism Area Lifecycle

UNWTO: United Nations World Tourism Organization

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ABSTRACT

Social exchange theory (SET) is the most widely applied theory to resident impact perceptions. In the field of tourism, SET suggests that expressed support for tourism development is considered as a willingness to enter into an exchange, and residents select exchanges after assessing the benefits and costs. Despite the widespread application of SET to resident impact perceptions some avenues of theoretical development remain unexplored. This doctoral thesis has the general objective to develop the applications of SET to the limits of tourism growth based on residents' perceptions of tourism impacts in a small heritage town in Spain. The limits of tourism growth encompass the planning systems and frameworks that focus on reducing or stabilizing the number of tourists or the impacts of tourism on destinations. It includes concepts theories and systems such as sustainable tourism, degrowth, carrying capacity or the limits of acceptable change. The first chapter introduces the literature of SET, links it to the limits of tourism growth, identifies the research gaps and outlines the research objectives. The following three chapters contain the three required publications to conduct a thesis by a compendium of publications.

The literature review identified three gaps. The first one was the application of SET to the limits of tourism growth in terms of indicators. The first article fulfills this objective as it applies and compares indicators used in SET literature and indicators used social carrying capacity (SCC). Four indicators were applied and interpreted conjointly (1) the balance of impact perceptions, an indicator used in SET studies; (2) willingness to accept more tourism, an indicator used in SCC; (3) the tourist function index, and (4) tourism density; the last two are both indicators of capacity, as well. The results show that there is a split between the indicators of SCC and SET. Taking a social exchange perspective, it can be said that residents in the study area perceive the impacts of tourism under a positive light but there is little willingness to take the exchange a step further. According to the results perceptions of crowding and inflation are linked to SCC. These perceptions are related to the resources of space and affordable prices. This suggests that tourism impacts on these key resources may affect the willingness of residents to accept more tourists.

The second gap found was the application of SET to resident impact perceptions taking social exchange relations as the unit of analysis and linking said relations to the limits of tourism growth. Social exchange relations are patterns that can be identified in an exchange system. SET literature proposes that these relations are a meaningful unit of analysis because they link benefits to costs however previous studied had not taken this approach. The second article bridges this gap. Four exchange

relations were identified using factor analysis: (1) tourism shops in exchange for high prices; (2) heritage conservation in exchange for the inconvenience of tourism; (3) noise in exchange for the higher number of leisure facilities; (4) and the conditions for tourists to learn in exchange for having a more interesting and diverse town. The results show that two exchange relations were linked to capacity: tourism shops in exchange for high prices and noise in exchange for the high number of exchange facilities. Residents who agreed that there is an exchange relation of higher prices in exchange for tourism shops were also less willing to accept more tourists which means they have lower SCC levels. Applying SET, residents may perceive that the exchange of high prices for tourism shops is not balanced and therefore want less tourists. Likewise, those who agree that tourism brings noise in exchange for leisurely facilities tended to want more tourists which means that this group has higher capacity levels. Applying SET, residents perceive a balance in terms of the exchange related to noise and facilities and thus want more tourists. These results show that the perceptions of residents about the resources being exchanged in tourism affect capacity levels.

The third gap was an identification of the role of values, a factor that is central in SET, in resident tourism impact perceptions and how these link to the limits of tourism growth. The third article fulfils this gap using qualitative methods. The values chosen to frame this part of the study were the ones of degrowth because it is a theory about the limits to growth in which values are very explicitly defined and play a fundamental role. Degrowth specifically proposes that tourism be kept at low development levels to avoid irreversible impacts on the destinations. The determination of how and when to stop growth should be made through political debate and giving importance to a series of values which include conviviality, autonomy, less emphasis on economic values and valuing natural assets. The third study, which is qualitative, delved into the role of these values in how residents understand the tourism exchange and the limits of tourism growth. The results show that some degrowth values such as conviviality and learning are at play in the way residents understand the tourism exchange. However, they do place much emphasis on the economic imperative in valuing their relation with tourists and they acknowledged no alternative to this imperative even when they sensed that the town could be reaching capacity limits. Those that were reluctant to accept more tourism based their evaluation on the impacts that more tourism could have on the lives of the neighbors that are more directly affected by tourism. They also base their opinion on their evaluation of the capacity of the town which they determined by using indicators of their choosing such as the size of the terraces of the town or the availability of hotel rooms. This result is aligned with SET because residents evaluate whether they can enter into the exchange by evaluating their resources but they also use values akin to degrowth

such as conviviality. By bridging these three gaps this thesis provides the basis to understand the limits of tourism growth in terms of SET.

The final chapter closes this thesis with the conclusions and indicates its limitations and possible future lines of research. This thesis brings three major contributions. The first one is that it helps understand the acceptance by residents of the tourism exchange under social exchange theory. In social exchanges it is necessary to know the rewards that residents receive but also the costs and the relation between both which determines the benefits. This thesis joins benefits and costs and evaluates the exchange in a more comprehensive manner. The comprehension of the limits of tourism growth is thus enriched with elements of SET such as resource availability and values. In the second place, this thesis highlights that the acceptance by residents of the tourism exchange involves factors that go beyond self-interest since residents see themselves as a part of a larger unit which is the destination, their home. Therefore, they not only take into consideration their own resources and costs but also those of their community and the tourists when they evaluate the exchanges. In the third place, this thesis sheds light on the role that non-economic values play to enable the tourism exchange. This third contribution allows a more humanistic understanding of sustainable tourism in which economic considerations are complemented with others types of considerations. It also enriches the comprehension of the limits of tourism growth with elements of SET such as the links between, on one side, the perceptions of exchanges and, on the other, the availability of resources and values. The final chapter closes this doctoral thesis

RESUM

La teoria de l'intercanvi social (TIS) és la teoria que s'ha aplicat més àmpliament a les percepcions d'impacte dels residents. En el camp del turisme, la TIS suggereix que els residents seleccionen els intercanvis després d'avaluar els costos i els beneficis. Tot i la utilització generalitzada d'aquesta teoria per estudiar les percepcions d'impactes turístics, algunes vies de desenvolupament teòric romanen inexplorades. Aquesta tesi doctoral té l'objectiu general de desenvolupar les aplicacions de la TIS als límits del creixement turístic a partir de la percepció que tenen els residents dels impactes turístics generats en un petit nucli històric d'Espanya. Els límits del creixement turístic engloben el sistema de planificació i marcs teòrics que s'enfoquen en identificar i avaluar les limitacions en la quantitat i/o els impactes turístics sobre les destinacions, com ara el turisme sostenible, el decreixement turístic, la capacitat de càrrega o els límits del canvi acceptable. El primer capítol introdueix la literatura de la TIS i la vincula als límits del creixement turístic, identifica les llacunes i exposa els objectius de recerca. Els tres capítols següents contenen les tres publicacions necessàries per elaborar una tesi per compendi de publicacions.

La revisió de la literatura ha identificat tres llacunes. La primera fa referència a l'aplicació de la TIS als límits del creixement del turisme en termes d'indicadors. El primer article assoleix aquest objectiu, ja que aplica i compara els indicadors utilitzats en la literatura sobre la TIS amb els indicadors que fan referència als límits del creixement turístic, en concret, els que s'utilitzen per determinar la capacitat de càrrega social (CCS). A aquests efectes, s'han aplicat i interpretat de forma conjunta quatre indicadors (1) el balanç de percepcions d'impacte, un indicador que s'utilitza en estudis relatius a TIS; (2) la disposició o voluntat a acceptar més turisme, un indicador utilitzat en estudis de CCS; (3) l'índex de la funció turística i (4) la densitat turística; els dos últims també són indicadors de capacitat. Els resultats mostren que els indicadors de TIS no es corresponen amb els de CCS. Des de la perspectiva d'intercanvi social, es pot afirmar que els residents de l'àrea d'estudi perceben els impactes turístics d'una manera positiva però hi ha poca disposició o voluntat de portar l'intercanvi un pas més enllà. Els resultats demostren que les percepcions d'aglomeració i la inflació estan vinculades amb la CSS. Aquestes percepcions incideixen sobre els recursos d'espai i preus assequibles. Això suggereix que els impactes turístics sobre aquests recursos clau podrien afectar la disposició dels residents a acceptar més turistes.

La segona llacuna detectada té relació amb l'aplicació de la TIS a les percepcions d'impacte turístic que tenen els residents prenent com a referència les relacions d'intercanvi social com a unitat d'anàlisi i

vinculant-la amb els límits del creixement turístic. Les relacions d'intercanvi social són patrons que es poden identificar en el sistema d'intercanvi social. Segons la literatura de la TIS, aquestes són una unitat d'anàlisi significativa ja que vinculen els beneficis amb els costos, però els estudis anteriors encara no han aprofundit en aquesta perspectiva. El segon article tracta aquesta llacuna. S'han identificat quatre relacions d'intercanvi utilitzant l'anàlisi factorial: (1) l'intercanvi de preus elevats per botigues turístiques; (2) l'intercanvi de mostrar la cultura pròpia a canvi de tenir un poble més excitant i interessant; (3) l'intercanvi de tolerar les molèsties del turisme a canvi de la conservació del patrimoni cultural i, finalment, (4) l'intercanvi d'acceptar el soroll a canvi de les instal·lacions de lleure. Els resultats indiquen que hi ha dos relacions d'intercanvi vinculades a la CCS: l'intercanvi de preus alts per botigues turístiques i l'intercanvi d'acceptar el soroll a canvi d'instal·lacions de lleure. Els residents que perceben una relació d'intercanvi de preus alts per botigues turístiques també tendeixen a acceptar menys turistes. Des de una perspectiva d'intercanvi social, perceben que l'intercanvi no és equilibrat i, per tant, accepten menys turistes. També, aquells que estan d'acord en que el turisme generi soroll a canvi d'instal·lacions de lleure tendeixen a acceptar més turistes, la qual cosa significa que aquest grup percep una capacitat de càrrega més alta. Des d'una perspectiva de TIS, els residents perceben un intercanvi equilibrat i per tant accepten més turistes. Aquests resultats demostren que les percepcions sobre el recursos que estan sent intercanviats afecten la capacitat de càrrega social.

La tercera llacuna identificada és el rol dels valors, un factor que és central en la teoria d'intercanvi social, en les percepcions d'impactes turístics i en com aquestes es vinculen amb els límits del creixement turístic. El tercer estudi aconsegueix aquest objectiu utilitzant mètodes qualitius. Els valors triats per emmarcar aquest estudi són els del decreixement perquè és una teoria sobre els límits del creixement en la qual els valors són fonamentals i estan definits de manera molt explícita en la literatura. El decreixement proposa que el turisme es mantingui a nivells baixos de desenvolupament per tal d'evitar impactes irreversibles en les destinacions. La determinació de com i quan s'ha de limitar el creixement ha de ser fruit d'un debat polític que doni importància a una sèrie de valors proposats, els quals inclouen la convivialitat, l'autonomia, posar menys èmfasi en l'economia i la valoració dels béns naturals. El tercer article, de metodologia qualitativa, analitza el rol que aquests valors del decreixement juguen en la manera en la qual els residents perceben l'intercanvi turístic i els límits del creixement turístic. Els resultats indiquen que alguns dels valors del decreixement influeixen la manera en la qual els residents interpreten l'intercanvi turístic; es tracta dels valors de la convivialitat i l'aprenentatge. No obstant això, també posen molta èmfasi en l'imperatiu econòmic a l'hora de valorar la seva relació amb els turistes i no saben identificar alternatives a aquest imperatiu, tot i que sospiten que el poble podria estar en els límits de la seva capacitat de càrrega. Aquells que són reticents a

acceptar més turisme basen la seva opinió en l' impacte que podria tenir sobre la vida dels veïns més directament afectats. També es basen en la seva avaluació de la capacitat de càrrega del poble, la qual determinen utilitzant indicadors com ara la disponibilitat d'espai a les terrasses o als hotels. Aquest resultat està alineat amb la TIS ja que els residents avaluen si poden entrar a l' intercanvi en funció dels recursos que tenen al seu abast, però també fan servir valors propis del decreixement com ara la convivencialitat. En englobar aquestes tres llacunes, aquesta tesi genera els fonaments per comprendre els límits del creixement turístic sobre la base de la teoria d'intercanvi social.

El capítol final tanca aquesta tesi doctoral amb les conclusions, les limitacions existents i indicacions sobre possibles línies futures de recerca. Aquesta tesi realitza tres contribucions. La primera consisteix en aportar claus per comprendre millor l'acceptació per part dels residents de l'intercanvi turístic en el marc de la TIS. En els intercanvis socials és necessari conèixer les recompenses que reben els residents però també els costos i la relació entre ambdós que és el que determina els beneficis. Aquesta tesi conjumina beneficis i costos i avalua l'intercanvi d'una manera més comprensiva. La comprensió dels límits del turisme s'enriqueix així amb elements de la teoria d'intercanvi social com ara els valors o la disponibilitat de recursos. En segon lloc, aquestes tesis ressalta que l'acceptació per part dels residents de l'intercanvi turístic incorpora factors que van més enllà de consideracions basades en l'interès propi ja que els residents es perceben a sí mateixos com a parts d'una unitat més àmplia, la destinació que és la seva llar. Per tant, prenen en consideració no només la disponibilitat dels seus propis recursos i els costos, sinó també els de la seva comunitat i els dels turistes a l'hora d'avaluar els intercanvis. En tercer lloc, aquesta tesi aporta coneixement sobre el rol dels valors no econòmics que possibiliten l'intercanvi turístic. Aquesta tercera contribució possibilita un enteniment més humanista del turisme sostenible en el qual les consideracions econòmiques es complementen amb un altre tipus de consideracions. També s'enriqueix la comprensió dels límits del creixement turístic amb elements de la teoria d'intercanvi social com ara les percepcions d'intercanvi, d'una banda, i la disponibilitat de recursos i els valors, d'un altre. El capítol final tanca aquesta tesi doctoral.

RESUMEN

La teoría de intercambio social (TIS) es la más ampliamente aplicada a las percepciones de impactos turísticos por parte de residentes. En el campo del turismo, la TIS sugiere que los residentes seleccionan los intercambios después de evaluar los costes y los beneficios. A pesar de la utilización generalizada de esta teoría para estudiar las percepciones de impactos turísticos, quedan algunas vías por explorar. Esta tesis doctoral tiene el objetivo general de desarrollar aplicaciones de la TIS a los límites del crecimiento turístico basado en las percepciones de impacto turístico de residentes de un pequeño pueblo patrimonial en España. Los límites del crecimiento turístico engloban los sistemas de planificación y marcos teóricos que se enfocan en identificar y evaluar los límites a la cantidad y/o los impactos turísticos sobre las destinaciones como, por ejemplo, el turismo sostenible, el decrecimiento, la capacidad de carga o los límites del cambio aceptable. El primer capítulo es una introducción al tema que recoge la literatura de la teoría de intercambio social vinculándola a los límites del crecimiento turístico, identifica las brechas en la investigación sobre el tema y delinea los objetivos de esta investigación. Los siguientes tres capítulos contienen las tres publicaciones requeridas para una tesis por compendio de publicaciones.

En la revisión de literatura se identificaron tres brechas. La primera fue la aplicación de la teoría de intercambio social a los límites del crecimiento turístico en términos de indicadores. El primer artículo publicado cumple con este objetivo ya que compara indicadores utilizados en la literatura de la TIS con indicadores utilizados para los límites del crecimiento turístico, específicamente, aquellos utilizados para determinar la capacidad de carga social (CCS). Cuatro indicadores fueron aplicados e interpretados conjuntamente (1) el balance de percepciones de impactos, un indicador utilizado en estudios aplicando la teoría de intercambio social; (2) la voluntad de aceptar más turistas, un indicador utilizado para determinar la capacidad de carga social; (3) el índice de función turística y (4) la densidad turística; estos dos últimos indicadores son de capacidad de carga también. Los resultados demuestran que los indicadores de la TIS no se corresponden con los de la CCS. Desde la perspectiva del intercambio social, se puede afirmar que los residentes del área de estudio perciben los impactos turísticos de una manera positiva pero hay poca disposición o voluntad de llevar el intercambio más allá. Los resultados demuestran que las percepciones de aglomeraciones y la inflación están vinculadas con la CCS. Estas percepciones inciden sobre los recursos de espacio y precios asequibles. Esto sugiere que los impactos turísticos sobre estos recursos clave podrían afectar la disposición de los residentes para aceptar más turistas.

La segunda brecha identificada fue la aplicación de la TIS a las percepciones de impacto turístico tomando la relación de intercambio social como unidad de análisis y vinculándola a los límites del crecimiento turístico. Las relaciones de intercambio social son patrones que pueden ser identificados en el sistema de intercambio social. Según la literatura de TIS, éstas son una unidad de análisis significativo ya que vinculan los beneficios con los costes pero los estudios anteriores no han profundizado en esta perspectiva. El segundo artículo cubre esta brecha. Cuatro relaciones de intercambio fueron identificadas usando análisis factorial: (1) el intercambio de precios altos por tiendas para turistas; (2) el intercambio de mostrar la cultura propia a cambio de tener un pueblo más excitante e interesante; (3) el intercambio de tolerar las molestias del turismo a cambio de la conservación del patrimonio cultural y, finalmente, (4) el intercambio del ruido por instalaciones de ocio. Los resultados demuestran que hay dos relaciones de intercambio social vinculadas con la CCS: el intercambio de precios altos por tiendas para turistas y el intercambio del ruido asociado a turismo a cambio de instalaciones de ocio. Los residentes que perciben una relación de intercambio de precios altos por tiendas para turistas también tienden a aceptar menos turistas. Desde una perspectiva de TIS, perciben que el intercambio no es equilibrado y por lo tanto quieren menos turistas. Además, aquellos que están de acuerdo en que el turismo genere ruido a cambio de instalaciones de ocio tienden a aceptar más turistas lo cual indica que este grupo percibe una capacidad de carga más alta. Desde una perspectiva de TIS, los residentes perciben un intercambio equilibrado y por lo tanto aceptan más turistas. Estos resultados demuestran que las percepciones sobre los recursos que están siendo intercambiados afectan la capacidad de carga social.

La tercera brecha identificada fue el rol de los valores, un factor que es central en la teoría de intercambio social, en las percepciones de impactos turísticos y cómo estos se vinculan con los límites del crecimiento turístico. El tercer estudio cumple con este objetivo por medio de métodos cualitativos. Los valores elegidos para enmarcar este estudio son los del decrecimiento porque es una teoría sobre los límites del crecimiento y en la cual los valores son fundamentales y están definidos de manera muy explícita en la literatura. El decrecimiento propone que el turismo se mantenga a niveles bajos de desarrollo para evitar impactos irreversibles en las destinaciones. La determinación de cómo y cuándo se tiene que limitar el crecimiento tiene que ser fruto de un debate político que de importancia a una serie de valores propuestos los cuales incluyen la convivialidad, la autonomía, poner menos énfasis en la economía y la valoración de los bienes naturales. El tercer artículo de metodología cualitativa analiza el rol que estos valores juegan en la manera en la que los residentes perciben en intercambio turístico y los límites de crecimiento turístico. Los resultados muestran que algunos de los valores del decrecimiento influyen en la manera en que los residentes entienden el intercambio

turístico; se trata de los valores de la convivencia y el aprendizaje. No obstante, también ponen mucho énfasis en el imperativo económico al valorar su relación con los turistas y no identifican alternativas a este imperativo aun cuando sospechan que el pueblo podría estar en los límites de su capacidad de carga. Los residentes que estaban reticentes a aceptar más turismo basaban su evaluación en los impactos que éste podría tener en las vidas de los vecinos más directamente afectados por el turismo. También se basaban en su propia evaluación de la capacidad del pueblo la cual determinaron usando indicadores de su elección tales como el tamaño de las terrazas o la disponibilidad de habitaciones en los hoteles. Este resultado está alineado con la TIS ya que los residentes evalúan si pueden entrar en el intercambio por medio de una apreciación de sus recursos pero también usan valores propios del decrecimiento tales como la convivencia. Al abarcar estas tres brechas, esta tesis genera los fundamentos para comprender los límites del crecimiento turístico en base a la teoría de intercambio social.

El capítulo final cierra esta tesis doctoral con las conclusiones, las limitaciones que tiene e indicaciones sobre posibles líneas futuras de investigación. Esta tesis trae tres aportaciones. La primera es que aporta claves para comprender mejor la aceptación por parte de los residentes del intercambio turístico bajo la teoría de intercambio social. En los intercambios sociales es necesario conocer las recompensas que reciben los residentes pero también los costes y la relación entre ambos que es lo que determina los beneficios. Esta tesis aúna beneficios y costes y evalúa el intercambio de una manera más comprensiva. La comprensión de los límites del turismo se enriquece así con elementos de la teoría de intercambio social como los valores o la disponibilidad de recursos. En segundo lugar, esta tesis resalta que la aceptación por parte de los residentes del intercambio turístico envuelve factores que van más allá de consideraciones basadas en el interés propio ya que los residentes se ven a sí mismos como parte de una unidad más amplia, la destinación que es su hogar. Por tanto, toman en consideración no solo la disponibilidad de sus propios recursos y los costes, sino también los de su comunidad y los turistas a la hora de evaluar los intercambios. En tercer lugar, esta tesis arroja luz sobre el rol de valores no económicos que posibilitan el intercambio turístico. Esta tercera contribución posibilita un entendimiento más humanista del turismo sostenible en la cual las consideraciones económicas se complementan con otro tipo de consideraciones. También se enriquece la comprensión de los límites del crecimiento turístico con elementos de la teoría de intercambio social tales como la relación entre las percepciones de intercambio, por un lado, y la disponibilidad de recursos o los valores, por otro. El capítulo final cierra esta tesis doctoral.

INTRODUCTION

Until 1992, there were no comprehensive applications of social exchange theory (SET) in the context of residents' impact perceptions. Some researchers did describe the host-guest relation as an exchange and identified elements of SET such as reinforcement and power (Sutton, 1967; Pearce, 1989). It was Ap (1990) that explicitly proposed that SET "could be useful in understanding resident's perceptions of tourism impacts, as exchange behavior is related to perceptions" (Ritchie & Inkari, 2006:31). He developed the theory in detail in the context of the host-guest exchange. Since then, SET has become the most widely used theoretical framework to explain residents' perceptions of the impacts of tourism and their support to the industry (Boley et al. 2014; Vargas-Sánchez et al. 2011; Gursoy et al. 2002; Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Carmichael et al. 1996; Jurowski et al. 1997). The following lines synthesize the rationale for applying SET to resident's perceptions of tourism impacts and the main findings in that respect.

Why social exchange theory?

According to Emerson (1976), SET emerged in sociology and social psychology in the 60's mainly from the work of Homans (1958, 1961), Thibaut and Kelley (1959) and Blau (1964). While Blau (1964) gave emphasis to economic aspects and, as Thibaut and Kelly (1959), used individual exchanges to understand dyads and more complex mechanisms in groups, Homans (1961) focused on the psychology of instrumental behaviour (Emerson, 1976; Blau, 1964). This thesis builds mainly from the works of Blau (1964) and Emerson (1976) because these place emphasis on the analysis of simpler processes to explain and understand more complex social aspects of the exchange system. The contributions of Homans (1961) and Emerson (1976) related to the tautological nature of SET and the nature of the exchange dyad are also central to this thesis because social exchange relations or dyads are explored in depth.

At a very basic level, SET "is limited to the actions that are contingent upon rewarding actions of others" Blau (1964:5). The utility of the theory is related to its adaptability as human relations can be explained as exchanges in many contexts and, thus, SET has been applied in many fields. SET offers an adequate frame of reference to explain the support given by residents to tourism in a destination as they receive benefits and endure costs. Since support is very important for sustainability and management, studies have thus aimed to identify the conditions in terms of rewards and costs that lead to it (Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2011; Nicholas et al., 2009; Dyer et al., 2007; Ritchie & Inkari, 2006;

Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Jurowsky & Gursoy, 2004; Harrill, 2004; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Yoon et al., 2001; Vesey & Dimanche, 2000; Smith & Krannich, 1998; Ryan & Montgomery, 1994; Getz, 1994; Madrigal, 1993; Perdue et al., 1990; Pearce, 1989; Perdue et al., 1987; Pizam, 1978).

As it has been mentioned before under a SET approach, residents evaluate the costs and the rewards and decide if they enter into the exchange. Accordingly, research in this topic has recurred to operationalizing costs and rewards in the tourism destination context. These have mainly been operationalized as negative and positive impact perceptions, respectively. Some positive impacts perceptions studied are public utilities; more community facilities; job creation, more money for residents and cultural exchange (Getz, 1994; Glasson, 1994; Belisle & Hoy, 1980). There is also a range of negative impacts such as pollution; high prices; drug addiction and trafficking, crowding and congestion, prostitution and litter (Simón et al. 2004; Glasson, 1994; Canestrelli & Costa, 1991; Belisle & Hoy, 1980).

How have SET and the limits to tourism been linked to each other?

SET has proven to be useful in understanding social relations in tourism destinations but the question remains of how it works in relation to the limits of tourism growth. Upon examination of the literature, it can be seen that SET has been employed in combination with carrying capacity, a theory that speaks about the limits to tourism growth. As Emerson noted, "SET is a frame of reference within which many theories can speak to one another" (Emerson, 1976:33). The attempts to combine them however stayed at a theoretical level with no empirical applications (D'Amore, 1983; Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2011). According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) carrying capacity has been defined as "the maximum number of people that may visit a tourist destination at the same time without causing destruction of the physical, economic or socio-cultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in tourist satisfaction" (1997:5). It can be seen, thus, that it relates to the study of the limits of tourism growth and therefore, it was an adequate template to study the links between tourism growth and SET.

Among the dimensions of carrying capacity, the one most directly linked with SET is the social one. Social carrying capacity (SCC) has been defined in terms of SET as: "that point in the growth of tourism where local residents perceive on balance an unacceptable level of social dis-benefits from tourism development" (D'Amore, 1983: 144) In its first stage, this thesis mixes SET with social carrying capacity,

a framework that is linked to the limits to tourism growth. The following lines are intended to explain the blending of both theories, SCC and SET, at a more practical level.

As it has been mentioned before under a SET approach, residents evaluate the costs and the rewards and decide if they enter into the exchange. Support for tourism is, in terms of SET, the indicator whether residents are willing to enter into an exchange. It is also, in terms of SCC, the indicator whether capacity limits have been reached. It is therefore an indicator for both theories. Literature shows two ways to operationalize support. One of them is stated support for tourism growth or development. This one was used in Vargas-Sánchez et al. (2011); Nicolas et al. (2009); Dyer et al. (2007); Ritchie & Inkari (2006); Gursoy & Rutherford (2004); McGehee & Andereck (2004); Jurovsky & Gursoy (2004); Ko & Stewart (2002); Gursoy et al. (2002); Yoon et al. (2001); Ryan & Montgomery (1994); Perdue et al. (1990). Other studies have operationalize support through the balance of impact perceptions or whether residents perceive that the benefits derived from tourism exceed the costs (Ritchie & Inkari, 2006; Ko & Stewart, 2002; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Perdue et al., 1990; Vargas-Sánchez, 2011; Dyer et al. 2007; Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Gursoy et al., 2002; Yoon et al., 2001; Smith, & Krannich, 1998; Madrigal, 1993; Getz, 1994).

Some of the studies that have operationalized support through stated support have applied the rule of Shelby & Haberlein (1986) to make a determination whether the destination is reaching SCC limits. This rule states that "if more than two-thirds of the visitors say that they are crowded it is likely that the capacity has been exceeded. If less than one-third senses the overcrowding, the area is probably below the load capacity" (Shelby & Haberlein, 1986: 62). This rule has been used to determine capacity from the perspective of tourists as well as residents in subsequent studies (Jurado et al., 2013; Glasson, 1994; Vaske & Shelby, 2008). Other indicators of capacity are the tourist function index (the ratio of beds to inhabitants) and the tourism intensity (the visitor to resident ratio).

The first article uses support for tourism as an indicator of carrying capacity and links it to the perceptions of residents of the tourism exchange obtained from the balance of tourism impact perceptions. It applies the cited rule of Shelby & Haberlein (1986) to support for tourism to determine whether the destination is at the limits of its SCC. The objective was to compare indicators used in SET literature and indicators used in the limits to tourism growth in order to understand the latter in terms of SET. The result was then compared to the two indicators mentioned (tourist function index and tourism density) in order to have a better approximation to capacity. Finally, the results of these three

indicators were then evaluated in conjunction with the balance of impact perceptions. The purpose was to translate SCC into SET terms and understand the limits to tourism growth in terms of SET.

The research gap being filled by this part of the thesis is an assessment of impact perceptions under a SET frame of reference linking to the limits to tourism growth. Given the importance of addressing the negative impacts of tourism, the relevance of this research lies in that it links the most widely used theory in host-guest relation to the research pathways in sustainable tourism. It attempts to explain host guest interactions as an exchange in the context of and in relation to the limits to tourism growth.

What are social exchange relations? Why link them to the limits to tourism growth?

Despite several studies having applied SET to understand host guest perceptions, none of the studies reviewed focuses on social exchange relations. The following lines explain this perspective. From its origins, Emerson (1962) pointed out that SET has a problem of tautology. SET, as it has been said, is limited to the actions that are contingent upon rewarding actions of others but the only proof that something is a reward comes when it is a reward. Therefore, SET, as Emerson (1962) stated cannot be tested empirically. It is a frame of reference that researchers can choose to explain some social interactions. This objection to the empirical testing of SET based on tautology was raised by Ap (1990), as well. However, many studies have attempted to test it empirically (Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2011; Getz, 1994). The proposal of Emerson to avoid tautology was to study exchanges in a relational manner. Social exchange relations “are the product of the conjunction of the actions of two individuals where the actions of one individual are dependent on the actions of the other. The emergent properties of the social exchange as a consequence of this interdependence cannot be explained by reference to the psychological processes that motivate the conduct of the individuals” (Blau, 1964:64). The proposal would thus be to study the relation as a unit and its emergent properties.

In terms of SET and the limits of tourism growth, the question would be how the latter can be explained in terms of social exchange relations and their emergent properties linked to the former? Exchange relations are relevant to tourism growth because support may be operationalized not as whether the costs exceed the benefits, in general terms, but as an ideal set of repeated exchanges where residents see specific benefits paired with specific costs and where contextual factors such as the availability of resources may come into play. As Emerson indicates “is a run in the rain ‘costly’ when it is experienced within a long-term friendship?” (Emerson, 1976:349). In other words, can costs and benefits be defined in a one-sided manner or are they relational (dyadic)? Are they influenced by the context and

the other costs and benefits being evaluated at the time? What role does the availability of those resources play and the values that residents hold regarding those resources? “Social life consists of longitudinal social relations forming, changing, and maintaining over time,... we see an actor engaged simultaneously in numerous exchange relations, each competing with some of the others for a commitment of resources” (Emerson, 1976:350).

Several studies have focused on variables that affect the perceptions of the exchange such as power and trust (Kayat, 2000; Madrigal, 1993; Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Harvey et al., 1996; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Zuo et al., 2017), or involvement (Lundberg, 2017; Nunkoo, 2016). However, none of the studies reviewed focuses on exchange relations nor how these relate to the limits of tourism growth. Even though previous research had not focused on exchange relations, constructs identified suggested resources being exchanged such as cultural exchanges linked to self-awareness, cultural reinforcement, pride and support to tourism (Abdollahzadeh & Sharifzadeh, 2014; Hammad et al., 2017; Andereck, et al. 2005; Ursache, 2015; Boley et al., 2018; Wang & Pfister, 2008); cultural exchanges between residents and tourists which have an impact on the level of attractiveness and how interesting the place is (Abdollahzadeh & Sharifzadeh, 2014; Brunt & Courtney, 1999; Garland, 1985; Yoon et al., 2001); economic exchanges where higher costs are associated with increased standard of living, local awareness, power, learning opportunities, and sense of ownership (Abdollahzadeh et al., 2014; Hammad et al., 2017; Harvey et al., 1995), and environmental exchanges where residents perceive they are getting recreational facilities, better parks, quality of life, linked to negative impacts on outdoor recreation (Abdollahzadeh et al., 2014; Yasong, 2017). The second article identifies these exchange relations in literature and in the research results.

What is the role of values in SET in the limits to tourism growth?

A third pathway to the limits of tourism growth using SET is the one offered by values. The focus on values in defining the conditions under which residents are willing to enter into an exchange is justified by two reasons. As Emerson (1962) highlights in order to transcend tautology studies of SET would have to go beyond a list of costs and rewards to explain the relations between them and the set of values that frame them: “we are profoundly ignorant about the nature of rewards and costs-and we shall remain so until value is studied as a dependent variable” (Emerson, 1962: 349). In this sense some studies have focused on the influence of community attachment (Gursoy et al., 2002; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; Nicholas et al., 2009; Bachleitner & Zins, 1999), political views (Litvin et al., 2020), and eco-centric attitudes (Nicholas et al., 2009; Gursoy et al., 2002). The

second justification is that, considering the work of Blau (1964) in examining them, values may play an important role in the exchange system. Some exchanges happen among individuals who are related by friendship or some liaison. However, as Blau (1964:3) explains “among the majority of members of a big community or a society there is no direct social relation. There must be some other mechanism that serves as a mediator in the structure of social relations among them.” This mechanism is the consensus about values that serve as a base to extend the range of social interactions beyond direct social contact. Consensus about values is “the base to extend the range of social transactions beyond the limits of direct social contact and to perpetuate social structures beyond the life of human beings” (Blau, 1964:10). Herein lies the importance of values as they allow for exchanges to occur even in the absence of an acquaintance between the individuals involved. The question emerging in this sense is how can values affect exchanges in the direction of limiting tourism growth? Also, how we can define the limits to tourism growth in terms of values under a SET approach. Among studies focusing on values in host guest exchanges a gap was identified with regards to values and the limits to growth.

The third article delves into this aspect of SET applied to the host-guest relation. It identifies values related to the limits of tourism growth. The values of degrowth were chosen as this frame of reference explicitly proposes limiting tourism growth. Upon reviewing studies about values in resident’s perceptions of tourism impacts, no studies were found linking values to the limits to tourism growth. In fact, degrowth proposes that destinations do not reach the limits of their carrying capacity but stay at early stages of tourism development (Andriotis, 2018). Degrowth is an emerging topic in host perceptions of tourism impacts. From the economic perspective degrowth is defined as “an equitable downscaling of production and consumption that increases human wellbeing and enhances ecological conditions at the local and global level, in the short and long term” (Schneider et al., 2010: 512). It aims to right size growth and when necessary to downscale tourism activity” (Andriotis, 2018: 31).

Degrowth proposes a series of values that underpin its proposals: decreasing consumption and enhancing the value of natural resources, more conviviality and less market-mediated relations, more autonomy (Andriotis, 2018; Fournier, 2008; Latouche, 2009; Economic De-Growth For Ecological Sustainability And Social Equity Conference, 2008). Until now, research has largely ignored degrowth in order to understand the impacts of tourism development (Andriotis, 2018). The concept has only recently been introduced in tourism studies (Andriotis, 2014; Canavan, 2014; Hall, 2009). However, it has not been used to approach the host-guest relation in tourism, thus, a gap in the literature applying degrowth to tourism was identified. Values also play a central role in SET since, as it has been explained, they serve as the basis for exchange relations between strangers which is the case in most

exchanges between the host and the guest. Since values play an important role in both perspectives (degrowth and the limits of tourism growth) it was an appropriate topic to link both theories. The third article explores the occurrence of degrowth values in host's perceptions of their exchanges with tourists and their understanding of the limits to tourism growth.

The role of sociodemographic variables in perceptions of impacts literature

Most studies of tourism impact perceptions have explored the links of sociodemographic variables to perceptions (Wang & Pfister, 2008; Kayat, 2002; Williams & Lawson, 2001; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; King et al., 1993; Madrigal, 1993; Perdue et al., 1990; Husbands, 1989; Belisle & Hoy, 1980). Among these, studies applying SET have also studied the role of these variables in relation to SET (Ritchie & Inkari, 2006; Ryan & Montgomery, 1994; Getz, 1994). Accordingly, the three articles of the compendium of this thesis explore the role that a set of sociodemographic variables play in relation to their central topics. This set includes the variable of education which has been studied in impact perception studies and linked to power and understanding of tourism impacts (Wang & Pfister, 2008; Kayat, 2002; Williams & Lawson, 2001; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; King et al., 1993; Madrigal, 1993; Perdue et al., 1990; Husbands, 1989; Belisle & Hoy, 1980). Gender and age have also been studied in relation to impact perceptions and support. (Ritchie & Inkari, 2006; William & Lawson, 2001; Cheyne & Mason, 2000; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Harvey et al., 1995; Lankford & Howard, 1994; King et al., 1993; Belisle & Hoy, 1980). Finally, tourism dependence has been studied in literature as a social exchange variable because it relates to personal benefit and links with support for tourism. Most studies have confirmed the links of financial benefit to support (Muler et al., 2018; Getz, 1994). In terms of perceptions, there appear to be no differences between non-dependents and dependents regarding perceptions of positive impacts (Getz, 1994; Madrigal, 1993). There are however differences in perceptions of negative impacts (Madrigal, 1993). The inclusion of this variable allowed for the analysis of the influence of direct financial benefit on impact perceptions and the limits to tourism growth which consolidated the conjunction of both. It also allowed testing whether support for tourism and perceptions of impacts are homogenous or whether they vary intrinsically.

OBJECTIVES OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

Having reviewed the available literature on the application of SET to resident perceptions, the following research gaps were identified:

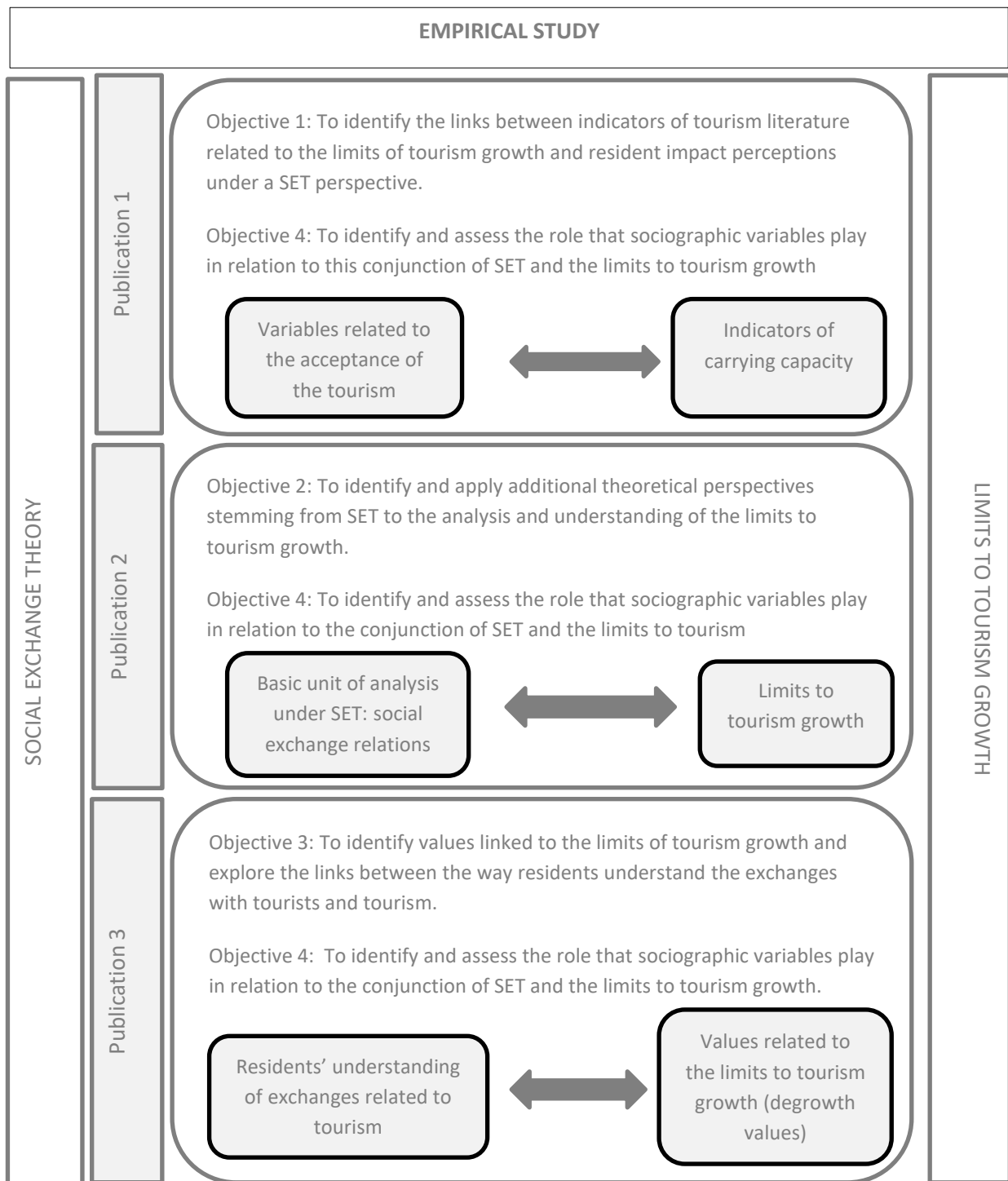
1. An assessment of impact perceptions in a SET frame of reference linking to the limits to tourism growth.
2. An assessment of social exchange relations emerging from residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and a link of this approach under SET to the limits of tourism growth.
3. An exploration of the links between residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and values related to the limits of tourism growth.

The general objective of this thesis is to approximate SET and the limits to tourism growth and to apply this combined framework to resident impact perceptions. The reason is that SET allows for the exploration of many aspects of host perceptions of tourism impacts which have not yet been attempted. Corresponding with each gap, the following objectives guided the research:

- To identify the links between indicators of tourism literature related to the limits to growth such as support for tourism and resident impact perceptions under a SET perspective.
- To identify and apply additional theoretical perspectives stemming from SET to the analysis and understanding of the limits to tourism growth
- To identify values linked to the limits of tourism growth and explore their role in the way residents understand their exchanges with tourists and tourism.
- To identify and assess the role that sociographic variables play in relation to the conjunction of SET and the limits to tourism growth.

Accordingly, the three articles develop each one of these four objectives. The first article links SCC and SET and applies both frames of references to the study area in order to define the limits to tourism growth in SET terms. The second article delves into the social exchange relation as a unit of analysis under SET and uses factor analysis to identify them. The social exchange relations are then linked to indicators of the limits to tourism growth in order to link the exchange of resources and said limits. The third article explores the role that a set of values related to the limits of tourism growth (degrowth values) plays in the way that residents understand social exchanges in tourism.

Figure 1. General methodology and links between publications and objectives



Source: Own authorship

Methodology

This thesis employs mixed methods. Mixed studies may refer to those where there is mixed data-collection based on at least two kinds of data or mixed means of collecting them (Small, 2011). The advantage of combining different types of data lies in that one type of data can compensate for the weaknesses of the other her (Brewer & Hunter 1989, 2006; Scrimshaw 1990). The choice of mixed methods responds to complementarity since the three articles complement each other in studying social carrying capacity through the lens of SET. The second publication complements the first one by adding another level of explanation to the balance of impact perceptions while the third publication, a case study, allows for the development of narrative explanations of found in all three publications. Along that line, the qualitative data which was obtained through in-depth interviews and analyzed under a phenomenological approach helped interpret the results derived from the quantitative data of the first and second publication which was obtained through a survey and analyzed using statistical methods. The first two studies are geared towards a quantitative approach and, therefore, they focus predominantly on variables whereas the third one is a case study which seeks to explain the phenomenon at hand integrally. Quantitative data and methods were adequate to juxtapose the limits to growth with SET and to identify exchange constructs while qualitative data was adequate to explore values and the role they play in the limits to tourism growth under SET. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the mixed methods used.

Table 1. Breakdown of mixed-methods used

| | Type of data | Data collection | Analysis Methods |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 1 st article | Survey | Survey administration | SPSS (ANOVA, Chi-square) |
| 2 nd article | Survey | Survey administration | SPSS (Factor Analysis) |
| 3 rd article | In-depth interview | Interviewing | Instrumental case study-analysis of content to contrast with literature themes |

Source: own authorship based on conceptual framework of Small (2011)

Two sets of primary data were used. The data is not nested meaning that the respondents in the qualitative were not chosen from within the quantitative ones. Non-nested data collection is useful in complementary research design when the purpose is to understand the totality of a group or community (Zuckerman & Sgourev 2006; Small, 2011). According to the Municipal government the population in the town center is of 420 inhabitants. The first set of data is quantitative and is based on

a survey done in 2015. This data was used for the first and second publication. The necessary sample size for a finite population of 420 inhabitants with a sampling error of $\pm 5\%$ and confidence level at 95% is 219 individuals. This first set of quantitative data was split between publication 1 and 2. Table 1 shows the items of the questionnaire that were used in each publication.

Table 2: *Questions in the survey instrument with an indication of the research article in which they were published*

| Item of questionnaire | 1st article | 2 nd article |
|--|-------------|-------------------------|
| Live + than 4 months a year in Besalú? | Included | Included |
| Do you or anybody of your household work in any of the following businesses or institutions? | Included | Included |
| To what extent do you agree with the following impacts of tourism in Besalú? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs • More money • Garbage • Noise • A more interesting and attractive town • Tourists learning | Included | Included |
| Indicate your level of satisfaction with the following areas of life in Besalú. | Excluded | Included |
| Would you like to have less, the same or more tourists coming to Besalú? | Included | Excluded |
| Age | Included | Included |
| Gender | Included | Included |
| Education | Included | Included |
| Recommendations to improve tourism in Besalú | Excluded | Excluded |

The second set of data is qualitative and was obtained by in-depth interviews done in Besalú, Spain, in 2018. The sample was chosen according to predetermined criteria following Patton (2002). The main criteria were tourism dependence and gender which were the two variables that yielded the most significant results in the first quantitative study. Interviews were done up to the point of saturation

after which no additional data are being found that may enrich the categories under study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). There are no clearly established rules about the number of interviews needed to achieve saturation because it does depend on the purpose of the study. However, literature reveals that a sample of 10-15 interviewees is acceptable in phenomenological studies. Guest et al. (2006) found that 80% of the themes in their qualitative research were revealed within the first six transcripts of their research while the additional 20% of the themes were identified in the next six transcripts. Morse (1994) recommends at least six participants for phenomenological studies and Creswell's (1998) between five and twenty-five.

Based on this literature and the themes that emerged, the in-depth interviews reached twelve participants. This data set was used for the third publication. Table 3 shows the script for these interviews. The purpose was to elicit values in residents' relations with tourists. Values here are defined as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct and end-states of existence" (Rokeach, 1968; Williams & Lawson, 2001).

The results were then analyzed taking a phenomenological approach to identify the values involved in residents' understanding of tourists. This choice was due to the objective of the study to identify the emergence of degrowth values. A phenomenological perspective was adequate because it describes the experiential, and lived existence of residents, and focuses on residents' seeing of the objects in the world and the meaning they hold (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). Accordingly, this research rests on a post-positivist paradigm which entails that values are phenomenon that can be studied with approximate objectivity while keeping critical views about their reality (Guba, 1990). Respondents are approached as "knowers" about the world (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010:1064). More specifically this part of the research explores the degree of unconscious knowledge that residents have of degrowth values; interviewees were not asked about these values literally but the questions elicited them.

Table 3: Guiding questions used in the interview

| |
|--|
| How would you describe the community in Besalú? |
| What do you think is good/bad about tourism? Why? (in general and in Besalú) |
| How would you like tourism and tourists to be? |

| |
|--|
| Do you think tourism is good or bad for the heritage and natural environment of the town? Why? |
| What do you think about the pollution coming from tourism? Do you think tourists should use less polluting vehicles and shift to, for example, bicycles? |
| How would you like it to be in terms of heritage and nature? |
| Do you like tourism? Why? |
| How do you relate with tourists? |
| Have you gotten to know any tourist? Can you please narrate the experience? |
| Would you like to have more tourists coming to Besalú? Or a different type of tourism? |

The text was analysed to identify the themes covered in the literature review and analyse them taking values, predispositions and beliefs as the unit of analysis. The literature reviews identified values: (1) related to natural resources and added value; (2) related to values related to the role of the economy; (3) related to unpaid work and conviviality; (3) against consumerism; (4) related to autonomy. The text was analysed to identify these four themes as related to tourism.

The study area

The objectives of the study made it necessary to choose a study area where most residents were aware of tourism and the exchanges and relations it might involve, and also, where the limits to tourism growth has become at least an issue. Besalú has a relatively outstanding heritage which is illustrated by the fact that it was listed in the National Inventory of Heritage of Spain since 1966. It has witnessed a gradual increase in the number of visitors compared to the resident population. The number of beds also increased from 69 hotel beds in 2002 to 120 hotel beds and 186 campsites beds in 2019 (Statistical Institute of Catalonia, 2020). The data available shows that apartment rentals have also shown an increase of 208% in this type of accommodation from 2015 to 2019 (Diputació de Girona, 2020).

The town has undergone other changes that, while not entirely related to tourism, may feed some of the dynamics that feed tourism related problems. It received substantial public investment in cultural heritage restoration and urban renewal and embellishment from 2004. In 2013, there were public hearings about financing the municipal government; part of the

issues discussed was the future of tourism in the town, and tourism-related crowding among other issues.

PUBLICATION 1

Overtourism: residents' perceptions of tourism impact as an indicator of resident social carrying capacity - case study of a Spanish heritage town

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Abstract

Purpose: This study assesses the value of impact perceptions as an indicator of social carrying capacity in the heritage town of Besalú, Spain. Additionally, it assesses the impact tourism dependence and other socio-demographic variables have on this indicator.

Design and methodology: A literature review on social exchange theory (SET) and carrying capacity related to impact perceptions is presented. The method was a survey, with a questionnaire based on the literature review and in-depth interviews. The results have been analyzed statistically to determine the links between perceptions and socio-demographic variables. Using statistical tools, perceptions are compared to three indicators that have been used to determine capacity in literature: willingness to accept more tourism, tourism pressure and the tourist function index.

Findings: The willingness of residents to enter into, and remain, in an exchange relationship is affected primarily by tourism dependence, and to a lesser extent by gender and education. Additionally, impact perceptions do not correspond to a willingness to accept more tourists. The impacts of tourism on conservation show greater consensus, while impacts on the availability of space for residents shows links to other capacity indicators.

Originality/Value: This study enhances the body of knowledge on social carrying capacity in heritage towns, by focusing on a regionally prominent day-tripper heritage town facing high tourism pressure which is Besalú. From a theoretical perspective, this study attempts to merge carrying capacity and social exchange theory (SET), thus linking sustainability to social exchange. It also highlights the importance of a gender based perspective in sustainability.

Keywords: social carrying capacity; social exchange theory; sustainable tourism; heritage towns; Besalú; Catalonia; Spain

1. Introduction

Residents play a vital role in developing sustainable tourism as they are the cultural agents and the social group in which tourism is delivered. It has been acknowledged, therefore, that since local hospitality is a key element of the tourism product, some way of “repaying” or spreading the benefits to the community needs to be found (Glasson, Godfrey, & Goodey, 1997). Residents have gained importance in the tourism equation, as their perceptions indicate tourism’s outlook regarding sustainability. Their goodwill is considered crucial to the success and sustainability of any tourism development (Bimonte & Punzo, 2016) .

This article specifically analyses the value of residents' perceptions of tourism as an indicator of social carrying capacity levels in a heritage town in Spain. Carrying capacity is multidimensional since environmental, economic, psychological and perceptual factors need to be considered, depending on the particular concerns of the stakeholders involved (Simón, Narangajavana, & Marqués, 2004). Accordingly, studies have emerged which focus on 1) environmental and biophysical carrying capacity (R. Z. Liu & Borthwick, 2011; Simón et al., 2004; Zacarias, Williams, & Newton, 2011); 2) economic carrying capacity (Sowman, 1987) and 3) social carrying capacity (Graefe & Vaske, 1987; Navarro et al., 2012). The interconnectedness between these dimensions has been consistently acknowledged in literature as well as their relevance to any comprehensive assessment of capacity (Navarro et al., 2012; Simón et al., 2004). However, the focus of this study is specifically to gain depth in social carrying capacity in a heritage town and the value of residents' impact perception in its assessment.

Regardless of its definition, social carrying capacity is generally framed as making some type of reference to residents' impact perceptions. D'Amore (1983) and Madrigal (1993) define it as the level above which there is an imbalance between the rewards and benefits of tourism for residents. Navarro (2012) uses the term "resident social carrying capacity" (as opposed to "tourist social carrying capacity"), and measures the former through residents' perceptions. Even studies that take a broader perspective of social carrying capacity use resident impact perceptions in their assessment. Glasson (1994: 144), for example, defines capacity as "the number of visitors an art city can absorb without hindrance of the other social and economic urban functions it performs." The study includes residents' impact perceptions in the assessment. On the other hand, many residents' impacts perceptions studies make reference to social carrying capacity as a theoretical basis (Glasson, 1994; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Johnson, Snepenger, & Akis, 1994; J. Liu, Sheldon, & Var, 1987; Vargas-Sánchez et al. 2011). These studies point out that negative results indicate a movement towards capacity levels (Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2011).

The aim of this article is to study residents' impact perceptions as an indicator of social carrying capacity. In order to assess its effectiveness, the tourist function index, tourism pressure and willingness to accept more tourism are valued. These three indicators have been used in previous studies to assess social carrying (J. Liu et al., 1987; Shelby & Haberlein, 1986). In this study, these indicators provide an important basis for the study of residents' impact perceptions in relation to capacity.

This study follows on from previous studies indicating that residents' perceptions are far from homogeneous, and that perceptions of tourism impacts change between segments of the population as they are influenced by many variables (K. L. Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Jurowski, Uysal, & Williams, 1997; Mason & Cheyne, 2000; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012). Therefore, a secondary aim is to study the impacts of different variables on residents' perceptions as an indicator of social carrying capacity. The sociodemographic variables examined are gender, education, and age. Taking a social exchange theory (SET) approach, four hypotheses are evaluated. The first hypothesis states that the variable willingness to accept more tourism will have values that indicate a movement towards capacity levels in the study area. The second hypothesis states that impact perceptions are linked to willingness to accept more tourism. The third hypothesis stems from a SET approach stating that residents who are employed in the tourism industry, or have close relatives employed there, welcome tourists more than those who are not. The fourth hypothesis is that employment in the tourism industry positively correlates with tourism impact perceptions. The first and second hypotheses are focused on assessing the social carrying capacity of the study, and use indicators established in literature, and also assess whether they correlate with each other. The other two hypotheses focus on the importance of employment in tourism related to social carrying capacity. These hypotheses are supported by relevant literature and theory.

The implications of this study are significant as they enhance the understanding of capacity in small heritage towns. Even though they share common themes with other types of destination, "the impact of tourism on heritage cities is "inherently place specific" (Simpson, 1999: 173). Since spatial constraints are a key issue in carrying capacity the characteristics of the study area are very relevant. Carrying capacity originated in studies of open outdoor natural spaces (R. Z. Liu & Borthwick, 2011; Simón et al., 2004; Zacarias et al., 2011). In contrast fortified colonial cities, European historic centers or Muslim medinas, tend to have narrow streets and are surrounded in many cases by ports, walls or rivers, a layout that is somewhat enclosed. Few studies have applied a method to determine carrying capacity to tourism spaces with dominant historic and heritage attractions (Garcia, De la Calle Vaquero, & Minguéz Garcia, 2011). Four such studies have been identified. Glasson et. Al. (1997) studied twenty European cities under a carrying capacity perspective and made management recommendations. The study of Glasson (1994) in the city of Oxford explored visitors' and residents' perceptions on tourism impacts in the city of Oxford, and assessed capacity. Canestrelli & Costa (1991) also determined the carrying capacity of the city of Venice using a mathematical linear programming technique. The same technique was used with success in the cities of Rhodes, Cambridge and Vis (Van Der Borg, Costa, & Gotti, 1996).

1.1. Carrying Capacity and Residents' Perceptions

According to UNWTO, carrying capacity is “the maximum number of people that may visit a tourist destination at the same time without causing destruction of the physical, economic or socio-cultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in tourist satisfaction” (1997:5). It is, thus, a turning point when tourism is no longer healthy for any given stakeholder. In the 60’s, carrying capacity was used as a theoretical approach to centre discussion on the negative impacts of tourism. This approach, however, was to be replaced by sustainable tourism as a theoretical tool (Saarinen, 2006). Some authors wonder whether this really is a replacement, as both ideas are very similar (Butler, 1999; Saarinen, 2006). Both theories are based on a threshold of tourism growth.

The literature in the field outlines that there are various conceptual bases for carrying capacity, these are social, economic and ecological (Simón et al., 2004). These bases are studied separately, or integrated in comprehensive frameworks to assess carrying capacity in general (Navarro et al., 2012; Papageorgiou & Brotherton, 1999; Shelby & Haberlein, 1986). Navarro et. al. (2012), for example, studied social carrying capacity together with 23 additional indicators in a methodology to assess carrying capacity. In carrying capacity studies, the perspective of the local community is generally measured through resident attitudes (under the name of perceptions, attitudes or opinions), or through a direct observation of their behavior in relation to tourism impacts. Thus, residents’ perceptions of impacts are taken as an important indicator of social carrying capacity. Local attitudes and the resulting levels of hospitality towards visitors have been identified as a factor shaping the attractiveness of a destination, and negative attitudes could constitute a key threshold in determining the capacity of an area to absorb tourism (Getz, 1994).

Although carrying capacity is recognized as a useful approach to manage tourism growth, it has been challenged, and its applications somewhat modified. Some authors have stated that focusing on tourism numbers may be misleading, since no specific impacts can be associated with a particular number of tourists (Glasson et al., 1997; Manning, Wang, Valliere, Lawson, & Newman, 2002; Martin, 1994). Numbers are much less important than other factors associated with the visit, such as timing, location, type of use, and visitor behavior (Lindberg, McCool, & Stankey, 1997). In response to this, alternative models have been proposed, for instance, the Limits of Acceptable Change Model (LAC) (Martin, 1994). In the LAC model, the intentions are as follows: to assess the likely impact of an activity on the destination; to agree in advance the degree of change that will be tolerated; to monitor the industry on a regular and systematic basis; and to decide what actions will be taken if these ‘quality

standards' are exceeded (Glasson, et.al, 1997:56). This shift, from visitor numbers to impacts, has its correlate in empirical research, since most studies use questionnaires phrased in terms of the impacts of tourism, instead of, or in addition to tourism numbers (K. L. Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Kathleen L. Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Boley et al., 2014; McGehee, Perdue, & Long, 2014; Glasson, 1994; Gursoy, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002). Notwithstanding these challenges, carrying capacity continues to be used as a tool in understanding the impacts of tourism in a destination.

A key perception studied in carrying capacity is the perception of crowding. Even though some authors link crowding to a negative state of mind, early works disagree that crowding is necessarily a negative state of experience (Choi, Mirjafari, & Weaver, 1976; Hall, 1994). The cognitive perception of crowding is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for the person to want to leave the place (Neuts & Nijkamp, 2012). Thus, the perception of crowding may be thought of as an attitude in which a perception of an excessive use level of tourism which may (or may not) lead to a negative state, and a change in behaviour. In their seminal work, Shelby and Haberlein (1986) used crowding perception to determine carrying capacity. Their rule is: "if more than two-thirds of the visitors say that they are crowded it is likely that the capacity has been exceeded. If less than one-third senses the overcrowding, the area is probably below the load capacity" (Shelby and Haberlein, 1986:62). Their study, however, focused on the perceptions of tourists, not residents. In 2013, Shelby & Haberlein's rule was used in another study of tourists' perceptions by Navarro et. al. who assessed carrying capacity in La Costa del Sol (Navarro, Damian, & Fernández-Morales, 2013). While more recent articles have used the rule and propose it as a viable method (Navarro et al., 2012, 2013; Vaske & Shelby, 2008), the study areas are natural areas and the type of tourism is nature-based. One study applying the rule set out by Shelby and Haberlein (1986) was found regarding residents in a heritage city context. Glasson (1994) used this to study residents' perceptions in the city of Oxford, England. The study concluded that "there is some evidence to suggest that tourism in Oxford may be near its capacity: 56% of the respondents felt that the number of tourists was too high, 41% about right, and almost no one felt it was too low" (Glasson, 1994:141).

1.2. Social Carrying Capacity and its Relationship with Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Various theoretical frameworks have been used to study residents' perceptions of tourism impacts. This study draws from both carrying capacity and SET. A combination of multiple theories and approaches is common in tourism studies, as they are not considered mutually exclusive, but rather, complementary in giving insight into the variety of factors that affect resident's attitudes towards tourism (Hernandez, Cohen, & Garcia, 1996; Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2011).

Studies of residents' attitudes to tourism have most often employed SET as their theoretical framework (K. L. Andereck & Vogt, 2000). More than simply a theoretical framework, SET is a “frame of reference that takes the movement of valued things (resources) through social process as its focus” (Emerson, 1976:359). Therefore, exchanges should be understood as a longitudinal process over time, where the unit of analysis is not the individuals, but the relationships. For example, “instead of speaking of the power of persons we speak of the power-dependence relations” (Emerson, 1976). Although SET draws much from economics, it is much broader. Social exchange theorists are fundamentally concerned with the implications of the exchange for the sociability of the group and the relations of trust, cooperation and obligation that emerge (Uehara, 1990). In the field of tourism, SET suggests that expressed support for tourism development is considered as a willingness to enter into an exchange (Ap, 1992; Jurowski et al., 1997). People select exchanges after assessing the benefits and costs (Homans, 1961). Consequently, individuals who evaluate the exchange as beneficial perceive the same impact differently to someone who evaluates the exchange as harmful (Abdollahzadeh & Sharifzadeh, 2014). Many studies do not explicitly refer to SET but use a cost-benefit approach to residents and tourism (Canestrelli & Costa, 1991; King, Pizam, & Milman, 1993). There is a concern whether the environmental and social costs of tourism development outweigh economic benefits (Krippendorf, 1982; J. Liu et al., 1987). The point where there is an imbalance between the rewards and costs indicate an approach to social carrying capacity limits.

1.3. Review of Residents’ Attitudes and Tourism Impacts

Residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts are heterogeneous. The aim of studies on resident attitudes is, generally speaking, to explore the relationship between independent variables and perceptions. Table 1 shows a list of articles on residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts, indicating which of them take a SET or a carrying capacity approach.

Table 1: *Residents’ Tourism Impacts Perceptions Studies*

| Author | Year | Social Exchange or Carrying Capacity?/Destination Type |
|-----------------------|-------------|---|
| Boley et al. | 2014 | Social Exchange, 3 counties, Virginia, USA |
| Bimonte & Faralla | 2012 | None/Follonica, Italy (coastal town) |
| Nunkoo & Gursoy | 2012 | Social Exchange Theory, Mauritius Island |
| Vargas-Sánchez et al. | 2011 | Social Exchange Theory, Carrying Capacity/Regional (Spain) |
| Ritchie & Inkari | 2006 | Social Exchange theory/Region Louise District (UK) |
| Williams & Lawson | 2001 | None/Ten Towns (New Zealand) |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|------|---|
| Mason & Cheyne | 2000 | None/Rural (New Zealand) |
| Bachleitner & Zins | 1999 | None/Region of Styria (Austria) |
| Smith & Krannich | 1998 | Social Exchange Theory/ Rural Communities Rocky Mountains (USA) |
| Haralambopolous & Pizam | 1996 | Carrying Capacity/Samos beach, Greece |
| Van der Borg, Costa & Gotti | 1996 | Carrying Capacity/Heritage Cities: Rhodes, Cambridge, and Vis |
| Harvey et al | 1995 | None/Rural USA |
| Glasson | 1994 | Carrying Capacity/Heritage City Oxford |
| Lankford & Howard | 1994 | Rural USA |
| Ryan & Montgomery | 1994 | Social Exchange/Heritage city of Bakewell |
| Getz | 1994 | Social exchange theory/ Rural Scotland |
| Johnson & Snepenger | 1994 | Carrying capacity/Rural U.S.A. |
| King, Pizam & Milman | 1993 | None/Small City, Fiji |
| Madrigal | 1993 | Social Exchange/Rural cities, Arizona (U.S.A.) |
| Canestrelli & Costa | 1991 | Carrying Capacity/Heritage City (Venice) |
| Perdue, Long & Allen | 1990 | Social Exchange Theory/5 Rural Communities, Colorado, U.S.A. |
| Husbands | 1989 | None/Livingston city (Zambia) |
| Liu, Sheldon & Var | 1987 | Carrying Capacity/ Three destinations: Wales, Hawaii and Istanbul |
| Sheldon & Var | 1984 | None/Regional, North Wales |
| Brougham & Butler | 1981 | None/Peninsula of Sleat, Scotland (U.K) |
| Belisle & Hoy | 1980 | None/Colonial Heritage City of Santa Martha, Columbia |

Regarding the relation between gender and impact perception, the study by Harvey et al. (1995) compared three rural communities in the United States, with high, moderate and low dependence on tourism. The aim was to analyze the relationship between gender and perceived impacts. Factor analysis showed no differences by gender, while individual analysis showed few differences. Women felt that tourism had a negative impact on recreational opportunities, but at the same time it also increased the options for recreation. They also felt that the community could live without tourism and they felt worse about non-residents developing tourism businesses. The authors concluded that overall the results suggested that women and men perceived tourism in much the same way. Ritchie & Inkari (2006) found that there were few significant differences in impact perception according to gender, but in the Lewes District (UK), men were less supportive of increasing tourism than women.

William & Lawson (2001) found that in small towns in New Zealand, females had more negative attitudes towards tourism than men. Also in New Zealand, Cheyne & Mayson, (2000) found that perceptions were partly gender based. Women tended to oppose the establishment of a café/bar more than men, and were more concerned about drinking and road safety. In this study, “it appeared that women were generally more opposed than men to the development on the grounds of perceived negative impacts.” (Cheyne & Mason, 2000:408). The authors suggested that differences in perception could be linked to both genders having different worldviews. In the historic city of Santa Martha, Belisle and Hoy (1980) found more concern among women regarding the “exposure to cultural differences” that tourism brings.

Several studies have focused on how age affects perceptions of tourism impacts. Williams and Lawson (2001) found that people who agreed with pro-tourism statements were wealthy, married, working and middle-aged. According to Husbands (1989), links were established between age and perceptions of tourism in Zambia in 1989, and several other studies found a relationship between age and perceptions of tourism impacts (Brougham & Butler, 1981; Perdue, Long, & Allen, 1990; Smith & Krannich, 1998). Ritchie & Inkari (2006) found some differences in attitude that could be linked to age, even though other variables, such as income showed a greater significance King. Pizam & Milman (1993) found that residents in the age group 51 to 61 had a more positive opinion of tourism than those in the age group 20 to 39. In their analysis, they linked this to the fact that the study area, the island of Samos, is a mass tourism destination. In historic cities, Ryan & Montgomery (1994) and Belisle & Hoy (1980) revealed no significant difference stemming from age. Davis et al. (1988) also revealed no difference related to age.

Regarding education, Kayat (2002) operationalized power through education to explore the its influence on perceptions of impacts. The assumption was that perceptions of power can generate positive perceptions of tourism impacts for two reasons: respondents either feel disempowered, and therefore support tourism because they feel weak and dependent on it; or, to the contrary, they feel empowered by tourism and, thus, can reap the benefits of it. Haralambopoulous and Pizam (1996) also studied the relationship between educational level and perception in Samos, Greece. They found that the higher educated residents’ were, the more positive were their perceptions of impacts. In the city of Livingston, Husbands (1989) found that education emerged as the most important variable associated with perceptions of tourism, since it was closely linked to employment in the tourism industry.

Residents in the heritage town of Besalú have shown certain discomfort related to tourism. In December 2013, the municipal government halted tourism-related business permits pending a local participatory process to define future tourism growth. A consultancy firm assessed the situation in the city after collecting the citizens' views through focus groups. The results of the process show strong concern regarding space in the town's streets, visitor information, parking spaces and shops. In an attempt to de-seasonalize tourism, the city already offers several festivals of regional importance during the year. The location of this heritage town might exacerbate tourism impacts, given that it is located close to La Costa Brava. This is a sun and beach area, and a relatively important tourism destination in Spain, with 17,439 overnight stays in 2014 (IDESCAT, 2015).

Residents' attitudes towards tourism in heritage cities can vary according to the type of development undertaken in their city, and whether it is a day-tripper, short-stay or long-stay center (Murphy, 1981). There are two indicators used in this study to show capacity in relation to the development of tourism: the tourism intensity, and the tourist function index. Tourism intensity is the visitor to resident ratio. This has been used to reveal pressure from tourism by comparing the coefficient among cities. "It is thus possible to perceive how the different cities bear varying dimensions of visitors impact" (Van Der Borg et al., 1996). The tourism intensity also relates to carrying capacity, as residents' perceptions of tourism are a function of this tourist-resident ratio. As the ratio increases, perceptions tend to become more negative, as does understanding the need to enhance the physical environment (J. Liu et al., 1987). In the case of Besalú, the tourism intensity for the town center is 164 tourists per local inhabitant, whereas it is 40 for the whole town. In a comparison, Van der Borg, Costa & Gotti (1996) found that the city with the highest tourism pressure was Venice, with an intensity of 89 visitors per local, followed by Salzburg, which had 36.

The tourist function index (ratio of tourism beds to residents) explains residents' attitudes to tourism by relating it to the level of tourism development (Vargas-Sánchez et.al. 2011). The tourist function index is .001 for Besalú (.001 beds per inhabitant), which is comparatively low. In their study on Florence, Van der Borg, Costa and Gotti (1996) observe that the highest tourist function index was 15 beds per inhabitant in Florence. These indicators suggest that the heritage town of Besalú is closer to a day-tripper destination, as it has a high level of tourism intensity, but comes very low in the tourist function index. The results of these two indicators are used to validate the value of impact perceptions in relation to social carrying capacity. Therefore the first hypothesis is the following:

H1. *The willingness to accept more tourism variable will confirm the results of the indicators of tourism function index, and the tourism intensity, suggesting arrival at social capacity levels.*

If impact perceptions can serve as an indicator of social carrying capacity, it is expected that positive impact perceptions positively correlate with willingness to accept more tourists. The literature revision does not yield many studies under this hypothesis, since most studies refer to tourism development and not willingness to accept more tourism, or more similar indicators. Regarding tourism development, King, Pizam and Milman (1993) found that there was a correlation between perceptions and the overall opinion regarding tourism. However, feelings about the volume of tourists were not included in this overall opinion, as they did not correlate with the overall opinion of the tourism industry. Anderect & Vogt (2000) found that residents' perceptions of community benefits show a direct and positive link to supporting tourism development. The second hypothesis is as follows:

H2. *Residents' impact perceptions relate to willingness to accept more tourism.*

Taking a social exchange approach to the residents' relationship with tourism, employment in the tourism industry emerges as an important variable. Many tourism destinations place primary emphasis on employment as a pre-condition for the acceptance of tourism by residents. Attention must be paid to the variables used. Many studies refer to personal dependence and perceived personal dependence, which are different from employment (the variable used here). Likewise, most studies refer to tourism development, which includes willingness to accept more tourists. Studies referring specifically to employment and increased tourism numbers include Ritchi & Inkari (2006), whose study did not confirm any significant results specifically relating this variable to increased tourism numbers. Also, Harambopoulos and Pizam (1996) found that those who were employed in tourism supported more arrivals and further development. In contrast, Teye, Sirakaya, & Sonmez (2002) considered that the deplorable working conditions of those employed in tourism explained the negative attitude towards it and industries related to it.

In terms of tourism dependence and tourism development, many studies confirm that personal benefits and perceived personal benefits from tourism development are positively related to an attitude which favors additional tourism development (Lankford & Howard, 1994; Perdue et al., 1990; Pizam, 1978; Ryan & Montgomery, 1994; Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2011). The third hypothesis is as follows:

H3. *Residents who are employed in the tourism industry, or have close relatives employed there, welcome tourists more than those who are not.*

Glasson (1994) studied residents' perceptions in the heritage city of Oxford, and found that perceptions of the advantages of tourism were more favorable for those who worked, or had a family member working in tourism-related jobs. Other studies have also confirmed this hypothesis (Ritchie & Inkari, 2006; Gursoy et al., 2002; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Perdue et al., 1990; Williams & Lawson, 2001). Mikko & Inkari (2006) found better perceptions of impacts, but only with residents employed in the cultural or creative sector, not in tourism. Again, the distinction is made between employment and personal benefits, or perceived personal benefits. Other studies have focused on the latter. For example, Andereck & Nyaupane (2011) found that employment was the strongest predictor of perceived personal benefit, while personal benefit positively correlated with the perception that tourism can play a more important economic role. Some studies have confirmed that residents who personally benefit from tourism perceive negative impacts less (Getz, 1994). This, however, has not been confirmed in other studies (Ritchie & Inkari, 2006; King et al., 1993; Sheldon, Var, & Var, 1984; Williams & Lawson, 2001). In these studies, there appears to be no difference between the assessment of negative impacts between the two groups. Liu, Sheldon & Var (1987) concluded that since tourism was at the forefront of public discussion and media, general knowledge of the negative impacts had grown.

In the same way that relationship between employment in tourism and a better perception of impacts has been explored, so has the relationship between non-employment and a worse perception. Some studies confirm that residents who are not employed in tourism still have positive impact perceptions of tourism (Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Ryan & Montgomery, 1994). Ryan and Montgomery (1994) found that there was no relationship between personal benefits from tourism and positive perceptions of tourism impacts in the city of Bakewell, as respondents not employed in the industry still appreciated the economic benefits. Taking a social exchange approach, they suggested that the appreciation of economic benefits by non-dependents was based on perceived intangible economic return. The authors also questioned the rationality principle of social exchange based on self-interest, since respondents were concerned with impacts on the general public, such as property prices for the younger generation. Finally the fourth hypothesis is described as:

H4. *Employment in the tourism industry positively correlates with tourism impact perceptions.*

1.4. Method and Data Collection

The hypotheses were tested using a questionnaire which was administered in the heritage town of Besalú in Catalonia, Spain (see map 1). Besalú has a population of 2,406 inhabitants and several

relatively important national monuments. It has been listed as an ensemble in the national inventory of heritage of Spain since 1966, and also contains several monuments individually listed: the Churches of San Pedro, San Vicente and Santa Maria; Besalú bridge; Besalú castle, and the city walls. Besalú also has one of the most important ensembles of Jewish monumental heritage in Spain, as it was the home to a well-established and relatively powerful Jewish community for almost five centuries. It is part of the network of Jewish heritage sites in Spain, and has a 12th century *micvé* and the remains of a 13th century synagogue. This predominantly Jewish heritage attracted 105,617 visitors to the town in 2015, as recorded by the tourist information office. The first three source countries were France, Russia and Israel.

Figure 1. *Location of the study site (map of Spain)*



To determine the sample size, the universe was the adult population (over 18) of the town centre. The necessary sample size for a finite population of 420 inhabitants with a sampling error of $\pm 5\%$ and confidence level at 95% is 219 individuals. Data collection was carried out between June 2015 and January 2016 through a survey conducted by interviewers in the streets of the town. Since the old centre of Besalú is small, it was possible to distribute the survey in the 14 streets and three squares at different times over a period of eight months. Using a map, the streets where surveys were carried out were rotated to cover all streets each survey day while the days of the week were changed to cover every week day from Monday to Sunday. Respondents were chosen from every four pedestrians. Then, with the aid of a map, they were first asked whether they lived in the town centre of Besalú for more than four months a year. If the answer was affirmative, the interview was conducted; if not, the next pedestrian was approached.

Concerning the sample profile, 47.5% of the sample were women, and 49.3% were men; a distribution similar to that of the town itself, which is made up of 53% women and 47% men (IDESCAT, 2015). The age distribution was as follows: 19-29 years (15.6%); 30-39 years (22.5%), 40-49 years (22%); 50-59 years (20.6%), and 60 or over (19.3%). Regarding length of residence, the highest percentage of respondents had been living in Besalú for more than 20 years (69.3%), while the rest 0-5 years (10.6%), 6-10 years (5%); 11-15 years (7.3%); 16-20 years (7.8%) and 20 years or more (69.3%). Regarding educational level, the highest proportion had primary education (46.3%), followed by university degree (25%) associate degree (17.6%), high school or secondary education (7.4%) and none (3.7%). A total of 76.7 % of respondents did not work in tourism, nor did they have any relatives working in the tourism industry, while 23.3 % did.

1.5. Questionnaire and Method

The questionnaire was designed to cover the relevant impacts of tourism. The answers were on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree”(5). The questions in the survey were developed from previous studies using similar instruments (Belisle & Hoy, 1980; Getz, 1994; Glasson, 1994; Glasson et al., 1997). The questionnaire included the employment in tourism variable, and sociodemographic variables (age, gender, education). The respondents were also asked about their willingness to accept a higher number of tourists. Five in-depth interviews were conducted between January and March 2015. Interviewees included residents, business owners, and personnel from the Town Council and Tourist Office in order to focus on relevant local issues.

The first stage in analyzing the data collected in the survey was to create an index of consensus to establish unanimity, or lack thereof, on perceptions of impacts. This was done following the steps developed by Getz (1994): complete consensus in disagreement or agreement is indicated by a value of 1.0. Contingency tables were then drawn up, relating first the independent variables, employment in tourism and socio-demographic variables, to impact perceptions and willingness to accept more tourists. The link between impact perceptions and willingness to accept more tourism were also analyzed, using ANOVA to measure the value of impact perceptions as an indicator of capacity. Chi square tests were performed to study the relationship between the variables in terms of their correlation with impact perceptions and willingness to accept more tourists. These tests revealed the power of "employment in tourism" (SET variable), when compared with the other socio-demographic variables (categorical variables). Chi-square tests were performed to study the relationship between those categorical variables, especially the impact perceptions and the willingness to accept more tourists; and the relationship between employment in tourism (SET) with the other socio-demographic

variables. The link between impact perceptions (quantitative variable) and willingness to accept more tourism (categorical variable) were analyzed using analysis of variance (Anova test) to establish the utility of impact perceptions as an indicator of capacity.

2. Results

Table 2 shows the results of the index of consensus. The statements with greatest consensus disagree on the negative impacts: “there is a higher crime rate because of tourism” and “tourism-related noise makes life in the town less pleasant” (index=.85). The third highest consensus agrees with the statement that shops are for tourists, which a priori, is considered negative for tourism (index=.74). The fourth highest consensus is a tie between two positive statements (that “tourism brings jobs and this is more important than the nuisances it brings” and that “thanks to tourism the cultural heritage is better preserved”). Both statements had an index of .63. The statement in the fifth position is also positive: “tourism brings more money than any other industry” (index=.58) The sixth position agrees with a negative statement: “that tourism brings higher prices” (index=.53). The greatest consensus is on negative impacts while consensus on positive impacts is lower. In general, the results show that residents do perceive both negative and positive impacts, and that there is a general view that tourism is not to blame for negative aspects of life in the town.

Table 2: *Consensus Index of Perceptions of Tourism Impacts*

| Items | Positive/Negative | Index |
|---|-------------------|-------|
| Because of tourism there is more crime in the town centre | - | .85 |
| Tourism related noise makes life in the town less pleasant | - | .74 |
| Shops in the town are for tourists | - | .64 |
| Tourism brings money and jobs, and that is more important than any inconvenience it might bring | + | .63 |
| Because of tourism, heritage here is better cared for | + | .63 |
| Tourism brings more money to Besalú than any other industry | + | .58 |
| Prices are higher in Besalú because of tourism | - | .53 |
| Tourists really learn and get to know the heritage of Besalú | + | .45 |
| The fact that tourists from different nationalities come to Besalú makes it more interesting and attractive | + | .41 |
| We have more leisure facilities because of tourism | + | .31 |
| Tourists get in the way of residents in the town | - | .22 |
| Tourists litter Besalú | - | .12 |

i= Index value out of 1.00

Table 3 shows p-values disconfirming the hypothesis that employment in tourism is related to impact perceptions. In contrast, employment in tourism does affect the willingness to accept more tourists, as Table 4 shows. Respondents working in tourism had a greater willingness to accept more tourists, as 33.3% of them wanted more tourists, compared to 16.2% of the total number of respondents. 82.9% of those not working in tourism wanted tourist numbers to remain the same, compared to 78.2% of the total number of respondents. 61.5% of respondents employed in tourism wanted tourism numbers to stay the same. This shows a tendency for those not employed to want tourism numbers to stay the same. There is a slight tendency for those not employed to want fewer tourists (5.7%) as opposed to 5.8% of the total sample. This tendency is not observed in residents employed in tourism, since 5.1% wanted fewer, as opposed to 5.8% of the total sample.

Table 3: *Results Relating Employment in Tourism to Perceptions of Impacts*

| Item | Tourism Dependent | Tourism no dependent | p-value |
|---|----------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| Tourism brings more money than any other industry | 3.81 | 3.82 | .988 |
| Tourism brings money and jobs; this is more important than any inconvenience it might bring | 3.80 | 3.91 | .497 |
| Small shops are for tourists | 2.17 | 2.07 | .535 |
| Prices are high because of tourism | 2.90 | 2.61 | .251 |
| Tourists litter Besalú | 3.71 | 3.79 | .758 |
| Tourists get in our way in the town | 3.02 | 2.97 | .862 |
| Thanks to tourism we have more leisure facilities | 3.59 | 3.36 | .205 |
| Tourists really learn about the town when they visit us | 3.55 | 3.67 | .425 |
| Thanks to tourism our heritage is better cared for | 4.17 | 4.01 | .311 |
| Because of tourism there is more crime | 4.87 | 4.77 | .456 |
| Because of tourism the town is more interesting | 3.56 | 3.68 | .476 |
| Tourism-related noise makes life in the town less pleasant | 3.98 | 4.21 | .118 |

The results in Tables 3 and 4 suggest that perceptions of impacts do not correlate with social carrying capacity. Even though the consensus index shows that residents perceive both negative and positive impacts, 83.8% of respondents state that either the number of tourists is good, or that they want fewer tourists. Additionally, the results show that employment in tourism may affect impact perceptions.

Table 4. Contingency Table Relating Employment in Tourism and Willingness to Accept More Tourists

| | Number of tourists | | | | X ² | V Cramer | p-value |
|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|-------|-------|----------------|-------------|---------|
| | More | Current number is good | Fewer | Total | | | |
| Non-Tourism Dependent | 11.4% | 82.9% | 5.7% | 100% | 10.825 | .246 | .004 |
| Tourism Dependent | 33.3% | 61.5% | 5.1% | 100% | | | |
| | 16.2% | 78.2% | 5.6% | 100% | | | |

Table 5 shows contingency tables which cross willingness to accept more tourists with gender, education and age. It demonstrates that women are more willing to accept a higher number of tourists than men. It should be noted that women are also more frequently employed in the tourism industry, thus raising the question: which of these two variables helps explain willingness for more tourism better? In terms of education, respondents holding an associate degree are more willing to accept a higher number of tourists. Regarding age, the 50 to 59 age bracket shows a greater tendency to want tourist numbers to remain the same. Those aged between 40 and 49 show a tendency to want more tourists. The 30 to 39 bracket shows a tendency to want fewer tourists, and ages 19 to 29 want tourist numbers to remain the same.

Table 5: Contingency Tables Crossing Willingness to Accept more Tourists with Gender, Education and Age

| | Number of Tourists | | | | X ² | V Cramer | p-value |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|----------------|-------------|---------|
| | More | Current # is good | Fewer | Total | | | |
| Women | 21.2% | 76.5% | 2.4% | 100% | 6.062 | .187 | .048 |
| Men | 11.2% | 79.8% | 9.0% | 100% | | | |
| Total | 16.1% | 78.2% | 5.7% | 100% | | | |
| Primary school | 15.7% | 77.5% | 6.7% | 100% | .314 | 0.030 | .989 |
| High School and Associate Degree | 16.7% | 78.6% | 4.8% | 100% | | | |
| University Degree | 17.1% | 78.0% | 4.9% | 100% | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|--|-------|-------|-------|------|--------|------|------|
| Total | | 15.8% | 78.5% | 5.6% | 100% | | | |
| 19-29 years old | | 16.7% | 3.3% | 80.0% | 100% | 13.484 | .194 | .096 |
| 30-39 years old | | 10.5% | 15.8% | 73.7% | 100% | | | |
| 40-49 years old | | 24.4% | 0% | 75.6% | 100% | | | |
| 50-59 years old | | 11.4% | 2.9% | 85.7% | 100% | | | |
| 60 and more | | 17.1% | 5.7% | 77.1% | 100% | | | |
| Total | | 16.2% | 5.6% | 78.2% | 100% | | | |

The results of the Chi-square (χ^2) tests are also shown in Table 5. Employment in tourism was most highly associated with willingness to accept more tourists, followed by gender and then age. Education was the least associated variable. These results confirm the high explanatory power of employment in tourism on willingness to accept more tourists supporting a SET approach. They also validate the influence of socio-demographic variables, mainly gender.

Table 6 shows results of an ANOVA test, which was carried out to relate residents' impact perceptions to their willingness to accept more tourism. Among the impact perceptions, are the claims that tourists get in the way of residents, and that prices are higher in Besalú due to tourism. These are the only two perceptions with p-values $<.05$, and thus, the only perceptions to demonstrate a relationship with a capacity indicator such as willingness to accept tourism in Besalú.

Table 6: Results Relating Impact Perceptions and Willingness to Accept more Tourism

| Item | More tourism | Current # is good | Fewer Tourism | p-value |
|---|--------------|-------------------|---------------|---------|
| Tourism brings more money than any other industry | 3.79 | 3.82 | 4.00 | .809 |
| Tourism brings money and jobs; this is more important than any inconvenience it might bring | 3.89 | 3.99 | 3.56 | .368 |
| Small shops are for tourists | 2.24 | 1.99 | 2.00 | .390 |
| Prices are high because of tourism | 3.15 | 2.26 | 2.33 | .004 |
| Tourists litter Besalú | 3.30 | 3.16 | 3.13 | .848 |
| Tourists get in our way in the town | 3.35 | 2.44 | 2.40 | .001 |
| Thanks to tourism we have more leisure facilities | 3.57 | 3.32 | 3.05 | .512 |
| Tourists really learn about the town when they visit us | 3.72 | 3.71 | 3.38 | .529 |

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| Thanks to tourism our heritage is better cared for | 4.19 | 4.05 | 3.33 | .093 |
| Because of tourism there is more crime | 4.65 | 4.64 | 4.71 | .942 |
| Because of tourism the town is more interesting | 3.73 | 3.60 | 3.30 | .504 |
| Tourism-related noise makes life in the town less pleasant | 3.90 | 4.19 | 4.50 | .136 |

Impacts of Variables on Perceptions

Analysis of variance relating education to perceptions of tourism impacts are shown in Table 7. 95% of unschooled respondents tended to agree that “tourism brings more leisure facilities”. This figure was followed by those with a university degree. The other educational levels were closer to uncertainty, except for high school graduates, who were closer to disagreeing. The same result was found regarding the statement “noise resulting from tourism makes life in the town less pleasant”: unschooled respondents tended to disagree more (95% confidence), followed by respondents with university studies. Also, unschooled respondents tended to believe that tourists got in their way. Regarding the statement “prices are higher in Besalú because of tourism” the result was the opposite: unschooled respondents had the highest level of agreement (95% confidence). This was followed by those with primary education and respondents holding university degrees.

Table 7. Results Relating Education to Perception of Impacts

| | Primary School | High School | Associate Degree | University Degree | No Formal education | p-value |
|--|----------------|-------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------|
| Tourism brings more money than any other industry | 3.82 | 3.92 | 3.53 | 3.94 | 4.00 | .285 |
| Tourism brings money and jobs and this is more important than any inconvenience it may cause | 3.91 | 4.00 | 3.59 | 4.02 | 3.88 | .303 |
| Small shops here are for tourists | 1.99 | 2.06 | 2.16 | 2.02 | 1.50 | .471 |
| Prices are higher here due to tourism | 2.27 | 2.54 | 3.00 | 2.42 | 1.14 | .002 |
| Tourists litter Besalú | 3.21 | 3.31 | 3.20 | 3.17 | 2.40 | .617 |
| Tourists get in my way | 2.62 | 2.31 | 2.87 | 2.59 | 1.29 | .024 |
| Tourism brings more leisure facilities | 3.49 | 2.57 | 3.32 | 3.59 | 3.67 | .033 |
| Tourists really learn about Besalú when they come here | 3.66 | 3.62 | 3.54 | 3.64 | 3.83 | .943 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Thanks to tourism heritage is better preserved | 4.04 | 4.27 | 3.91 | 4.12 | 4.00 | .748 |
| Because of tourism there is more crime here | 4.64 | 4.64 | 4.53 | 4.62 | 4.71 | .863 |
| Tourism makes this town more interesting and diverse | 3.58 | 3.62 | 3.83 | 3.68 | 3.25 | .582 |
| Tourism related noise makes life in the town less pleasurable | 4.20 | 3.87 | 3.81 | 4.25 | 4.75 | .022 |

Regarding gender results, Table 8 shows significant differences. With a degree of confidence of 95%, gender was related to the perception that prices are higher because of tourism. Men agreed more to this. With a degree of confidence of 90% the statement that “tourism brings money and jobs and this is more important than any nuisance it might bring” generated agreement from men. Regarding the statement that “noise makes life less pleasurable in the town centre”, men also disagreed more.

Table 8. *Results relating Gender to Perception of Impacts*

| | Male | Female | p-value |
|---|------|--------|---------|
| Tourism brings more money than any other industry | 3.86 | 3.74 | .340 |
| Tourism brings money and Jobs and this is more important than any nuisance it may cause | 3.97 | 3.74 | .079 |
| Small shops here are for tourists | 1.91 | 2.13 | .327 |
| Prices are higher here due to tourism | 2.18 | 2.65 | .008 |
| Tourists litter Besalú | 3.25 | 3.12 | .425 |
| Tourists get in my way | 2.54 | 2.64 | .600 |
| Tourism brings more leisurely facilities | 3.50 | 3.35 | .355 |
| Tourists really learn about Besalú when they come here | 3.69 | 3.65 | .744 |
| Thanks to tourism heritage is better preserved | 4.08 | 4.01 | .606 |
| Because of tourism there is more crime here | 4.62 | 4.60 | .773 |
| Tourism makes this town more interesting and diverse | 3.61 | 3.68 | .634 |
| Tourism related noise makes life in the town less pleasurable | 4.23 | 4.02 | .093 |

3. Conclusions & Discussion

The main hypothesis in this paper is that, by applying Shelby and Haberlein’s (1986) rule, an analysis of the variable of willingness to accept more tourism confirms an approximation to the limits of capacity, as is revealed by the other two indicators (tourism intensity and the tourist function index).

Applying the rule, hypothesis 1 is confirmed. 5.7 % of the respondents stated that they wanted fewer tourists; and 82.9% stated that the current level is “good”. The total of these two categories (an overwhelming 88.6%), somehow disagree with an increase in numbers, which suggests that they do sense overcrowding, and that an increase in tourism could be negative for them. Even though the highest percentage of respondents do not want more tourists, this has not yet led to a general, negative perception of tourism impacts, as the consensus index shows. In terms of the economy, there is a strong appreciation of both positive and negative impacts. Impacts on conservation are also strongly appreciated, while there is uncertainty about other impacts. If more tourists were to come, it is not clear whether the residents would have a worse perception of tourism impacts, since some research suggests that residents find ways to accommodate and cope with the negative impacts (Getz, 1994; Rothman, 1978). Also, there is disagreement that crowding is a strictly negative experience (Choi et al., 1976). A lack of willingness to accept more tourism does not necessarily correspond with negative perceptions of tourism impacts. This result raises questions about the usefulness of perceptions of impacts as an indicator of capacity, as there is a split between perceptions of impacts and willingness to accept more tourism. Taking a social exchange perspective, it can be said that residents in the study area perceive certain benefits and costs, mainly the economic and conservation ones, while other benefits and costs are perceived in an uncertain manner. SET is about willingness to enter into exchange relations with tourists (Ap, 1992; Jurowski et al., 1997). It can be said that this willingness is present in the resident community of Besalú, but there is little willingness to take the exchange a step further. Therefore, the conditions affecting willingness need to be explored. The results of this study focus on the socio-demographic variables that could affect willingness, but there are other objective variables that can affect it, such as the type of tourism and traveller. As stated in the literature review, limits of carrying capacity not only refer to numbers, but also to other tourism conditions such as tourist type (Martin, 1994).

The economic aspects generated greater consensus: residents held a clearer and more unanimous position regarding these statements than others. This finding aligns with that of Ritchie & Inkari (2006) and Vargas-Sánchez et.al. (2011) in that economic benefits are perceived more than any other benefits. Belisle and Hoy (1980) also found that respondents in Santa Marta perceived that tourism created employment. Other statements with high levels of consensus disagree with negative impacts. This finding was also confirmed in Hawaii, Istanbul and North Wales where “respondents tend not to blame tourism for adverse social and environmental impacts” (Liu et al., 1987). Apart from the economic impacts, the positive impact of tourism on heritage preservation also generated a high level of consensus. It is worth mentioning that the statement “tourism makes the town more interesting and attractive” generated a low level of consensus. In contrast, in Santa Marta, close to 50% of respondents

in Belisle & Hoy's study (1980) agreed that tourism gave them the opportunity to live, speak and think differently. The statements are not identical, but they both explore how residents see the cultural opportunities that tourism can bring. The difference could be place specific, however, as Colombians might be more open to interacting with tourists than Catalans.

The second hypothesis, that impact perceptions relate to willingness to accept tourism, was confirmed regarding only two perceptions: that tourists get in the way of residents and that prices are higher due to tourism. The first perception is related to lack of space in areas shared with tourists, and is a characteristic impact of tourism in heritage town centers. It is also worth noting that it emerges as one of the perceptions associated with a capacity indicator. Residents who want more tourism tend to agree less on this being an impact, while residents who want less tourism tend to agree it is an impact.

The third hypothesis is that residents who are employed in the tourism industry, or have close relatives employed there, are more willing to accept more tourists than those who are not. This hypothesis was confirmed following the findings of other studies where support for additional tourism development was positively related to personal benefits (Getz, 1994; Long, Perdue, & Allen, 1990). Respondents who are not employed in tourism showed less willingness to accept more tourists. Overall, these findings would suggest that "residents weigh the benefits and costs through some informal cost-benefit analysis similar to that proposed by social exchange theory" (Ritchie & Inkari, 2006:38). However, there are also intangible returns and wider social benefits, as opposed to individual ones, which may override in-existent individual benefits in the case of residents who are not employed in tourism (Ryan & Montgomery, 1994). If these wider social benefits are taken as a potential explanation for willingness to accept tourism, we would need to focus on how these extended social benefits lead to a lower willingness to accept more tourists. Social exchange theory may serve as a theoretical framework to explain the results. While the tourism dependent population is prepared to endure costs in order to maximize benefits, the non-tourism dependent population will try to keep the carrying capacity at a level that does not compel it to bear unwanted costs (Canestrelli & Costa, 1991). The results of this study suggest a combination of self-interests and community interests as the rationale for resident's perceptions, for example, better leisure facilities or heritage conservation. The results also suggest that wider social interests are not enough to make respondents willing to endure costs. Indeed, the statements in the questionnaire all focused on community benefits, thus indicating that residents do perceive these general benefits.

The fourth hypothesis states that residents who are employed in the industry, or have close relatives employed there, perceive the positive impacts of tourism more and the negative impacts less than those who are not. This was not confirmed following the findings of Liu, Sheldon & Var (1987) in Hawaii, Istanbul and North Wales and also those of Ryan & Montgomery (1994) in the heritage city of Bakewell. Residents who work in tourism also perceive some of the negative impacts of tourism such as higher prices, that shops are for tourists and that tourists get in the way of residents. Those who do not work in tourism also perceive some positive impacts such as jobs and money, facilities, that tourists learn heritage preservation and that the city is more interesting and attractive because of tourism. Since employment in tourism is a variable that fits with SET, these results indicate that impact perceptions might escape the exchange context. An explanation can be the prevailing knowledge in Catalan society of tourism and its impacts (Liu, Sheldon & Var, 1986). However, education, another variable that also fits into a social exchange approach, did show meaningful impacts on perceptions. The results of this study show that respondents with both the highest and the lowest educational levels had a better perception of some tourism impacts, for instance, noise and leisure facilities. Unschooled respondents, on the other hand, had the worst perception of high prices related to tourism. This result could support both interpretations of the relation between power (operationalized partly through education) and impact perceptions emerging from the literature review (Ap, 1992; Kayat, 2002). Unschooled respondents might feel more tourism dependent, while those who have a university education feel that education gives them the power to reap greater benefits from the industry.

Regarding the impact of sociodemographic variables on impact perception, the results of our study confirm the link between gender and willingness to accept more tourists. Taking a place specific perspective, women in the Lewes District (UK) were more supportive of an increase in tourism numbers than men (Ritchie & Inkari, 2006). However, two studies in small towns in New Zealand found that women did not support an increase in tourism (Mason & Cheyne, 2000; Williams & Lawson, 2001). In their study, Cheyne & Mason (2000) suggested that this difference might be due to different worldviews which are strongly culturally oriented. The results in Besalú confirm that, more than gender, employment in tourism is linked to a willingness to accept a higher number of tourists. This result supports a SET approach to willingness to accept more tourists. Gender, however, emerges as the second variable, and has the most significant link to willingness to accept more tourists, thus confirming the findings in the Lewes district. Harvey et. al (1995) found similar results in rural towns in the US: although women perceived some tourism impacts differently, they were perceived in the same way overall. This study, however, had no questions regarding a willingness to accept more tourism. The conclusions questioned why women, regardless of being employed in tourism more than men,

perceive tourism impacts in a very similar way to men. The authors ask: “Is there a problem with the survey questions - are they too global and general to differentiate more subtle gender-based differences in response to tourism development?” (Harvey, et. al 1995: 363). Perhaps they failed to uncover any difference because the focus was on impact perceptions alone. The findings in our study indicate that when questions on willingness to accept more tourism are posed, differences between genders emerge. Some studies show that job opportunities in tourism has led to greater independence and social opportunities for women (Harvey, Hunt, & Harris, 1995; Reynoso y Valle & DeRegt, 1979).

In order to further the growth and development of tourism in Besalú, tourism managers could benefit from a deeper understanding of residents’ perceptions of tourism. SET still holds an explanatory value, thus tourism can be understood as an exchange relationship, even though impact perceptions, per se, may not be a valid indicator of the circumstances of the exchange. The conditions affecting the willingness of residents to enter into, and remain in this relationship, could be a criterion for choosing future development options for tourism; however, a more detailed understanding is needed. For example, the involvement of women and men in tourism could be guided by a gender based understanding of the issues making tourism more authentic, as this would lead to a more personalized experience for both residents and tourists.

4. Future studies

Three future lines of research emerge from the results of this study. The first refers to social carrying capacity in heritage towns and cities. This study has identified the impact of tourism on availability of space as a perception that links with other another indicator of capacity (willingness to accept more tourists). Additionally, the perception of positive impacts on heritage conservation generated a relatively high consensus. Future studies could focus on the importance of heritage conservation, in residents’ assessment of the tourism exchange. While a specific methodology for the assessment of carrying capacity in coastal areas is well under way (Navarro et al., 2012), the body of knowledge related to carrying capacity in heritage cities is much less developed. This methodology could be further developed to incorporate the findings of this study which relate to heritage conservation and space. A second impulse for future work could take a gender-based perspective of social carrying capacity. We have seen that gender is linked to a willingness to accept more tourists, and that studies in New Zealand show that women support tourism development less than men, whereas studies in Besalú and the UK show that women support tourism more than men. A comparative study of local cultural elements that might influence perceptions of tourism by gender could be carried out, and as Cheyne and Mason (2000) suggested, “different world views” might explain why women have different

perceptions of future tourism development. A third future line of research relates to employment in the tourist industry. Regardless of their perceptions of the general benefits tourism brings, residents not employed in tourism were less willing to accept an increase in tourism. This suggests that the influence of personal benefits on people's willingness to accept tourism is greater than the influence of extended social benefits.

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PUBLICATION 2

RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TOURISM SOCIAL EXCHANGE RELATIONS IN HERITAGE TOWNS

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Keywords: social exchange theory; social exchange relations; heritage towns; residents; perceptions

Purpose: Studies of residents' perceptions of tourism impacts have focused on the costs and rewards of tourism in a one-sided manner. The purpose of this study is to study these perceptions taking social exchange relations, which are dyadic, as the unit of analysis. Social exchange relations offer a more accurate understanding of tourism exchanges as they pair costs with rewards.

Methodology: The literature review covered previous studies of resident impact perceptions in which exchange relations had been suggested. Based on this review, a survey was carried out with the residents of Besalú.

Results: The results identify four social exchange relations. This study reveals that perceptions about exchanges that specifically involve the resources of space and retailing areas are linked to the willingness of residents to accept tourism.

Research limitations: The constructs are newly developed items; therefore, the factor loadings are somehow lower than for established items.

Value: The results are relevant for heritage towns as they show that residents strongly perceive tourism as a contribution to heritage conservation and that, although tourism brings inconveniences, these are outstripped by the benefit of heritage conservation. The results also show that the exchanges involving space, which is a scarce resource in heritage town centres, are linked to residents' willingness to accept tourism.

PAPER UNDER REVIEW. EMGARGO UNTIL PUBLICATION DATE

PUBLICATION 3

How do degrowth values in tourism influence the host-guest exchange? An exploratory analysis in small towns in the rurality

Abstract

From a social perspective, the literature predominantly explains degrowth as a transition of values from market mediated ones towards increased conviviality and less consumption. This exploratory research is based on a case study in the small town of Besalú in Spain which is located between Barcelona and the coastal area of Costa Brava. The town has experienced an increase in visitors and more recently in apartment rentals. The study area was thus adequate to explore the emergence of degrowth values and the role they play in residents' understanding of their exchanges with tourists. The methodology is based on a literature review which identifies values associated with degrowth, followed by an analysis of the study area and a series of in-depth interviews with residents using a phenomenological approach. The results show that degrowth values such as conviviality are at play in areas such as providing tourists with a bathroom, while other areas such as environmental preservation are less significant.

Key words: degrowth, host, guest, sustainable development, rurality

1. Introduction

Many authors believe that the concept of sustainable development is weakening because it is insufficient and ill-adapted to address the inequitable impacts of economic development (Bayon, et al., 2011; Fournier, 2008; Martínez-Alier et al., 2010). The findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2014) indicate a failure in the sustainable development paradigm to tackle vital issues. It concludes that “continued emissions of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and changes in all components of the climate system” and that “limiting climate change will require substantial and sustained reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.” Sustainable development in the past twenty years since the Brundtland report (WCED, 1986) has not yet led to effective ways to avoid these impacts, nor led economies to the substantial, sustained reduction of greenhouse gas emissions required. To some authors, the problem is the concept of sustainability has been paired with growth avoiding the fundamental problem that natural and social systems, and perpetual economic growth are incompatible (Fournier, 2009; Latouche & Valls, 2008; Martínez-Alier et al., 2010)

In this context, degrowth is seen as an alternative approach which has gained importance in recent years (Bayon et al., 2011; Canavan, 2014; Fournier, 2008; Martínez-Alier et al., 2010; Schneider et al., 2010). Martínez Alier (2010: 1741) points out that despite degrowth first

appearing in literature in 1970, it is once “again” a topic for discussion in rich countries. It is difficult to define degrowth as it emerges from various fields (culturalists, movements in the quest for democracy, ecologists, those searching for a meaning of life, and ecological economists) (Schneider et al., 2010). According to Latouche (2009:137), degrowth is not really a concrete alternative but it provides a context where multiple alternatives can flourish. From the economic perspective it is defined as “an equitable downscaling of production and consumption that increases human wellbeing and enhances ecological conditions at the local and global level, in the short and long term” (Schneider et al., 2010: 512). From a cultural perspective, this movement proposes localization and valuing local knowledge as opposed to a system that tends to alienate human endeavour (Illich, 1978). From a political and environmental perspective, central to degrowth is a call to rescue political debate from economics and return it to the real needs of humans in a finite natural system (Fournier, 2008; Latouche & Valls, 2008) The debate on needs is central and it stems from environmental issues and the global distribution of wealth (Alier, 2008; Max-Neef & A., 1996).

In synthesis, degrowth proposes values such as conviviality, free time and unremunerated activities, less market mediated consumption and more social life (Latouche & Valls, 2008; Research and Degrowth, 2010). There is a strong anti-utilitarian view given that this movement coincides in France with groups such as the Mouvement Anti-Utilitariste en Sciences Sociales (MAUSS). At present, there are several lines of research on practical applications of degrowth such as environmental impacts reduction, income redistribution within and among countries, and the transformation from a materialistic society to one that is convivial and participatory (Cosme et al., 2017).

The purpose of this case study is to explore how degrowth values affect the host-guest relationship in tourism. Until now, there are relatively few studies analysing tourism from the perspective of degrowth (Cloquet, 2016; Andreotis, 2018; Fletcher et al., 2019). The concept has only recently been introduced in tourism studies even though its agenda has existed for decades, as in the case of hippies who during the 60s and 70s in protest against industrial society used to sleep in the caves of Matala, Crete (Andriotis, 2014; Martin, 1998). The literature shows one line of studies which aligns with the view that tourism can be a degrowth process within a steady state economy. Hall (2010) develops the theoretical discussion in this

sense and, later Chasange Everingham (2019) and Renkert (2019) develop instrumental case studies along the same line. In this process, tourism occurs within the limits of natural, cultural and human capital. Andreotis (2018) makes a comprehensive review of theoretical underpinings of degrowth and links it to several destinations and lifestyles that seem to be developing according to degrowth principles. More recently, Fletcher et al., (2019) analyse how tourism is a tool for capitalism and vice-versa. The authors pose the question whether tourism degrowth must necessarily be inscribed in a post-capitalism scenario. Other studies focus on how relevant actors are using degrowth principles as an alternative to overtourism and to spur intense public debate in Barcelona and the Balearic Islands (Milano et al., 2019; Valdivielso & Moranta, 2019).

Degrowth has not yet been used to approach the host-guest relation in tourism, thus, a gap in the literature has been identified. The objective of this research is to describe how degrowth values, as they emerge in literature, shape residents' understanding of their relation with tourists. A phenomenological approach is taken as this approach can be used to "describe the meanings of lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or phenomena" (Creswell, 1998: 51). In tourism studies, phenomenology has served as a theoretical avenue towards describing the way we see things in the world and the meanings they hold (Cerbone, 2006; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). Values are taken here as a phenomena or structure of consciousness in human experience (Polkinghorne, 1989). The question would thus be how residents experience their relation with tourists, if any. More specifically, what role do values that can or might be akin to those of degrowth play? This article is structured as follows: section 2 is a review concerning degrowth theory literature and the values proposed by degrowth in the context of tourism and, more specifically, the host-guest relationship. This is followed by an analysis of the evolution of the town in terms of relevant indicators related to tourism. Section 4 presents a description of the methodology and section 5 presents the results of the interviews and analysis followed by a synthesis of the main conclusions.

2. Literature review: degrowth values and their emergence in tourism settings

The degrowth movement's critique of growth is inscribed within a conceptual framework that challenges orthodox economic thinking or "economism" for "colonising our imagination" (Fournier, 2008). The "success" indicators within the tourism industry are still mainly economic. These generally include economic indicators such as the tourism gross domestic product (GDP), direct and indirect earnings from tourism, tourism receipts, and foreign direct investment in tourism among others. While these indicators can be adequate as economic measures, they can be inadequate to measure the environmental and social effects of tourism on communities (Andriotis, 2018; Hall, 2011). Some authors coincide that there is a vision of tourism as an economic activity that pre-empts other equally important values (Woosnam, 2011; Zuo et al., 2017). In contrast, the struggles of social movements opposing tourism and proposing alternative approaches to travel have also been studied and documented (Koussis, 2000; Monterrubio, 2017). Forms of tourism that seem to be inspired by some of the principles of degrowth such as slow tourism, community-based tourism, slow tourism and staycations have been documented as well (Andriotis, 2018). The following sections include a literature review of the values of degrowth and their emergence in tourism research.

2.1. Values related to natural resources and added value

At the root of the degrowth movement lies a strong input from ecological economics which still stands today. According to the laws of thermodynamics, transformations of matter and energy are irreversible (Latouche & Valls, 2008). "All human activity transforms resources of low entropy into high entropy ones that have the property of being useless for human beings, or even other species: barren lands, waste and pollution." (Bayon et al., 2011: 35). Since nature is the substrate of all value, environmental needs should inform the political debate of needs (Martínez-Alier et al., 2010; Max-Neef, 1996). In this manner, due to the influence of works of ecological economy, environmental values such as the preservation of natural capital, and energy and resource conservation are included in the set of values set forward by degrowth. Specific proposals in this sense include reduced material consumption through re-localization and changing consumption patterns (Cosme et al., 2017). It would also imply downscaling of some sectors of tourism, especially those related to long-haul travel (Hall, 2010). Quality

would have to replace quantity in an effort to consume less natural resources (Andriotis, 2018).

2.2. Values related to the role of the economy

In words of Latouche (2009: 529), economics have colonized the imagination. This colonization has reverted into a societies trapped in “a system of representation that translates everything into a reified and autonomous economic reality inhabited by self-interested consumers”. In this context, degrowth is not presented as a programme, an ideology or another economic theory, but rather as a symbolic challenge to policies that herald growth as an end in itself (Fournier, 2008). From an existential perspective, lessening the importance of the economy entails transcending the role of consumers to nurture other social roles, such as political or cultural roles (Latouche & Valls, 2008).

According to Bramwell and Lane (1993) the environmental movement started in the 1960's as a vague negative antigrowth sentiment which grew into two groups: those who wanted a return to the past by embracing historic values and those who wanted to balance economic growth with environmental protection (Bramwell & Lane, 1993). Growth advocates have been more vocal until recently. A well-documented example is the work of Bramwell (2006) in Malta where political debate about tourism was found to be predominantly based on economic considerations even when a sustainable development framework was being used. The pre-eminence of economic considerations in that case were explained by the composition of the group with political power (mainly industry representatives), the focus on short-term gains, and the high level of tourism dependence.

2.3 Values related to unpaid work and conviviality

The importance of unpaid activity is also at the root of degrowth literature, particularly in the works of Hannah Arrendt (1958). In Ancient Greece political activity and arts were separated from economy which was a private affair but money-earning gradually gained supremacy over any other human activity. “All serious activities irrespective of their fruits are called labour, and every activity which is not necessary either for the life of the individual or for the life process of society is subsumed under playfulness” (Arrendt, 1958: 127). Degrowth literature continues to examine the pre-eminence of work which proposes to change the “pleasure of leisure and the ethos of play for the obsession for work” (Latouche, 2009: 27). Some authors

stress the importance of unremunerated action such as household activities to maintain the quality of life, and of unpaid work (UW), which according to feminist scholars remains unrecognized and undervalued (Sekulova et al., 2013). One direct implication of work-addicted societies is that trips become short (Richards, 1998; Andriotis, 2018). In contrast, Andreotis (2014) found that degrowth tourists travel more widely, and tend to stay longer periods of time. The type of tourism undertaken would have to be predominantly based on unremunerated activities and conviviality rather than market-based travel. Examples of this would be couchsurfing, homewstays or farm stays (Andriotis, 2018).

2.4 Values against consumerism

Saarinen (2018) indicates that sustainability narratives increase the importance of individualized and personalized qualities of moral consumers neglecting the public sphere, collective action and politics. This critique may be partly traced to Arendt (1958) for who consumerism is an extension of the ideology of work. The dematerialization of the economy, the consumption of experiences and intangible goods such as in tourism, does not make any difference since it is still consumption: “that these appetites become more sophisticated, so that consumption is no longer restricted to the necessities but, on the contrary, mainly concentrated on the superfluities of life, does not change the character of this society, but harbours the great danger that eventually no object of the world will be safe from consumption and annihilation through consumption” (Arendt, 1958: 154). The proposal coming from degrowth is an invitation to simplicity (Flipo, 2008; Illich, 1978). It means a transition to modes of living in which both well-being and social comfort do not depend in producing and consuming (Andriotis, 2018). Specific projects aimed at less consumerism are co-housing efforts, as studied by Cataneo and Gavalda (2010). In this sense, Hall (2009) proposes slow consumption which reduces personal demand.

2.5. Values related to autonomy

Degrowth literature takes from the works of Ivan Illich (1977, 1978) especially in the aspect of autonomy. Illich (1978) defined autonomy as “the social virtue by which people recognize and decide limits on the maximum amount of instrumented power that anybody claims, both for his own satisfaction and in the service of others” (Illich, 1978: 11). Commodity intensive societies are strengthened by hierarchical relationships and professional standards, but “the

generation of use-values that escape effective measurement limits not only the need for more commodities but also the jobs that create them and the paychecks needed to buy them” (Illich, 1977: 46). He insists that “autonomous and creative human action, required to make man’s universe bloom, atrophies” when human autonomy is replaced by dependence on heteronomous goods (Illich, 1977:3). Generating non-marketable use values lies at the centre of every culture. By substituting use values with marketable commodities, the “innumerable ways in which people coped, played, ate, made friends and loved have been destroyed” (Illich, 1977: 6). Humans, building on their own individual and social capacities, place a real limit on the ideology of growth as human endeavour is liberated from the market and commodification.

Studies of autonomy in tourism relate mainly to independence from colonial or wider political and economic powers (Dahl, 1993; Lerner & Haber, 2001). However, the sense with which degrowth proposes autonomy can be linked to its antecedents in the Arts and Crafts Movements in the late 19th Century. Andriotis (2018) traces degrowth back to this movement in its opposition to commodities and industrialized ways of production. According to Andriotis (2014), “degrowth tourists’ activities are not commodified and allow greater emphasis on the travel experience” which allows for “the downscaling of tourism infrastructure” and a focus on experiences and relations with the local community (Andriotis, 2014: 41). The autonomy of both the resident and the tourist would be enhanced and driven away from market considerations.

3. Study Area

Besalú is a rural Medieval town in Catalonia, Spain (see map 1), with a population of 2,492 inhabitants (2019, Statistical Institute of Catalonia). It is a well-preserved example of a European Medieval ensemble which has been listed in the national inventory of heritage of Spain since 1966. The town is located north from Barcelona, 40 to 50 Km away from the coastal area of Costa Brava.



Map 1. Location of the study area

Besalú has been chosen as a study area for several reasons. From 2004 the Catalan government implemented some 34 projects to embellish and restore the historic centre of Besalú. Given its small size the town has been a popular one-day excursion place for tourists staying on the beach (Montal de la Prida, 2004). As such it has high day-time visitor volumes and limited overnight stops. Table 1 shows the evolution of the number of visitors to the tourism office and the tourism intensity (visitor/resident ratio) from 2010 to 2018. The table shows there has been a gradual increase in the number of visitors compared to the resident population. This tourism intensity is relatively high as established by Muler et al. (2019).

Table 1. Evolution of population, visitors to the tourism office and tourism intensity

| Year | Population | # Visitors registered at Besalú tourism office at Besalú tourism office (in thousands) | Tourism intensity (visitor/resident ratio) | |
|------|------------|--|--|-----------------|
| | | | Whole town | Historic center |
| 2010 | 2,360 | 73.615 | 31 | 175 |
| 2011 | 2,372 | 53.658 | 23 | 128 |
| 2012 | 2,427 | 80.248 | 33 | 191 |
| 2013 | 2,406 | 103.613 | 43 | 247 |
| 2014 | 2,400 | 101.625 | 42 | 242 |
| 2015 | 2,437 | 105.617 | 43 | 252 |
| 2016 | 2,438 | 106.216 | 44 | 253 |
| 2018 | 2,467 | 110,000 | 45 | 262 |

The supply of accommodation is an indicator of potential tourism demand (Van Der Borg et al., 1992). In that sense, available data shows that the number of beds increased from 69 hotel beds in 2002 to 120 hotel beds and 186 campsites beds in 2019. The current tourism function index (ratio of beds to inhabitants) is of .12 beds per inhabitant. Regarding apartment rentals the data available shows an increase of 208% in this type of accommodation from 2015 to 2019 (Diputació de Girona, 2020) This very high growth rate of apartment rentals in the last 5 years indicates an increasing demand and interest from investors and home owners to offer this type of accommodation in Besalú. In contrast, the number of inhabitants has remained stable from 2010 (Table 1); it has seen an increase of .06% with respect to 2010. There have been only small migrations with up to 60 migrants in 10 years while the migration balance has been mostly positive (2019, Statistical Institute of Catalonia). The local government has stated that their policy is to avoid population loss in the historic centre as the general trend in the region is of population loss (Statistical Institute of Catalonia, 2019). The recent increase in apartment rentals, however, may lead to the some local population loss by incrementing the prices of housing and forcing residents to leave (Robertson et al., 2020; Jover & Diaz-Parra, 2020). Both the increase in visitors and the apartment rentals potentially create the conditions for antagonistic attitudes among residents (Doxey, 1975; Smith & Krannich, 1998; Robertson, 2020; Jover & Diaz-Parra, 2020).

In December 2013, the municipal government of Besalú halted tourism-related business permits during two years, pending a local participatory process about the future of tourism in Besalú. A report of the process indicates that the local government was facing a financial crisis; the issues to be discussed included the economic promotion of the town and the development of tourism (Municipal Government of Besalú, 2013). The political debate was, thus, framed mainly in economic terms even though other issues such as space and locality were addressed.

The problems identified by the municipal government after the participatory process linked to overtourism in three main aspects: (1) exclusivity of tourism related shops; (2) that products in shops are not local; (3) lack of space in streets and public areas. These impacts have been extensively studied in tourism impacts literature (Milano, Novelli & Cheer, 2019; Van Der Borg Costa & Gotti, 1996; Archer, 1982; Vaughan et al, 2000; Laws & Le Pelly, 200; Le Pelley & Laws, 1998). After 2013, the local government launched initiatives to (1) disperse visitors in time

and space, (2) review local regulations to make life in the historic centre easier for the people who live or work there; (3) segment visitors to attract new markets; and, (4) ensure local people benefit from tourism. As an example of how the government implemented this, they did a contest among shoppers of the historic centre the winner of which earned a prize. The name of the contest was “Shopping in Besalú earns you prizes” (Muler & Fauró, 2019).

The information presented which covers from 2004 to 2019 shows that Besalú has undergone important changes related to tourism. These include: an increase in visitors and, more recently, an increase in accommodation offer, specifically, apartment rentals, a loss of traditional shops where locals used to shop, and bigger crowds in the public areas. The town has taken measures to tackle these issues even though degrowth does not appear in the debate, especially, because the local government seems keen to keep growth in the face of its financial stretches. In this context, it is important to examine the role that degrowth values are playing in the way residents relate with tourism and tourists.

4. Methodology

Open-ended interviews were carried out with residents of the town from April to July 2018 to twelve respondents. The sample was chosen to get the widest variety, thus allowing for unique cases, as well as commonalities among participants (Patton, 1990). Table 2 shows the respondents and their sociodemographic characteristics. The second set of data is qualitative and was obtained by in-depth interviews done in Besalú, Spain, in 2018. This data set was used for the third publication.

Table 2. Respondents and their sociodemographic characteristics

| Fictitious name | # | Gender | Age | Life-long resident | Employed in tourism? |
|-----------------|---|--------|-----|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Edu | 1 | Male | 21 | Yes | Yes |
| Carles | 2 | Male | 42 | Yes | No |
| Marta | 3 | Female | 41 | Yes | No |
| Alejandra | 4 | Female | 45 | Immigrant from Colombia X years ago | No |

| | | | | | |
|---------|----|--------|----|---|---|
| Julia | 5 | Female | 71 | No immigrant from Galicia | Retired |
| Mari | 6 | Female | 37 | Yes | Yes |
| Anna | 7 | Female | 37 | Yes | Yes |
| Josep | 8 | Male | 68 | No-immigrant from another town in Catalonia | Yes-shop owner |
| Marina | 9 | Female | 28 | Yes | No |
| Mari F. | 10 | Female | 57 | Yes | Yes – public servant in the area of tourism |
| Tamara | 11 | Female | 33 | Immigrant from Valencia | Student |
| Toni | 12 | Male | 23 | Yes | Yes |

Table 3 shows the script for these interviews. The purpose was to elicit values in residents' relations with tourists. Values here are defined as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct and end-states of existence" (Rokeach, 1968; Williams & Lawson, 2001). The results were then analyzed taking a phenomenological approach to identify the values involved in residents' understanding of tourists. This choice was due to the objective of the study to identify the emergence of degrowth values. A phenomenological perspective was adequate because it describes the experiential, and lived existence of residents, and focuses on residents' seeing of the objects in the world and the meaning they hold (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). Accordingly, this research rests on a post-positivist paradigm which entails that values are phenomenon that can be studied with approximate objectivity while keeping critical views about their reality (Guba, 1990). Respondents are approached as "knowers" about the world (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010:1064). More specifically this part of the research explores the degree of unconscious knowledge that residents have of degrowth values; interviewees are not literally asked about these values but the questions elicit them.

Table 3: Guiding questions used in the interviews

| |
|--|
| How would you describe the community in Besalú? |
| What do you think is good/bad about tourism? Why? (in general and in Besalú) |

| |
|--|
| How would you like tourism and tourists to be? |
| Do you think tourism is good or bad for the heritage and natural environment of the town? Why? What do you think about the pollution coming from tourism? Do you think tourists should use less polluting vehicles and shift to, for example, bicycles? |
| How would you like it to be in terms of heritage and nature? |
| Do you like tourism? Why? |
| How do you relate with tourists? |
| Have you gotten to know any tourist? Can you please narrate the experience? |
| Would you like to have more tourists coming to Besalú? Or a different type of tourism? |

The sample was chosen according to predetermined criteria following Patton (2002). The main criteria were tourism dependence and gender since literature shows that these two groups are more willing to accept more tourists (Muler et al., 2018). Interviews were done up to the point of saturation after which no additional data are being found that may enrich the categories under study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). There are no clearly established rules about the number of interviews needed to achieve saturation because it does depend on the purpose of the study. However, literature reveals that a sample of 10-15 interviewees is acceptable in phenomenological studies (Guest et al., 2006; Morse, 1994; Creswell, 1998).

The text was analysed to identify the themes covered in the literature review and analyse them taking values, predispositions and beliefs as the unit of analysis. The literature reviews identified values: (1) related to natural resources and added value; (2) related to values related to the role of the economy; (3) related to unpaid work and conviviality; (3) against consumerism; (4) related to autonomy. The text was analysed to identify these four themes. Respondents were chosen after contacting them casually while in town and asking them whether they would be willing to participate in the study by answering some questions.

5. Results

All the respondents accepted tourism in the town. Four of them did not want an increase in tourism. Two were concerned because they thought the town could not cope with more tourists. One of them, male (21, tourism dependent) said, "I would tell them to come, but there is no space. The pavement cafés are full." Similar remarks came from another resident (male, 42, not tourism dependent) who said "we cannot have more tourists to stay because there is very little accommodation." They seemed to make their own assessment of capacity based on their perception of space, rather than the will of the people themselves. In any case, none of the respondents rejected tourism with an absolute 'no'. Two respondents expressed concerns about increasing numbers of tourists for residents living in streets with heavy tourism flows. One of them indicated the following: "I can imagine for people living here (referring to the centre), it can be hard to feel like you are crowded for months. You can't carry on a normal life. If more people come, I don't know, it could be a problem" (female, 42, not tourism dependent).

Regarding degrowth values of preservation of natural capital, half of the respondents were aware of the efforts the municipal government have made to promote using bicycles instead of cars as transport around the town. Two interviewees used bicycles to get around, and that was only at weekends as a leisure activity. Regarding the general impact of tourism on the environment, only three respondents were concerned about the broader environmental impacts such as air pollution or destruction of the landscape. "[Tourism] is bad for the planet, we all know that. All those planes, but you know people also get to know each other. But yes, it would probably be better to stay home" (Male, 42, not tourism dependent). The rest of the respondents were not very aware or thought that this issue was not important. A female respondent (42, not tourism dependent) indicated that tourism pollution was not a problem in Besalú: "Here we do not feel any pollution. That is mostly the planes, the cars,.. but this town is small. We don't feel that." Respondents valued cleanliness meaning an absence of garbage since many of them were critical of full bins and waste around the town. Currently, the municipal government is supporting bicycles as a form of transport inside the town. Three parking spaces for bicycles have been created and a campaign to raise awareness has been held to "fight the irrational and mass use of cars and promote the use of bicycles" (Municipal Government of Besalú, 2013).

In terms of the preeminence of economic considerations, as it has been mentioned, the municipal government held a debate about ways to finance itself through tourism. The interview results confirm that residents are aware of the dependence that their local government has on tourism. One resident noted: “the fairs are not for us... they (referring to the municipal government) would not be able to make a living out of us alone, they need to do stuff for tourists... the municipal government needs money...” (male, 42, not tourism dependent). Likewise, other responses confirm that some residents have somehow given in to an economic imperative. A female resident (57, public servant in the area of tourism) mentioned how it would be impossible to sell hand-made original souvenirs because they would be too expensive: “It would be unsustainable... a straw basket in those shops now can cost you around 12 euros... the handmade ones are too expensive. It would certainly be better, but few people could afford local hand-made baskets.” In a certain way, the loss of handcrafts and local small businesses that are valuable to them are seen as an inevitable economic fate. Another respondent indicated “it is not in our hands to change these things (referring to the lack of space). You have to get used to it.” (Female, 37, tourism dependent). Another resident also portrays tourism as an inevitable fate of the town: “All of a sudden, you can’t do a lot of things because you live in a town with high tourism flows... we have to make some sacrifices.” (Female, 57 public servant in tourism). To this respondent, tourism is the natural development of the history of the town: “Besalú has always been at a crossroads... it is a small town, it has always been a transitory destination”. In one way the responses show a utilitarian economic approach to tourism and at the same time an acceptance of it as an inevitable fate for different reasons.

All the respondents pointed out that tourism was good because of the revenue it brought in. One female resident from the town centre, (45, not tourism dependent) said “there are more shops now... more variety of places to shop. Thanks to tourism, the town has grown. Haven’t you seen all the new houses they have built?” A 23-year-old male, (tourism dependent) viewed tourism as a saviour: “if it weren’t for tourists the people in the town wouldn’t be able to survive...” Another male, 42, (not tourism dependent) responded that tourism brings “wealth” to the town. All the respondents value the economic impact of tourism in the town regardless of the benefit to themselves.

In terms of conviviality, the results indicate a strong community life in Besalú. This is significant, because conviviality is one of the values of degrowth. From the outset, many respondents indicated that, for them, conviviality is an integral part of the local society: taking care of each other and helping. Community life provides safety, services, information and a mutual support system. Many respondents, including immigrants, made reference to these values, demonstrating that they perceived themselves as a homogeneous group of residents. “People support each other a lot... since it is a small town. Among neighbors everybody knows each other. If you do not know the father, you know the son, if you don’t know the son you know the grandfather. The good thing about this is that people help each other.” (male, 21, tourism dependent). Another respondent who is an immigrant reported being accepted and supported by locals. “When I came here, they told me ‘welcome to Besalú. You are part of our town now.’ They helped me get a job”. (female, 45, not tourism dependent)

Several respondents valued how tourism helped and inspired neighbourhood associations, and valued the work these associations do to improve tourism. Making reference to signs inside St. Vincent’s church, a monument in the old quarter, one respondent was convinced it was the residents’ associations who had put them there. “I am not sure who put the signs. I suppose it was the associations. They do it well. They used a natural material that looks really nice.” (male, 21, tourism dependent). Other respondent mentioned how the associations were key to deal with noise and garbage coming from tourism (female, 25, tourism dependent). Half of the interviewees had volunteered to make activities and events in the town. The ‘Besalú Medieval Fair’ which takes place in September appeared to be the most popular event in which residents volunteered. These respondents were asked for their motivations to get involved as volunteers. Pride was one of the reasons. One respondent said: “Hey, it is our town. We have to make the fair the best. There is an attraction in which locals get very involved in called the mystery chamber. We wear costumes. I’ve had a great time doing it” (Female, 37, tourism dependent). Another female indicated: “We really get engaged. These things really showcase our town” and was happy about the “demand” for Besalú (Female 37, tourism dependent). Another resident (female, 42, not tourism dependent) said that: “Besalú has become very popular... at a tourism level, I mean... until just recently there was tourism but not the numbers we have now... I like to show my town. I have friends in Switzerland, they didn’t know about Besalú. I made them a video and they were all amazed!

It is a beautiful town. The world should know about it.” Two interviewees said they did it to help even though it seemed the ultimate motivation was to raise funds for their local associations. A respondent (male, 42, not tourism dependent) said “I do it to help. During the fair associations can raise some money.. Me and my children belong to some associations.. The money helps to push the entities forward.. There are many entities here in Besalú... basketball, heritage...” This aligns with the view of Paraskevidis and Andreotis (2017) that pride, emotional ties and civic ties motivate host involvement in attractions. Lockstone-Binney, Holmes, Smith and Baum (2010) suggest that host involvement in volunteering may not be altruistic as they often see it as a work experience. The results here suggest that residents see local events as a source of funding for their local organizations. As Paraskeviadis et al (2017) found they might see tourism as a source to improve their living standards instead of increasing economic output through tourism induced development.

Respondents who had closer contact with tourists reported that they appreciated learning languages with tourists, which indicates a spirit of learning and curiosity in the exchange. All the respondents reporting this had direct contact with tourists. “It happens by necessity, because you hear people speaking French and as times goes by you go on learning the phrases. There is mutual learning” (male, 21, tourism dependent).

One aspect of conviviality arose in relation to the use of toilets. A female (37, tourism dependent) who lives in town centre thought that tourists ought to spend money and stay longer, or they would “use the toilet without spending a cent, which is outrageous”. Another respondent (female, 57, public servant in tourism) told a story related to tourists using the toilet: a tourist visiting Besalú had a health condition that made her need a toilet urgently and frequently. She asked to use the toilet in a number of establishments to no avail, and in the end, had an embarrassing ‘accident’. The respondent heard about this from tour operators who visit the town and raised the issue in a public meeting. “We can’t do this. This is a human being that needs help. Are we just going to close the door on them? We told all the establishments that this should never happen again.” Another respondent said that allowing tourists to use toilets for free was part of the “service” they give to tourists: “People always have to complain about something... People come and if they need to go to the bathroom, they go, and that’s it! And whether they spend money or not, well, the service has to be given

as well, it is not a big deal to let them go.” The issue of using bathrooms shows a set of highly market based values by which tourists should not be let to use the service without paying, and another set of values which would seem more convivial; they value caring, on a human level, and help tourists regardless of the money they spend.

Along the same lines of conviviality, many interviewees said they enjoyed helping tourists get around. A female, (37, tourism-dependent) said happily: “I draw them a map... I tell them ‘you have to go to the bridge, drop by the micvé’”. Another respondent (male, 23, tourism dependent) says: “At the most, if I see they are lost, I tell them where to go with a map but little more.” One man, (42, not tourism dependent) mentioned conviviality among children. He explained that “here in St. Pere’s Square, playing with the ball, sometimes tourists’ kids pass it to you. You say thanks and that’s it. Our kids play with tourists’ kids”. Another respondent, (female, 41, not tourism dependent) also mentioned her children playing with tourists’ in public areas of the town. Respondents involved in the Besalú Medieval fair mentioned that during the fair they occasionally chatted with tourists throughout the streets and public areas of the town. A respondent (male, 68, tourism dependent) mentioned many interactions with tourists who are clients in his shop and even having phone numbers of some of them. However, their relationship was strictly limited to purchases and products from the shop.

In terms of consumerism, residents explained tourists’ habits as bad or good. They used the term “healthy” to describe a certain type of tourist that does not consume excessive alcohol as they do in other towns. “Here we don’t have those groups of young people that come to get drunk at night. Young tourists who come to drink cheap alcohol and do nothing else don’t come here.” They valued the fact that tourists spend money on souvenirs, hire guides and take the tourist train to see the town. Even though many residents valued tourist consumption, or insisted on its importance, two mentioned that this was not the only value they attributed to tourism. A female (57, public servant in the area of tourism) said that “just because a tourist spends money, it does not mean that he is a desirable or good tourist... people always talk about the good tourist. We also want tourists that get to know the town and that learn from our heritage. It is not all about money.” These remarks indicate an inclination towards less consumerism, and more towards tourism stemming from a spirit of

curiosity and learning. Other respondents also appeared to value learning through tourism. One female, (33 not tourism dependent) explained that she had tourists stay for free in her house through a well-known online platform, partly to “learn and exchange recipes, stories.” The rest, however, consistently mentioned spending and consumption as a desirable thing in tourists. A female (25, tourism dependent) equated convivial forms of accommodation such as couch surfing to residents being stupid. “Let’s not be dumb. If people came for free, I don’t think people here would let them stay. Altruistic people would do it but then they would do home swapping or something similar.”

As mentioned, autonomy in degrowth has been linked to a focus on locality and engagement with local communities (Andreotis, 2014). The results of the study show these values at work in the way residents assess the evolution of local shops. One resident mentioned that she sometimes missed the shops that had been there a lifetime (in Catalan, *botigues de tota la vida*) like bakeries and butchers that no longer existed. “You knew those people well, and the products were really special. They would make a lot of stuff... sausages... bread...” (Female, 28, not employed in tourism). Another respondent commented “where the fruit stand is now there used to be a blacksmith. Imagine that. Very few of those places are left. Most of the shops now are owned by people who are not from Besalú. They have some money to invest and they come here to set up a business for tourists” (Female, 57, not tourism dependent). These respondents missed local commerce as it used to be: more specialized, local or hand-made. In this sense, the responses show that they value shops run by locals. Another respondent also valued handmade crafts in shops. “Time ago, tourists used to care about what they purchased... how it was made. They would even come back a year or two after looking for me. They wanted good stuff. Now they just want cheap stuff to buy. They know nothing and just wander about lost. They don’t want to learn anything. To make things worse they have put a food vending machine, right there, at the end of the bridge.” (Male, 68, tourism dependent) Again, the respondent valued hand-made goods and he wanted to host tourists with similar inclinations. In contrast, a younger respondent (male, 21, tourism dependent) expressed liking the shops very much: “and there are also the shops... they’re spectacular... on the bridge there are 5 or 6 nice, little shops of those that are dedicated exclusively to tourism ... all those people make a living out of tourism.. It is pleasing because people have jobs... they can open their shops...” This respondent valued the shops exclusively for the jobs

they provide, regardless of the type of goods or consumption. Other respondents who were non-dependents also valued the souvenir and tourism related shops in this manner.

6. Conclusions

Results show that both sets of values, degrowth and growth based ones, are at play in the host guest exchange. Degrowth understood as residents wanting the number of tourists to decrease has not been observed. Residents work as volunteers in tourism fairs, help tourists around and some welcome tourist shops. However, there were concerns about having more tourists and perceptions of space played an important role in their assessment of this. To evaluate the capacity of the town to host more tourists they resorted to perceptions of lack of space in bars, cafés and accommodation capacity. There were also concerns about the impact of more tourists coming on the lives of residents in the streets with high flows of visitors.

The value of conviviality with tourists was at play in some instances. Respondents engage with tourists in three ways not mediated by the market (convivial ways): volunteering, helping tourists around, and having their children play together. They volunteered out of pride, willingness to help, to fund local associations or get free accommodation when travelling. This finding supports literature that indicates that tourism can help to support increased human agency and autonomy (McGehee, Kline, & Knollenberg, 2014; Tribe, 2008). Most of the respondents had been involved in volunteering to help put on the Besalú Medieval fair for visitors, an event which is also important for locals. Increased human agency through tourism seems to be facilitated by the already existing social networks. These networks may be linked to Besalú being small and its geographical location in the rurality. They may also be linked to the fact that the population has remained relatively stable. Smaller rural communities allow for more daily interactions with other residents (McKnight, Sanders, Gibbs & Brown, 2017; Wuthnow, 2013). These interactions are associated with norms such as reciprocity, such as close kin and friendship (Salamon 2003; Wuthnow 2013). Conversely, bigger urban centres have other assets such community services and educational and occupational opportunities that can aid the sense of community (Carr and Kefalas 2009). Other studies show that individuals in high residential density areas might be less likely to know their neighbours, have

lower levels of bridging trust, and less involved in the community's activities (Muzayanah et al., 2020). In Besalú, the sharp increase in apartment rentals may push residents out and break the community ties that make conviviality more plausible. To the contrary it may allow more conviviality as tourists will be able to stay longer. This is one of the characteristics of degrowth tourism as discussed by Andriotis (2014).

A majority of the respondents spoke of their fellow neighbours in Besalú and how they knew or helped each other. The community ties of a permanent resident population have been found to make community members more aware of ethical behaviour (Smith & Oakley, 1994). Rural areas elsewhere are experiencing changing rates of residents leaving and urban residents coming in (Ulrich-Schad et al., 2013). Besalú risks following this trend if apartment rentals continue to show such high growth rates and residents are forced to leave. Migrations in which local inhabitants are lost may weaken the predominant interpretation of community by the appearance of new cultural groups with different views (Salamon 2003).

Even though there is conviviality in some aspects, there is little personal come along with tourists. It can be said that both groups (residents and tourists), use the same space, but practically independently, except for relationships that develop through commerce or during the fair, when residents spend enough time in the town centre to be able to talk to tourists; and also permits their children to play together. Interestingly, opportunities for conviviality were more common during fairs when residents have free time to spend on the streets of the town. According to Snepenger, et. Al. (2004) tourists and residents share spaces that can be viewed as a social communication system that offers insights into the value of experiences and the symbolic nature of places. In Besalú, public spaces such as squares offer the opportunity for residents, in their free time, and tourists to share the convivial experience of having their children play together. It is when residents have free time to spend in the streets of the town when conviviality happens. Perhaps if residents worked less, there would also be more conviviality with tourists. One of the proposals coming from degrowth is precisely less working hours and more free time which might increase the opportunities for convivial relations with tourists. Additionally, tourism provides residents with a means to finance their local associations, so in this way, tourism helps sustain conviviality among residents.

The values of environmental preservation set out in degrowth reflect little of Besalú's society. Residents were concerned about two impacts of tourists on their immediate environment: garbage and lack of space. Broader impacts such as climate change were barely mentioned. Only two of the interviewees professed to using the newly installed bicycle facilities. This shows much lesser importance of environmental impacts than degrowth proposes. It would be necessary to see how these values change as global climate change, for example, becomes more evident in the region. Destinations where there are specific environmental issues show awareness about those issues. Such would be the case of Mallorca where studies have been done on the relation between tourism and water scarcity (Deyà Tortella & Tirado, 2011). Considering that the proposal stemming from degrowth is that environmental needs inform the political debate, and that citizens are not really aware of these needs, a debate geared towards degrowth seems less probable.

The respondents did not see any alternatives to tourism, or give any importance to a political debate on alternatives. Instead, it seemed to be considered necessary in order for the municipal government to face financial hardships. It comes as no surprise that for some residents, tourism is seen as an inevitable fate and there is no political debate about alternatives, even though some respondents pointed out its negative impacts and a certain weariness of it. This finding aligns with Bramwell (2006) in the sense that political debates seemed to be highly constrained by economic considerations. In the case of Malta, the author explains this as a result of the tourism dependence of country and the current focus on short-term financial stretches. As indicated by Fletcher et al., (2019) both tourism and tourism degrowth must be currently understood within a capitalistic context. A third reason emerging from the results is that since the town is small and rich in heritage, residents see limited alternatives to gain revenues. According to their understanding of tourism dynamics, they assess the town's potential as a destination and conclude that tourism is the way for Besalú to finance its needs. Finally, a fourth reason is that tourism is evaluated positively by the respondents. They described tourism in Besalú as "healthy tourism". They not only value the revenue from tourism, but also the liveliness it brings to the streets, the international recognition, the opportunities to finance the local associations, and chances of learning languages. They mentioned negative aspects of tourism regarding space and mobility but

there was a corresponding feeling of resignation. This finding aligns with other research purporting that residents may find ways to accommodate and cope with the negative impacts of tourism (Getz, 1994; Rothman, 1978).

Tourism dependent interviewees tended to highlight and insist on the economic value of tourism with perhaps more intensity using phrases such as “what would happen to Besalú without tourism?” and “we truly depend on it” or “we would be dumb to give any services for free.” Additionally, differences were observed among tourism dependents in terms of the exclusivity of economic value. Respondents closer to middle age almost exclusively spoke of the economic impact while the youngest saw other values in tourism such as identity reinforcement, protection of the landscape or diversity and amusement. Older tourism dependents, exclusively talked about the economic value of tourism describing a transition from quality tourism to cheap one.

The role of conviviality as regards allowing tourists to use the toilets without paying was evident. The views on this issue went from strong opposition to the view that it has to be done out of pure humanity. Residents employed in restaurants, or who were restaurant professionals but unemployed at the time of the interview, viewed this issue and tourists in general in ways more oriented towards short-term profit. It was these respondents who said that if tourists did not spend money they should not be allowed to use the toilets. Civil servants working in the tourism sector, residents that were not (and had never been) employed in tourism, and artisans selling handcrafts were less oriented towards tourist spending at whatever cost. This result shows conflicting sets of values: short-term economic interest and conviviality. Some literature shows that residents who work in tourism are more willing to accept an increase in tourism than those who do not (Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Muler Gonzalez, Coromina, & Galí, 2018). The findings here also indicate that those who work in certain sectors of tourism may be more inclined to short-term economic gain, wanting to charge tourists for all that they can. Other respondents put more emphasis on the general interest and the image the town portrayed, or quality as opposed to quantity of tourism.

Some respondents consistently valued localization and creativity as exemplified in local shops or handcrafts. While others seemed to value having nice and lively shopping streets regardless

of what is being sold. The respondents who placed high value on local production were not employed in tourism, public servants in tourism or artisans. Future studies in this area could explore the influence various tourism jobs, including tourism related public service, have on the values guiding residents' relationships with tourists.

Consumerism plays an important role in the way residents rate the tourist as good or bad depending on what they consume. There are certain types of products that are negatively rated such as excessive alcohol or cheap souvenirs while other types of products are positive such as trips on the town trolley or guided tours. In this sense residents in Besalú are aligned with degrowth to a certain extent. Even though, all types of consumption are market mediated, degrowth includes authentic curiosity and learning, in this case through guided tours, and consumption of local hand-made objects as indicators of good tourism.

The conclusions of this research show that residents reveal some degrowth values in their understanding of tourists' behaviour and tourism. This is an important step in the development of an understanding of degrowth in tourism. Many destinations around the world have been attempting alternative forms of tourism that are apply degrowth principles such as slow tourism or community based tourism. It would seem that degrowth will grow in the face of new environmental and social challenges. Therefore, it is important to understand resident communities in this context in order to develop appropriate policies, and research and business management approaches.

Future research could focus on big cities like Barcelona where this sense of community may be missing. Would residents there also serve as volunteers in tourism fairs, rejoice in other residents benefitting from tourism, or feel solidarity for the burden of tourism on other residents? Other lines of research would be the impacts of less working hours on conviviality among tourists and residents. It has been identified that conviviality among tourists and residents occurred during festivals and leisure time of residents when they had time to roam the town with their children. Destinations implementing policies for less working hours might thus experience greater resident-tourist conviviality.

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SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF MAIN RESULTS

The results of this thesis allow us to fulfil the objectives set forward in the beginning. In the first place, there was the objective to assess the links between indicators of tourism literature related to the limits to tourism growth such as support for tourism and resident impact perceptions under a SET perspective. Those links have been identified. Results show that SCC, the indicator used to assess the limits of tourism growth, was at the limit as more than 83.8% of the respondents either did not want more tourism or wanted it to stay at present levels. The two other indicators employed (the tourist function index and the tourist density) also yielded results that show that the study area is close to its limits in terms of SCC. The index of perceptions, on the other hand, showed that residents appeared to perceive tourism quite positively which would suggest under a SET perspective a willingness to enter into the exchange. The index shows consensus in highly disagreeing with the negative impacts such as crime and noise, and agreeing with positive ones such as job creation and heritage conservation. The positive impacts with the highest consensus are that “tourism brings jobs and this is more important than the nuisances it brings” (index=.63) and that “thanks to tourism the cultural heritage is better preserved” (index= .63) which would imply that residents perceive these resources (conservation and jobs) coming in with the tourism exchange. The indicators do not coincide as the balance of perceptions is positive and the SCC indicator suggests that the destination is at the limits of its capacity. Only two perceptions were linked to capacity: that tourists get in the way (p-value=.001) and that tourism brings higher prices (p-value=.004) suggesting that these resources (affordable prices and space) are critical resources that link directly with capacity levels.

It was expected that tourism dependence would be significant in the results as it is a primordial SET variable. This was confirmed as tourism dependents wanted more tourism. Respondents working in tourism had a greater willingness to accept more tourists, as 33.3% of them wanted more tourists, compared to 16.2% of the total number of respondents. 82.9% of those not working in tourism wanted tourist numbers to remain the same, compared to 78.2% of the total number of respondents. 61.5% of respondents employed in tourism wanted tourism numbers to stay the same. There was a slight tendency for those not employed to want fewer tourists (5.7%) as opposed to 5.8% of the total sample. This tendency is not observed in residents employed in tourism, since 5.1% wanted fewer, as opposed to 5.8% of the total sample. According to SET, this would confirm that residents highly value jobs among the positive impacts of tourism as this reward links to their perceptions of capacity.

The second objective was to apply theoretical perspectives stemming from SET to the analysis and understanding of the limits to tourism growth. This objective was achieved as well. The theoretical perspective was the social exchange relation, a unit of analysis that early SET literature proposes (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961; Emerson, 1976). It can be defined as a reciprocal exchange of resources and it has emergent properties that cannot only be described by the motivation of the individuals involved (Blau, 1964; Uehara, 2009). Four social exchange relations were identified where residents perceive a reciprocal exchange of resources. These were identified using EFA. Factor 1, labeled *high prices for tourism shops*, includes the perception that prices are high due to tourism and that shops are for tourists. It suggests an exchange of high prices for small tourism shops. Tourism shops have been considered both positive and negative in literature (Getz, 1994; Backman & Backman, 1997; Kim et al., 2013; Snepenger et al., 2003). As a positive impact, it has been found that residents use the tourism shops as a resource for different purposes such as shopping or taking guests; the value of these places may range from hedonic to utilitarian ones (Snepenger et al., 2007; Snepenger et al., 2003). In the social exchange relation, this perception appears linked to the cost of higher prices related to tourism. Inflation is also considered in general a cost but some studies show that residents link this cost to empowerment through increased standard of living, increasing local awareness, power, new learning opportunities, and sense of ownership (Abdollahzadeh & Abolqasem, 2014; Hammad, et al. 2017; Harvey et al. 1995). The factor of high prices for tourism shops shows that residents perceive an exchange of resources, specifically higher prices for tourism shops even though high prices may be linked to empowerment, as well.

Factor 2 has been labeled *space usage exchange*. Two items loaded onto that factor: that tourism related noise makes life in the city less pleasurable and that tourism brings better leisure facilities. There seems to be an exchange in terms of the use of space where residents perceive negative impacts in terms of noise for leisure facilities. The flow of resources is quiet and tranquility for more opportunities of leisure. This confirms findings in other studies where residents make exchanges in terms of leisure and outdoor activities, such as increasing traffic and overcrowding linked to more parks and recreation areas (Abdollahzadeh & Sharifzadeh, 2014; Wang & Pfister, 2008). Some segments of residents have been found to perceive that tourism has negatively impacted recreational opportunities for local residents in their area while also increasing the number of recreational opportunities (Harvey et al., 1995).

Two items loaded on to factor 3 labeled *benefits to heritage* because it links a cost (the nuisance that tourism brings) to a typical benefit in heritage destinations which is heritage conservation. As it was

stated at the beginning of this section, heritage conservation was the second positive impact with more consensuses. This factor suggests that heritage conservation is a benefit to which residents link the general costs of tourism. Finally, two items loaded on to factor 4 labeled as *cultural exchange* because it contains a give-and-take in relation to culture: residents enjoy a more attractive and interesting town while tourists learn from it. Previous studies also indicate that residents stage their culture and that this is linked to cultural benefits that range from perceptions of cultural reinforcement to pride through recognition of the other in Hammad et al. (2017); Andereck et al. (2005); Liu et al. (1986); Ursache (2015); and Andereck & Nyaupane (2011). Other studies link support to tourism, which under a SET approach may be considered as a cost, to cultural understanding and pride (Andereck et al., 2005; Boley et al., 2018; Hammad et al., 2017; Wang & Pfister, 2008). All the social exchange relations identified resonated with exchanges identified in literature. The results confirm that residents perceive flows of resources and costs that are specific to the tourism context such as heritage conservation and crowding.

Regarding the third objective, a set of values related to the limits of tourism growth was identified and their role in the way residents understand their exchanges with tourists and tourism was explored. Degrowth values were used because it is a framework that specifically proposes limiting tourism growth and gearing tourist behavior towards less consumerism (Andriotis, 2018; Latouche, 2009, 1991). As it was discussed in the literature review, under SET, values enable exchange transactions in cases when the individuals involved do not know each other. Specifically, the research studied the role of the following degrowth values found in the literature review: conviviality, less pre-eminence to economic considerations, less consumerism and autonomy. The in-depth interviews were built to elicit the values that guided resident respondents in their relation with tourists and their understanding of tourism.

In general, values played a role in the evaluation that residents made about the tourism exchange. However, degrowth values did not seem very preeminent. Residents saw some positive values in tourism but they also tended to accept it due to some sort of economic fate of the town based on their perception that tourism brings jobs and money for the government and associations are necessary. The value of conviviality influenced the residents evaluate tourists' use of bathrooms in the town, when residents show tourists around and when resident children and tourist children play together during fair time. One aspect of conviviality arose in relation to the use of toilets. Respondents were divided in that tourists should be allowed to use the toilets out of a spirit of humanity while others thought they had to spend money in order to do so. In this aspect, tourism dependents seemed to be

more utilitarian than non-dependents. A female (37, tourism dependent) who lives in town center thought that tourists should spend money and stay longer instead of “using the toilets without spending a cent, which is outrageous”. Another respondent (female, 57, public servant in tourism) told a story related to tourists using the bathrooms: a tourist visiting Besalú had a health condition that made her need a toilet urgently and frequently but she did not get access to one. Respondents were divided in their perceptions of whether tourists should be able to use bathrooms free of cost. One respondent indicated that this was not “the spirit of generosity” of their town to exclude tourists from using bathrooms for free. These views show the role of conviviality in opposition to the prevalence of economic considerations influencing the way that residents perceive the exchange with tourists.

Degrowth proposes questioning the excessive preeminence that economic considerations have in public life. It invites to end the colonization of imagination by economics (Latouche, 2009; Fournier, 2008). The results show that in general residents gave much preeminence to economic considerations and they barely mentioned non-economic alternatives to the way they perceive their involvement in tourism. They mentioned that the government needed to attract tourism to finance itself, that it would be impossible to sell hand-made products to tourists because it would be too expensive for them. Acceptance of tourism was based on some sort of economic fate which one of the respondents characterized as that “there are certain things we cannot change” and “sacrifices” have to be made. A respondent described their town being in the crossroads, historically, a place of passage for travelers suggesting that depending on tourism was the fate of the town.

All the respondents valued the revenues of tourism and linked this revenue to more variety of places, more houses being built and wealth of people. All the respondents value the economic impact of tourism in the town regardless of the benefits to themselves which points to solidarity and the extended community benefits mentioned in literature (Ryan & Montgomery, 1994; Wang, 2018). They tended to consider the positive and negative impacts of, for example, jobs and crowding, respectively, on their neighbors. Interviewees did engage in tourism in non-economic ways by, for example, volunteering to make activities for tourists. Half of the interviewees had volunteered to make activities. In terms of their motivations, two interviewees said they volunteered to help, even though it seemed the ultimate motivation was to raise funds for their local associations. A respondent (male, 42, not tourism dependent) said: “I do it to help. During the fair associations can raise some money. I and my children belong to some associations.. The money helps to push the entities forward. There are many entities here in Besalú: basketball, heritage...” This aligns with the view of Paraskevaidis and Andreotis (2017) that pride, emotional ties and civic ties motivate host involvement in attractions. Lockstone-

Binney et al. (2010) suggest that host involvement in volunteering may not be altruistic as they often see it as a work experience. The results here suggest that residents see local events as a source of funding for their local organizations but tourism also becomes a pretext and a support for associations that boost empowerment and pride. Also, in a non-economic line, degrowth proposes tourism for an authentic spirit of learning and curiosity. Respondents who had closer contact with tourists reported that they appreciated learning languages with tourists, which indicates a spirit of learning and curiosity in the exchange. All the respondents reporting this were employed in tourism: “It happens by necessity, because you hear people speaking French and as times goes by you go on learning the phrases. There is mutual learning” (male, 21, tourism dependent).

Values against consumerism and in favor of autonomy appeared linked. In the first place, residents seemed to support consumerism in tourists as long as it was “good” consumption. Actually, they defined the “good” and the “bad” tourists based on their types of consumption. The good tourists being the ones who consumed cultural goods and made purchases in the local shops and restaurants while the bad tourists were the ones coming to buy cheap alcohol or not spending at all. In this sense they valued spending but differentiated among “good” and “bad” types of spending. Some forms of consumption which were favored by some respondents were linked to autonomy. As mentioned, autonomy in degrowth has been linked to a focus on locality and engagement with local communities (Andreotis, 2014). The results of the study show that some residents valued local shops that enhanced local production. One resident mentioned that she sometimes missed the shops that had been there a lifetime (in Catalan, *botigues de tota la vida*) like bakeries and butchers that no longer existed. “You knew those people well, and the products were really special. They would make a lot of stuff: sausages, bread, ...” (Female, 28, not employed in tourism). Even though changes in retailing are part of a more complex and global change in supply chains and production, residents in Besalú link these changes to tourism because an overwhelming majority of shops there have converted to tourism retailing. Respondents were divided between those who valued local handcrafts and production and those who did not. Younger residents who were employed in tourism tended not to value local production and whether the shops were old or new. These respondents just valued the jobs and how nice the souvenir shops were. A younger respondent (male, 21, tourism dependent) expressed liking the shops very much: “and there are also the shops. They’re spectacular. On the bridge there are 5 or 6 nice, little shops of those that are dedicated exclusively to tourism. All those people make a living out of tourism. It is pleasing because people have jobs. They can open their shops”. This respondent valued the shops exclusively for the jobs they provide, regardless of the type of goods or consumption. Other

respondents who were non-dependents also valued the souvenir and tourism related shops in this manner.

In terms of the limits to tourism growth, all the respondents accepted tourism in the town and four of them were against an increase. They seemed to make their own assessment of capacity based physical constraints and not a political will to limit tourism. For example, one of them was concerned with space (male, 21, tourism dependent) said, "I would tell them to come but there is no space. The pavement cafés are full." Similar remarks came from another resident (male, 42, not tourism dependent) who said "we cannot have more tourists to stay because there is very little accommodation." In any case, none of the respondents rejected tourism with an absolute 'no'. They were however concerned about a future with more tourists.

Employment in tourism was a key variable being assessed across the three articles. In the first article, the results show that those employed in the tourism industry perceived both the positive and negative impacts as those not employed but they were willing to accept more tourists. This confirms findings in other studies where support for additional tourism development was positively related to personal benefits (Getz, 1994; Long et al., 1990). The second article confirmed links between the factor of *high prices for tourism shops* and tourism dependence. Dependents tended to perceive more of an exchange in terms of high prices and shops. The third article discriminated among employed and non-employed in order to identify any differences in values related to their perceptions about the exchanges involved in tourism. The results show that dependents tended to be more utilitarian in their views about tourists when, for example, they expected tourists to spend money in town. Less utilitarian views came from non-dependents or public servants in tourism. To synthesize the findings of the three articles in terms of this variable, the first article shows that when asked whether they want more tourists, dependents will tend to give affirmative answers but as shown in the third qualitative article, both dependents and non-dependents attempt to assess the resources of the town based on their perception of certain indicators such as the space in cafés or the number of bedrooms in order to decide whether they can increase exchange levels. This would confirm Ritchie & Inkari (2006:38) as they indicate that "residents weigh the benefits and costs through some informal cost-benefit analysis similar to that proposed by SET". The results here show that they evaluate the resources based on objective indicators of capacity, among other things. The non-dependents in the quantitative data jump to a negative answer (not wanting more tourists) more easily even though the qualitative shows that they may also assess their resources and the community's. Additionally, as Ryan and Montgomery (1994) suggest the wider community interests play an important role in this assessment as respondents

in the qualitative article made reference to wider community costs and benefits. These wider benefits compel both dependents and non-dependents to both want and reject tourism but it would seem that the play of costs and benefits differs given that the second article showed that dependents perceive social exchange relations differently than non-dependents. More specifically, they tend to perceive more of an exchange in terms of *high prices for tourism shops*. These resources, affordable prices and shops, are valued differently by dependents. Literature shows that residents relate differently with their resources as in the case of outdoor recreation spaces, shopping spaces or cultural resources (Ritchie & Inkari, 2006; Snepenger et al., 2007; Perdue et al., 1987). This seems to be the case between dependents and non-dependents, and high prices and use of tourism shops. The results of the first article also show this group also tends to want more tourism. The tourism dependents thus tend to value different resources than non-dependents and to perceive them linked to different costs; they also have mechanisms to assess the town's resources in the tourism exchange, just as non-dependents do, but the results of their assessment is more positive and, therefore, they want more tourism.

The fourth objective was to identify and assess the role that sociographic variables play in relation to the conjunction of SET and the limits to tourism growth. In terms of the sociographic variables, the ones that were linked to SCC and social exchange relations in the first and second article were gender, tourism dependence, and education. In the first article, women were more willing to accept a higher number of tourists than men. Gender also showed a relation to the first social exchange relation of *high prices for good shops*. According to Wang & Pfister (2008) women tend to perceive more the benefits of downtown revitalization "this result suggests a difference between men and women in their use of the downtown core and/or their disposition toward new retail outlets. (Wang et al. 2008: 92). That women agree less that there are high prices and that shops are for tourist would suggest that they see less of an exchange relation as they enjoy these spaces more. The third qualitative article did not reveal nor explain any differences in term of gender and values.

Education also showed links to impact perceptions and capacity in the first article and to the social exchange relation of *space usage* in the second article. This aligns with literature showing the power of this variable in terms of impact perceptions (Almeida-García et al., 2016; Wan, 2012; Kayat, 2012). Unschooling respondents tended to perceive more that tourism brings leisurely facilities and they also disagreed more that tourism brings noise while in terms of negative impacts, they also tended to perceive that tourism brings higher prices and that tourists get in the way. These mixed results in which less educated residents perceive both negative and positive impacts more does not align with literature where in general less educated respondents perceive impacts under a worse light (Yasong,

2008; Almaeida-García, 2016; Wan, 2012). As it has been mentioned, residents use of resources influences their perceptions of impacts on those resources (Ritchie & Inkari, 2006; Snepenger et al., 2007; Perdue et al., 1987). It would seem that less educated respondents use the resource of leisure facilities in a different manner and, thus, value this resource differently. Respondents with the highest level of education tended to agree that tourism brings leisure facilities and disagree that it brings noise which aligns with literature where higher educational levels have better perceptions of impacts (Yasong, 2008; Almeida-García et al., 2016). Kayat (2012) found that residents with both the highest and lowest educational levels may perceive the benefits of tourism more than other levels but for different reasons. Higher levels of education may be more empowered to reap the benefits of tourism while lower educational levels feel more dependent on it (Kayat, 2012). There is also literature showing that higher educational levels might perceive better impacts because they have more knowledge of the way the tourism industry works (Liu et al., 1987). In terms of the links of education with the social exchange relation of *space usage*, it has been suggested that educational level affects the participation in outdoor leisure activities (Lee, 2001). The leisure facilities in the study area of Besalú are mostly cultural ones but also, more recently, the government of the town has been focusing on enhancing access to the natural surroundings of the town through information, pathways and bicycle lanes (Municipal Government of Besalú, n.d.). The factor of *space usage* suggests that there are differences in terms of education in the way these resources are used and valued as well as their exposure to the costs of noise.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

SET is the most widely used theory to explain resident impact perceptions. This thesis aims to refine the utilization of said theory after identifying some gaps in the literature. The applications of SET have not been chosen randomly but in relation to the limits to tourism growth given the relevance of this topic in the present global context of climate change impacts and environmental degradation linked in particular to tourism.

SET is tautological or locked to empirical testing as it has been explained in the foundational literature of this theory. As Emerson (1976) proposes, once it is chosen as a frame of reference what can be done is to study the flow of resources and what factors alter it. The limits to tourism growth, this is, the exploration of how, why and when tourism can and should be limited can be explained in terms of SET. Given that it is the most widely used theory in the area of resident impact perceptions, linking it

to theoretical applications that are important in the present context is a useful endeavor for both researchers and policy makers.

In general, this thesis shows that resident impact perceptions are a questionable operationalization of social carrying capacity or the limits to tourism growth from the social perspective. The results show a mismatch: on one hand, residents perceived positive impacts of tourism more than negative ones but they did not appear to want more tourists. The qualitative study delved into this aspect. The results shows that some residents even when they valued many aspects of tourism impacts they sought to justify the limits to tourism based on what to them were objective indicators of capacity such as the low availability of beds or lack of space in bars and terraces and the implications for their fellow residents who live in the most crowded streets. They were in fact evaluating the resources of their town and the implications of more tourism for their other fellow residents. Their concerns about space and hotel capacity are understandable given that space is a limited resource in heritage towns. Residents are aware of this which brings hesitation. This conclusion links to degrowth values in tourism. Degrowth proposes finding alternatives to the prevailing economic approach to life and limiting the power of economic considerations through political deliberation. The results show that residents barely relate to tourism in ways that are not economic. This can be explained by the economic crisis that the Municipal government was facing as literature shows that financial recession and crisis may influence the way that residents perceive tourism (Garau-Vadell, et al., 2018). Besalú had obtained considerable financial support from the government from 2004 but by 2013 it needed to identify sources of funding. The qualitative study showed that residents valued tourism as a way for the Municipal Government to finance itself. To the contrary, their understanding to the limits to tourism was not based on a political and ethical understanding of the negative impacts of tourism but on space capacity constraints. They did, on the other hand, consider the impacts of more tourism for their fellow residents. Residents seemed to admit helplessness with words like “we need to make sacrifices” to deal with tourism or “there are things we cannot change”. Degrowth values were confirmed in other instances. Some residents believed that tourists should be helped regardless of their spending admitted that when they have free time to spend in the town center their children play with tourists’ while they get to chat. In this sense, another proposal of degrowth is less work and more free time even though this was not studied in this thesis. The results however suggest that if residents had more free time, as when there is a fair, there would be more conviviality with tourists.

Social exchange relations as structures underlying daily exchanges which have emergent properties were also identified and described. The relations identified suggest that residents identify the cost of

noise with access to leisure facilities, the resource of tourism shops with the cost of high prices; the resource of cultural heritage and jobs with general nuisance of tourism, and the resource of an interesting and attractive city for the cost of staging their culture and heritage. These exchanges can be the focus of future studies to identify how external factors affect the exchange; factors such as the ones proposed in SET: supply, demand and price of the resource or power (Blau, 1964). This study lays the foundation for that type of study in the future following the work of sociologists in topics like networks of support among poor women or the use of advice by specialist groups. This type of study is needed in the host guest exchange in tourism in order to understand it better using SET.

Some of the sociodemographic variables studied showed significant links to SCC, social exchange relations and the values involved in the tourism exchange. There were no significant differences between the perceptions of the impacts of tourism by dependents and non-dependents. Some literature confirms this (Getz, 1994; Ritchie & Inkari, 2006; King et al., 1993; Sheldon, Var, & Var, 1984; Williams & Lawson, 2001; Liu, Sheldon & Var, 1987; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Ryan & Montgomery, 1994). Marrero Rodríguez & Huete Nieves (2013) found no differences in terms of the opinion held by residents dependents and non-dependents of the quality of tourism employment. The results here show, however, that tourism dependents were more willing to accept more tourism. This is explained under the rationality principle in SET; people chose alternatives that have the greatest value for them and for which they have the greatest chance of getting the rewards they want. Tourism dependents value the reward of jobs and tourism has given them this reward. This is an economic or egotistic application of this principle, even though SET literature proposes other principles such as altruism and reciprocity. The inclination of tourism dependents to want more tourism can be explained using this principle. The qualitative study showed however that tourism dependents also had concerns about carrying capacity. Some dependents also seemed to assess the limits to tourism and showed concerns about impacts. This aligns with Marrero Rodríguez & Huete Nieves (2013) where both groups (dependents and non-dependents) were equally critical of the type of employment generated by tourism. Future studies may delve into differences in terms of capacity according to type of employment in general and type of employment in tourism since some literature shows that employees in tourism might have negative attitudes towards tourism related to the bad working conditions in this sector (Teye et al., 2002).

Gender also appears to influence the exchanges and outcomes involved. Women use resources differently as the literature suggests regarding tourism shops and the downtown city center. This may explain why they tended to perceive exchanges involving those resources differently from men. They

also tended to accept more tourism. The qualitative study however failed to identify any differences or account for the differences in terms of gender found in the other two quantitative articles. The literature suggests other explanations for these differences that remain as future research avenues. Studies show that women might be impacted differently by tourism depending on the social fabric of the place and historic factors. This suggests that studies exploring gender may need to take place specific perspectives to account for some differences.

Education also appeared to influence impact perceptions and social exchange relations. More educated residents appeared to perceive more of an exchange in terms of the environment which aligns with literature about tourists indicating that more educated ones have a lower threshold for crowding. Residents with lower education have also been found to perceive tourism impacts differently. They reap the benefits of tourism in a different manner which may influence the manner in which they perceive the exchanges involved. Respondents with a middle level of education seemed unperceptive of exchanges.

Several authors remark that host guest relations and host perceptions remain in great measure alien to extensive and rich theoretical understanding. Even though SET was applied to this topic of the first time conclusively by Ap (1990) it has remained underdeveloped ever since with some exceptions. The contention here is that the social exchange relations that underlie individual daily exchanges in the field of tourism should be identified and categorized just as it has been done in other fields such as relations of support and counsel. This thesis takes a step in that direction by identifying exchanges relations that have already been identified in literature.

SET can also enrich the understanding of sustainable tourism and the study of the limit of tourism growth. In this thesis, SET has been related to carrying capacity, one of the theories that have been used extensively to understand the conditions under which destinations reach limits to growth. If we explain tourism as an exchange system, what are the implications for these exchanges of exceeding capacity limits? How does this affect the perceptions of the exchange via SET variables such as supply, demand, cost and resources? These are the questions for which a research foundation has been established in this thesis.

Values as enablers of exchanges also remain unexplored in tourism host-guest literature. As Emerson (1976) highlighted in early SET literature understanding of role of values in relations to exchange relations can greatly enhance the understanding of support for tourism. Additionally, the links of

exchange relations and the exchange system to values may allow understanding the limits to tourism growth as a variable related to values. Residents resort to these to make sense of the exchanges they make with tourists. Degrowth values are geared to raising the importance of the non-economic costs and benefits of tourism, the need for political debates in the topic that free residents from the obligation to endure endless tourism growth, and an emphasis on environmental and cultural resource conservation. The application of SET to resident impact perceptions shows a highly economic and egotistic slant but SET is a resourceful frame of reference that allows for a wider understanding and application of the principle of rationality that encompasses other types of values related to reciprocity or altruism. The results show that some of the degrowth values were at play in the study area even though there were also the opposite ones at play. This coincides with the results of the first quantitative study where residents showed ambivalence, while they acknowledged positive impacts they also seemed reluctant to an increase in tourism.

All of the objectives of this thesis relate to linking the limits to tourism growth and SET. The limits of tourism growth encompass the planning systems and frameworks that focus on reducing or stabilizing the number of tourists or the impacts of tourism on destinations. It is an object of study that is framed in terms of limiting tourism growth such as sustainability, degrowth, carrying capacity or the limits of acceptable change. SET is a frame of reference that explains a sector of human social interaction. The purpose of this thesis is thus to explain, understand and test the limits to tourism growth in terms of SET. Therefore, it could have benefitted from a greater integration among the focus of the three articles and a more uniform application and use of the sociographic variables. This would have made the whole of the thesis more coherent. A perspective based on values throughout the thesis could have enriched the interpretations of the linkages between carrying capacity and impact perceptions, as well as the exchange relations identified in the second article. Also, the sample for the quantitative article could have been larger for the constructs to have greater reliability. The determination of the sample was statistically determined based on the population of the town centre but given the type of test that was to be performed it could have been adjusted for a higher number. Finally, there are constructs that have been studied in literature the role of which could have been explored as well such as tourism-related quality of life or values (Yu et al., 2018; Mantecon, 2016; Nicholas, Thapa, and Ko 2009; Rasoolimanesh et al. 2015; Wang and Pfister 2008; Jurowski, Uysal, Williams, 1997; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012, Nunkoo & Smith, 2013). The variable of seasonality was not considered even though the collection of data spanned across ten months of the year. It may be the case that during the low season, the carrying capacity is higher and the social Exchange relations different since the resources are

affected differently in each season. This being said, seasonality in Besalú is not as extreme as in other destinations that have been the subject of seasonality and impact perceptions studies.

The main contribution of this thesis is the finding that residents' involvement in tourism is not exclusively based on an evaluation of self-interest. Residents see themselves as individuals but also as a part of a bigger unit, the destination that is their home. They identify and evaluate their own as well as the common resources in order to anticipate costs and benefits for them and also for their neighbors and tourists. Non-economic values are also at play in the way that residents perceive and understand tourists and tourism. As a small town, Besalú has characteristics that may contribute to these results such as stronger community ties and an inclination to consider ethics. In this sense, it would be valuable to make a similar study in a city where social ties are different and understand how residents take into account the impacts of tourism on their neighbors and ethics. This contribution allows for a more humanistic understanding of sustainable tourism in which economic considerations are but one of the factors involved for all the stakeholders involved. It also gives a richer understanding of the limits of tourism growth based on a detailed consideration of multiple factors under SET such as resource availability and values. Finally, communication with residents in relation to tourism can benefit from perspectives that are less economic or utilitarian and that highlight the ethical and cultural benefits of living among tourists. As recommended by Flores Asenjo & Parra Meroño (2010), the study of residents' perceptions regarding the limits of tourism can be very useful when linking tourism marketing and sustainable tourism. If it is studied and valued, the human dimension of tourism can bring greater possibilities for residents to accept it because they might see the opportunities for human and social development it entails.

This thesis also brings the social exchange relation as a unit of analysis to the study of impact perceptions. This contributes new knowledge about social exchanges in tourism from the perspective of residents. The approach is different as it is binary. The value of it lies in that the knowledge provided is more context-based. Benefits are best understood in relation to the costs. For example, a college degree is not a benefit if we have to give our life for it. Along the same lines, exchange relations allow us to know what costs are associated to what benefits and how this factor links to the limits of tourism growth. Destinations need to know the basis for the acceptance of tourism by residents in order to achieve socially sustainable tourism. In this sense, a more context-based knowledge is useful to destination managers, public policy developers, residents, and scholars. In terms of theory, this thesis brings the study of impact perceptions under SET using the social exchange relation as the unit of analysis. This contribution is important because it offers additional knowledge about the exchange

system from the perspective of residents. A different approach to exchanges which is binary is being proposed. The value of this lies in that the knowledge is more context based since benefits are always understood in relation to the costs which allows understanding what costs link to what benefits, and how the relation links to the limits of tourism growth. Destinations need to know the basis for the acceptance of tourism by residents in order to make tourism sustainable social wise. In this sense, a more context-based knowledge is more useful.

This thesis also highlights to the tourism sector that impact perceptions (that residents manifest their agreement with the benefits or their disagreement with the costs) are not linked to their acceptance of tourism. There is literature that operationalizes carrying capacity through these perceptions (Navarro et al., 2012) which highlights the need to deepen research into perceptions as indicators of capacity. Residents who are satisfied with their perceptions may be believed to want more tourism. The results suggest that the links between perceptions of impacts and social carrying capacity must be mediated by other variables which opens future lines of research. Globally, the results of this thesis suggest that carrying capacity might be mediated by the variables of gender and tourism dependence. These contributions can be extrapolated to other destinations since carrying capacity is an indicator and a tool that may be applied in any destination just as impact perceptions.

This tests also explores how residents substantively characterize carrying capacity. Carrying capacity tends to be approached as a specific indicator like, for example, the number of visitors, the level of impacts on resources or use of resources. This thesis explores how residents characterize it by calculating the resources their town has (bars, beds..) and taking their own calculations of capacity. It then juxtaposes this qualitative characterization of capacity with two quantitative studies which confirms that capacity is independent from perceptions and that they may be reluctant about more tourism. The exploration of degrowth values adds the role these values play which suggests that residents are not entirely trapped in economism when perceiving tourism. They not only consider how more tourism will affect them but also their fellow neighbours or the finances of the municipality. It would be adequate to ask whether residents in bigger destinations like cities assess capacity in the same way given that these destinations might have weakened social networks.

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