

**Resident's perceptions and attitude toward the cruise tourism development: insights from an Italian tourism destination**

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### **Abstract**

**Objectives** – The impact of tourism has received much consideration by researchers attempting to investigate the attitudes of the host population toward tourism development. Research has focussed on rural, coastal and urban areas. However, very little research has been carried out in tourism island destinations. Furthermore, research aimed at analysing the perceptions and attitude of residents toward cruise tourism development is still very poor. Moving on from a literature review on community-based tourism, the aim of this study is to contribute towards filling this gap by examining residents' attitudes toward cruise tourism in Messina, a port of call on the island of Sicily (Italy). Since current statistics in the field of community-based tourism report that residents' attitudes are significantly influenced by several socio-economic and demographic characteristics, this study also examined whether these differences exist, within the topics considered in the present paper.

**Methods** – This study uses a sample size of 1,500 residents. Data were collected via a stratified random sample with questionnaires administered face-to-face to residents living at different distances from the port and in different areas of the city.

**Results** – Findings show that residents are expressing an overall positive attitude toward the cruise tourism development. Further, they highlight that significant differences based on socio-economic and demographic characteristics (age, gender, reliance on cruise-related employment, level of education, geographical proximity to tourist areas and port, length of residency and frequency of interaction with tourists) exist in residents' perceptions and attitudes toward cruise tourism development.

**Conclusions** – Perceptions of the local community and its attitude towards the impact of any proposed tourism development model should be taken into account when planning the future of a cruise tourism destination. Local government and policy makers should run internal marketing and communication activities aimed at increasing the favourableness of residents' attitudes toward tourism, delivering tailored messages which demonstrate the positive balance between the positive and negative impacts of tourism.

**Key words:** Cruise tourism, community-based tourism, socio-economic and demographic characteristics, tourism island destinations, Messina.

## 1. Introduction

In the last two decades, the cruise industry has been experiencing a significant expansion (Chin, 2008). It constitutes a significant part of the international worldwide tourism corresponding to 1.6% of the total tourists and 1.9% of the total number of nights (Brida and Zapata, 2010). According to Cruise Lines International Association (2008), the average annual growth rate in the number of worldwide cruise passengers was 7.4% in the period from 1990 to 2007. According to Risposte Turismo (2010), in Italy cruise tourism is mainly concentrated in five regions, i.e.: Latium, Liguria, Veneto, Campania and Sicily. In 2010, the number of cruise passengers in Italy was 9.356 million and the most developed cruise tourism destinations were Civitavecchia (1,945,223 cruise passengers), Venice (1,617,011 cruise passengers) and Naples (1,139,319 cruise passengers).

Cruising is considered to be still in its infancy and research on this sector is in its early stages. In particular, there are few published papers concerning the effects of cruising on the destinations, particularly those related to cost-benefits analysis of this tourism activity. Little research has been devoted to the perceptions and attitudes of residents toward cruise tourism development (Brida, Riaño and Zapata, 2011; Diedrich, 2010; Gatewood and Cameron, 2009; Hritz and Ceci, 2008).

The present research aims at exploring this somewhat neglected area of tourism research by discussing findings of an empirical investigation on a sample of 1,500 residents living in Messina, a cruise tourism destination in the South of Italy (Sicily). In particular, the study is based upon the following research questions:

*Research question 1:*

How does the local community perceive the economic, environmental and socio-cultural impacts (both positive and negative) of cruise tourism?

*Research question 2:*

To what extent do residents support the idea of further cruise tourism development within the destination?

*Research question 3:*

To what extent would the local community support further development of four distinct types of tourism (cruise tourism, sport tourism, sun, sea and sand tourism, and historical/cultural tourism)?

*Research question 4:*

Are there any significant differences in residents' perceptions and attitude towards cruise tourism, based upon their socio-economic and demographic characteristics?

This article is structured as follows: section 2 discusses the impact of cruise tourism, section 3 presents a literature review on the topic of sustainable development and community-based tourism in cruise tourism destinations, section 4 explains the methodology and research design used and section 5 illustrates the findings. Sections 6, 7, 8 and 9 discuss the findings and limitations of the study, thereby setting out the direction of future research and highlighting the implications for management.

## **2. The impacts of cruise tourism development**

Cruise ships generate several impacts (both positive and negative) on the hosting destination: economic, politic, environmental and socio-cultural (Brida and Zapata, 2010). Residents' attitude towards cruise tourism development depends on the perceptions they have about these impacts.

Many economic impacts (direct, indirect and induced) associated with different types of cruise-related expenditures (passengers and crew-related expenditure, vessel-related and supporting expenditure) may potentially benefit the host destination. The direct effect impacts on those organizations who sell goods and services directly to cruise passengers and crew (taxis, souvenirs, tourist excursions, etc) and cruise vessel (port costs, fuel, maintenance, etc). Indirect effects are produced when direct suppliers buy goods and services from other (local) companies. Induced effects arise from the expenditures that direct and indirect recipients make as a result of their increased incomes. Thus, indirect and induced effects create on the whole a sort of "respending effect" by the tourism industry and households on other economic sector of the region (Brida and Risso, 2010; Brida and Zapata, 2010; Dwyer & Forsith, 1998; Dwyer, Douglas and Livaic, 2004). Perceived positive economic impacts can be: more job opportunities, an improvement in standard of living and/or economic growth for locals. In addition to the aforementioned economic effects, cruise tourism generates positive marketing and promotional effects for the hosting destination. During their visit to a cruise destination, passengers have the opportunity to learn about and experience the local tourism attractions. This could influence their likelihood to return to visit the destination as independent land tourists and/or to recommend the destination to friends and relatives (Brida and Risso, 2010) through word-of-mouth, both traditional (WOM) or over the internet (eWOM) (Del Chiappa, 2010). Then, the benefit of showcasing port communities and their tourism destination to thousand of potential repeat visitor is pivotal when assessing the benefits of cruise activity (Gabe, Lynch and McConnon, 2006). This argument is used by policy makers especially when they decide to attract cruise lines and ships in order to become a port of call. Average

expenditure per person depends on the destination and on the category of the port: homeport or port of call (Brida and Zapata, 2010). A homeport is a destination from which a cruise trip start and end, while a port of call is just an intermediate stop during the cruising. It is expected that economic impacts be higher when homeport cruise destinations are considered. According to prior research, this occurs, at least partially, because passengers' expenditure is limited by the length of time that a ship stays in a port with expenditure increasing as the stay of cruise ship in the port increases (Mckee, 1998). Further, passengers' expenditure in homeport cruise destinations is higher than in a port of call because, in the former, cruise activity produces direct impacts on almost every segment of the travel industry (transport, accommodation, restaurants, attractions, retailers, etc). Also the likelihood to revisit the destination could be considered higher for a homeport destination compared to a port of call, since this likelihood is reportedly significantly influenced by the length of stay in port (Gabe, Lynch and McConnon, 2006). Other elements were also found to affect this likelihood, such as: being employed, being a repeated cruise passenger and also cruise tourists that received information onshore (Miriela and Lennie, 2010 cited in Brida et al., 2011). Findings of the aforementioned research are particularly useful in supporting destination managers, local government and policy makers when planning private and public development and formulating marketing strategies aimed at increasing repeat tourism inland visits (Brida et al., 2011). From an economic point of view, prior research seemed to highlight, however, that cruise tourism provides few real jobs and business opportunities for local residents (Brida and Zapata, 2010) and can produce several negative economic impacts such as an increasing in cost of living and/or uneven distribution of benefits across the local community (Brida, Riaño and Zapata, 2011).

Other critical impacts are on the environment. Among these we can cite, for example, trail formation and deterioration, presence of litter, vandalism of natural habitat and physical deterioration (Scherrer, Smith and Dowling, 2011), loss of natural habitat, exploitation of local construction, damage to marine ecosystems, increasing in the use of air travel, congestion and over-crowding, noise and disturbance (Brida, Riaño and Zapata, 2011; Brida and Zapata, 2010; Johnson, 2002). Cruise tourism, as the broader marine transport system (Byrnes and Warnken, 2008), can be considered responsible for producing large quantities of greenhouses gases. According to Eijgelaar, Thaper and Peeters (2010) emissions by cruises consist of two main parts: a) the emission of transport from the tourist's home to the homeport destination and vice versa; b) the emissions caused by the cruise ship itself.

In 2007, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) estimated a global figure of 19.17 Mt CO<sub>2</sub> for all cruise ships (Buhaug et al. 2008, cited in Eijgelaar, Thaper and Peeters, 2010).

Finally, cruise tourism development can produce socio-cultural impacts. Among the positive we can consider: a better understanding and knowledge of other people and cultures, a revitalization in visual and performing arts, an enhancement in the quality of life of local community through an increasingly “sparkling” social and cultural life, etc. However, cruise activity can generate also several negative socio-cultural impacts, such as vandalism of cultural and historic assets and physical deterioration of rock art (Scherrer, Smith and Dowling, 2011), acculturation with respect to ethical values, loss of community cohesion and language loss (Brida, Riaño and Zapata, 2011) or an altering in the way residents can manage their normal daily life because of the presence of cruise tourists.

Although these positive and negative impacts are difficult to quantify, decision makers should consider them when planning the tourism development, trying to achieve a positive balance between these elements. In doing this, they should take into account how residents perceive those impacts as well as their attitude towards the idea of further cruise tourism development. Visitor management practices, operational sustainability and several other measures can be used to regulate the tourism resources and avoid a negative balance between the positive and negative impacts of cruise tourism development (Scherrer, Smith and Dowling, 2011). These include recreation management options, transport options, solid waste management options, renewable energy options (Altinay, Hussain, 2005; Kelly et al., 2007). We can cite, for example, better communication of technical innovations/solution between tour boat/ship operators, naval architect and engineers and/or the introduction of a fuel-consumption-based excise on operator permits (Byrnes and Warnken, 2008). Further, prior research found the impact cruise activity can produce on the hosting destination to be heavily dependent on the type of tourism activities and excursions experienced by passengers visiting the tourism area. Then, other possible measures trying to reduce the negative impacts of cruise tourism can consist in everything that can be done to incentivize low-impact activities to passengers (Johnson, 2006). Other relevant challenges include monitoring the number and type of visitors travelling to the destination (Nyaupane, Morais and Dowler, 2006; Stoeckl, Greiner and Mayocchi, 2006).

### **3. Sustainable development and community-based tourism in cruise tourism destinations**

Nowadays, researchers concur with the idea that sustainability is one of the most important elements for the competitiveness of a tourism destination, if not the most important (Ritchie and Crouch, 2000). According to the World Trade Organization (1996) sustainability includes quality of life for host communities, visitor satisfaction, careful use of natural and social resources, addressing the general objective of achieving a level of harmony among the various types of stakeholders involved in the tourism sector and/or interested in the way tourism in their area is managed and developed.

Tourism can be considered as the main vehicle for economic development in islands (Conlin and Baum 1995; Croes 2006). Local government is therefore expected to give significant financial support to ensure that the tourism sector remains sustainable (incentives, grants, etc), with the aim of avoiding, as much as possible, the creation of those differences within communities, in terms of income and distribution of benefits, that usually exist in islands (Hampton and Christensen 2007; Weaver 1995). In broad terms, local government is not only expected to give economic support to tourism to enable its development and survival, but it is also expected to regulate the environmental and sociocultural impacts deriving from it. Tourism sustainability requires collaborative policymaking between local authorities, government agencies, businesses and host communities, who must work together to plan and regulate tourism development (Vernon et al., 2005). Further, according to Edgell there is a need for "...harmonious relationship between local communities, the private sector, and governments in developmental practices that protect natural, built, and cultural environments in a way compatible with economic growth" (Edgell, 2006: 4). This is particularly true in the case of in island destinations, which require process-oriented planning based on mutual consensus among stakeholders and a significant level of community integration and involvement (Chen 2006).

In sustainable tourism, local communities play an important dual role. Residents are expected to be an integral part of product development (Murphy 1985; Simmons 1994). The local community with its traditions, culture, and authenticity, is one of the main "attractions" for people whose travel reason is to experience and connect with the culture of their destinations. The local community is one of the principle stakeholders as it is the one most closely affected by the positive and negative economic, environmental, and sociocultural impacts. The local community is one of the principle stakeholders as it is the one most closely affected by the positive and negative impacts that tourism development can produce economically,

environmentally and socio-culturally (Besculides, Lee and McCormick, 2002; Madrigal, 1995; Perdue, et al., 1990). Residents should be active participants and beneficiaries of the tourism industry (Mitchell and Reid, 2001). This means that the perceptions of the local community, its expectations and its attitude towards the impact of proposed tourism development model should be taken into account when planning the future of any tourism destination (Mowforth and Munt, 2003). Further, it is useful to study how far the views of stakeholders who most influence the local tourism development converge, and whether they are able to keep up with those of local residents (Del Chiappa, 2011). This is something that should be done over time. According to Doxey's index of irritation, as tourist development proceeds, the relationship between the local community and tourists goes from euphoria to apathy, annoyance and, finally, antagonism (Doxey, 1976).

Prior literature found several factors affecting residents' attitude toward tourism. These can be categorized in extrinsic and intrinsic factors. According to Faulkner and Tideswell (1997), the former refer to the characteristics of the location with respect to its role as a tourist destination while the latter refer to characteristics of host community members. Between the extrinsic factors researchers considered the degree or stage of tourism development (Doxey, 1976; Haukeland, 1984; Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004), the level of economic activity in the host area (Johnson, Snepenger and Akis, 1994), the degree of tourism seasonality (Fredline and Faulkner, 2000), the tourist-guest ratio (Doxey, 1976) and the type of tourist visiting the destination (Nyaupane, Morais and Dowler, 2006; Del Chiappa, 2011). Between intrinsic factors, we can consider the following: perceived balance between positive and negative impacts (Dyer, et al., 2007; Gursoy, Jurowski and Uysal, 2002; Lindberg and Johnson, 1997), level of ecocentric values of local resident (Gursoy, Jurowski and Uysal, 2002), community attachment and concern (Besculides, Lee and McCormick, 2002; Gursoy, Jurowski and Uysal, 2002; McCool and Martin, 1994), involvement in tourism planning (Ap, 1992), geographical proximity to activity concentrations (Fredline and Faulkner, 2000), community attachment, their rural, urban or coastal area of residence (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2010), length of residency (Gu, Ryan, 2008; Sheldon and Abenoja, 2001; Weaver and Lawton, 2001) proximity to tourist zone, degree of tourism concentration (Pizam, 1978), level of contact with tourists, degree of involvement in tourism planning, economic reliance and tourism dependence (Ap, 1992; Smith, Krannich, 1998) and socio-demographic characteristics (Belisle and Hoy, 1980) such as gender (Mason and Cheyne, 2000; Petrzalka et al. 2005; Wang and Pfister, 2008), age (Sheldon and Abenoja, 2001; Wang and Pfister, 2008) and level of education (Sheldon and Abenoja, 2001).



In their study on Key West, Hritz and Cecil (2008) found residents fearing that cruise tourism may threaten the laid-back atmosphere of their location and asking for greater involvement in tourism planning. A study carried out in two communities in Belize reported that locals from the overnight destination prefer to attract stay-over tourists over cruisers. Furthermore, the study showed that both communities believe that hotel owners and managers are more concerned about environmental protection and preservation than cruise lines companies (Diedrich, 2010). Other research found the most part of local community preferring the development of historic/cultural tourism while few people would wish to experience a growth in cruise tourism in their destination (Gatewood and Cameron, 2009).

Brida, Riaño and Zapata (2011) carried a cluster analysis to analyze residents' attitude towards the cruise tourism development in Cartagena de Indias. They considered just economic and socio-cultural impacts. Overall the study revealed a positive recognition of the economic impacts. The same was also for social-cultural impacts, even if to a lower degree. In particular they found four different clusters which they labelled as "opponents", "neutrals", "developers" and "tourism workers". The opponents were found to be mainly women, older age residents, with a bachelor or master degree, living not far from the area visited by cruise passengers and not having a job related to the tourism industry. The majority of neutrals are males, less than 45 years and not having a job related to cruise sector. The majority of supporters do not work in a cruise-related sector and are in the lowest income bracket. Finally, the majority of "tourism workers" work in a related sector and interact frequently with cruise passengers.

#### **4. Methodology**

Messina, the third largest city in Sicily (after Palermo and Catania), is the researched site of this study. Cruise tourism is becoming a significant sector of the local economy.

Indeed, the number of cruise passengers increased from 126.023 in 2000 to 374,441 in 2010 (table 1) thus making Messina the ninth cruise tourism destination in Italy. The number of cruise ships increased from 165 ships in 2005 to 215 in 2010. Messina is a port of call where passengers spend five-six hours visiting the city.

Recently, several studies have been carried out to evaluate the expenditure of cruise passengers (Observatory on Tourism on European Islands, 2009). These studies highlight that most of the expenditure is for tours, food and beverages and shopping. The average spending was around 50-70 Euros with an average expenditure for excursions of 20-30 Euros.

The questionnaire included items selected on the basis of an in-depth review of literature and included 49 questions divided into three sections. The first one focused on socio-demographic information from the interviewees (17 items, 9 of which were used in the present study).

The second section listed 26 items concerning residents' perceptions toward the economic, environmental and socio-cultural impacts generated by the cruise tourism development.

**Table 1 – Italian cruise destinations - number of cruise passengers over time (2000-2010)**

| <b>Year</b>               | <b>2000</b>      | <b>01</b>                           | <b>02</b>  | <b>03</b>  | <b>04</b>  | <b>05</b>  | <b>06</b>  | <b>07</b>  | <b>08</b>  | <b>09</b>  | <b>10</b>  | <b>2010</b>      |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------------|
| <b>Port</b>               | <i>i.v</i>       | <i>Ind. values (year 2000 = 1*)</i> |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            | <i>i.v</i>       |
| Civitavecchia             | 392.103          | 1,2                                 | 1,2        | 1,4        | 1,7        | 2,5        | 3,2        | 4,0        | 4,6        | 4,6        | 5,0        | 1.945.223        |
| Venezia                   | 337.475          | 1,6                                 | 1,5        | 2,0        | 2,0        | 2,4        | 2,6        | 3,0        | 3,6        | 4,2        | 4,8        | 1.617.011        |
| Napoli                    | 405.639          | 1,2                                 | 1,2        | 1,5        | 1,9        | 2,0        | 2,4        | 2,8        | 3,0        | 3,2        | 2,8        | 1.139.319        |
| Genova                    | 407.974          | 1,2                                 | 1,4        | 1,5        | 0,8        | 0,9        | 1,2        | 1,3        | 1,3        | 1,6        | 2,1        | 860.290          |
| Livorno                   | 228.996          | 1,2                                 | 1,3        | 1,6        | 1,7        | 2,0        | 2,7        | 3,1        | 3,5        | 3,7        | 3,6        | 822.554          |
| Savona                    | 120.071          | 0,9                                 | 0,9        | 1,6        | 4,4        | 5,3        | 4,9        | 6,3        | 6,4        | 5,9        | 6,5        | 780.680          |
| Bari                      | 60.660           | 2,4                                 | 3,4        | 3,5        | 4,3        | 4,5        | 5,0        | 5,8        | 7,7        | 9,4        | 8,4        | 507.714          |
| Palermo                   | 157.092          | 1,2                                 | 1,3        | 1,3        | 1,2        | 2,1        | 2,0        | 3,0        | 3,4        | 3,0        | 2,5        | 394.885          |
| Messina                   | 126.023          | 0,9                                 | 1,2        | 1,9        | 1,7        | 1,8        | 2,0        | 2,3        | 2,7        | 2,0        | 3,0        | 374.441          |
| Catania                   | 42.616           | 1,1                                 | 0,5        | 0,6        | 1,4        | 1,6        | 2,0        | 2,6        | 2,3        | 4,3        | 5,9        | 250.384          |
| Olbia                     | 43.376           | 1,0                                 | 1,0        | 0,9        | 0,6        | 0,7        | 1,6        | 2,3        | 4,8        | 5,4        | 4,3        | 184.623          |
| Cagliari                  | 39.491           | 0,4                                 | 0,5        | 1,2        | 1,2        | 0,9        | 0,6        | 1,6        | 2,3        | 2,8        | 4,0        | 159.753          |
| Ancona                    | -                | -                                   | -          | -          | -          | 1,0        | 0,5        | 1,2        | 1,5        | 1,9        | 3,4        | 135.858          |
| Salerno                   | -                | -                                   | -          | -          | -          | -          | -          | 1,0        | 1,7        | 2,0        | 5,3        | 98.815           |
| La Spezia                 | -                | -                                   | 1,0        | 1,7        | 1,6        | 2,4        | 4,1        | 5,2        | 3,2        | 2,0        | 2,9        | 44.874           |
| Portoferraio              | 27.684           | 1,0                                 | 1,0        | 0,8        | 0,8        | 0,7        | 1,0        | 0,9        | 0,8        | 0,5        | 0,9        | 24.473           |
| Trieste                   | -                | -                                   | 1,0        | 1,0        | 0,9        | 1,1        | 3,0        | 4,1        | 6,6        | 0,5        | 1,2        | 15.577           |
| <b>Average - 17 ports</b> | <b>2.389.200</b> | <b>1,2</b>                          | <b>1,3</b> | <b>1,6</b> | <b>1,8</b> | <b>2,2</b> | <b>2,5</b> | <b>3,1</b> | <b>3,5</b> | <b>3,6</b> | <b>3,9</b> | <b>9.356.474</b> |

Fonte: Risposte turismo, 2010.

Finally, the third part asked respondents to express to what extent they agree or disagree with a list of 5 statements specifically chosen to investigate their attitude towards further cruise tourism development. A 5-point Likert scale was used (1 = completely agree; 5 = completely disagree) to indicate their answers. The third part also asked respondents to what extent they would support different types of tourism (cruise tourism, sport tourism, cultural tourism and sea, sun and sand tourism) by using a 5-point Likert (1 = not at all, 5 = very much).

The questionnaire was then pilot tested with a sample of 30 residents. This was done to verify the validity of its content, the comprehensibility of the questions and the scale used to make the assessments. No concerns were reported in the pilot-tests.

Respondents were selected with a quota random sampling procedure. Based on the official data published by ISTAT about the socio-demographic characteristics of Messina's residents, the quotas were set on age (three class were considered: 16-40, 41-65, over 65) and gender and covered cases characterized by heterogeneous demographics features. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews conducted by 10 trained interviewers directly supervised by the authors. Interviewers were instructed about the streets and area where to administrate the questionnaire. Only people aged 16 or above were asked to take part in the survey. A total of 1,500 complete questionnaires was obtained thus making up a sample which is representative of Messina population at a 1% level.

Data were coded and analyzed using SPSS (version 17.0). A series of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-tests were conducted, when appropriate, to indicate whether any significant differences exist in residents' perceptions and attitudes toward cruise tourism, based on socio-economic and demographic characteristics.

## 5. Findings

Table 2 presents the general profile of the sample population. The majority of residents were female (52.8%), whereas males accounted for 47.2% of respondents. Most respondents reported not to be economically dependent on cruise tourism (93.4%).

**Table 2. Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample (%)**

|                                       |      |   |      |
|---------------------------------------|------|---|------|
| <b>Gender</b>                         |      | <b>Distance from home to tourist area</b>             |      |
| Male                                  | 47.2 | Less than two   | 28.2 |
| Female                                | 52.8 | Between 3 and 5                                       | 33.8 |
| <b>Age</b>                            |      | Between 6 and 10                                      | 22.9 |
| Young (18-25)                         | 32.8 | Between 11 and 20                                     | 11.1 |
| Middle aged (36-56)                   | 35.5 | More than 21  | 4    |
| Senior (more than 56)                 | 31.7 | <b>Distance from home to port of Messina</b>          |      |
| <b>Education</b>                      |      | Less than two   | 25.4 |
| Below high school                     | 25.3 | Between 3 and 5                                       | 35   |
| High school                           | 45.2 | Between 6 and 10                                      | 24   |
| Bachelor's degree-Master's degree     | 29.5 | Between 11 and 20                                     | 12.3 |
| <b>Number of members in household</b> |      | More than 21  | 3.3  |
| Less than two                         | 21.6 | <b>Does your income relate to the cruise tourism?</b> |      |
| Three and four members                | 57.8 | Yes   | 6.6  |
| Five or more                          | 20.6 | No  | 93.4 |
| <b>Occupation</b>                     |      | <b>Years of residence in Messina</b>                  |      |
| Administrative worker                 | 26.2 | Less than five  | 4.1  |
| Executive manager                     | 3.9  | Between 6 and 10 years                                | 3.7  |
| Freelance                             | 11.4 | Between 11 and 20 years                               | 10.8 |
| Retired                               | 20.1 | Between 21 and 30 years                               | 26.6 |
| Unemployed                            | 9.5  | More than 31 years                                    | 54.8 |
| Student                               | 19.4 |   |      |
| Other                                 | 9.5  |   |      |

Most respondents reported having a secondary school qualification (45.2%) whereas 29.6% had a university or postgraduate degree. Types of respondents' occupation were: administrative worker (26.2%), executive manager (3.9%), free-lance (11.4%), retired (20.15), unemployed (9.5%), students (19.4%) and other jobs (9.5%). The majority of residents belonged to the 36-56 age group and reported living in household of three or four members (57.8%). Most residents reported a length of residency above 31 years (54.8%) and living 3-5 km away from the main tourist area (33.8%) and the port (35%).

The findings of the study (table 3) show that respondents think that, on the whole, cruise tourism is bringing more benefits than costs ( $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = 1.162$ ). Further, results show that respondents expressed low concern or "neutral" responses ( $M \leq 3$ ) toward all but one statement used to assess their perceptions about the negative impacts arising from the cruise tourism development. In particular, they appeared to be concerned by the idea that most of the benefits of cruise tourism go in the hands of external business investors ( $M = 3.27$ ,  $SD = 1.199$ ).

At the same time, respondents displayed positive attitudes toward some of the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of cruise tourism. The benefits of cruise tourism in terms of improvement in private investments and infrastructure ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 1.124$ ), job creation ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = 1.234$ ), improved quality of restaurants, hotels and retail facilities (Mean = 3.41,  $SD = 1.143$ ), increasing the opportunities of cultural exchange (Mean = 3.56,  $SD = 1.138$ ), exploitation of local identity/authenticity (Mean = 3.48,  $SD = 1.128$ ) and cultural heritage (Mean = 3.30,  $SD = 1.153$ ) were highly ranked by the respondents.

Respondents were also asked whether they would support additional cruise tourism development. They reported a positive attitude about this possibility. In particular, they think that local institutions should incentivize this kind of tourism through subsidies, tax cuts ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 1.118$ ), revitalizing the area inside the center ( $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 1.016$ ) and outside the city center ( $M = 3.76$ ,  $SD = 1.118$ ). However, when they were asked to assess to what extent they would support four different types of tourism, cruise tourism was not the favorite. In particular, results showed that the local community would rather see the development of historic/cultural tourism ( $M = 3.92$ ,  $SD = 1.144$ ) followed by sea, sun and sand tourism ( $M = 3.86$ ,  $SD = 1.115$ ), cruise tourism ( $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = 1.202$ ) and sport tourism ( $M = 3.16$ ,  $SD = 1.360$ ). This seems to confirm prior pioneer research aimed at analyzing residents' perceptions and attitude toward the development of cruise tourism (Gatewood and Cameron, 2009).

**Table 3 – Mean scores for the questionnaire items and results of ANOVA and independent t –tests (\* significant at 0.05 level, \*\* significant at 0.01 level)**

| Statements: Cruise tourism...   | Mean | S.D   | Gender         | Age            | Employment reliance | Level of education | Residence-port distance | Residence-tourism area | Length of residency | Contact with tourists |
|---|------|-------|----------------|----------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
|   |      |       |                |                |                     |                    |                         |                        |                     |                       |
| <b>Positive economic impacts</b>  |      |       |                |                |                     |                    |                         |                        |                     |                       |
| Increases public investments and infrastructures                              | 3.14 | 1.222 | 1.289          | <b>3.867*</b>  | -.231               | <b>21.213**</b>    | 1.350                   | <b>4.718**</b>         | .791                | .759                  |
| Increases private investments and infrastructures                             | 3.26 | 1.124 | 1.470          | <b>3.840*</b>  | -1.426              | <b>8.422**</b>     | 1.374                   | 1.562                  | 1.699               | 1.100                 |
| Increases job opportunities   | 3.33 | 1.234 | -.512          | 2.058          | <b>-2.632**</b>     | <b>7.887**</b>     | <b>2.605*</b>           | <b>4.826**</b>         | 1.535               | 2.010                 |
| Increases the income of local people  | 2.96 | 1.151 | -1.485         | 2.403          | <b>-5.941**</b>     | <b>7.549**</b>     | 2.335                   | <b>3.782**</b>         | .815                | <b>5.595**</b>        |
| <b>Positive socio-cultural impacts</b>  |      |       |                |                |                     |                    |                         |                        |                     |                       |
| Enhances the quality of life  | 2.98 | 1.113 | .608           | <b>4.551*</b>  | <b>-4.197**</b>     | <b>6.012**</b>     | <b>3.351**</b>          | 1.970                  | <b>3.002*</b>       | <b>7.546**</b>        |
| Allows to meet new people and to experience new culture                       | 3.56 | 1.138 | -.941          | <b>7.482**</b> | <b>-1.963*</b>      | <b>5.590**</b>     | <b>2.398*</b>           | .219                   | .382                | <b>10.506**</b>       |
| Enhances the local offer of cultural entertainment activities and attractions | 3.22 | 1.080 | <b>-2.151*</b> | 1.271          | -1.238              | <b>8.921**</b>     | 1.961                   | 1.291                  | 1.168               | <b>7.631**</b>        |
| Makes the best of this location's identity and authenticity                   | 3.48 | 1.128 | -.032          | 2.231          | -.575               | <b>10.344**</b>    | 1.728                   | .301                   | .781                | <b>2.819*</b>         |
| Enhances the quality of restaurants, hotels and retail facilities             | 3.41 | 1.143 | .070           | <b>6.432**</b> | -1.210              | <b>9.184**</b>     | <b>3.013*</b>           | .720                   | .440                | <b>2.392*</b>         |
| Improves the safety and security of the city                                  | 2.89 | 1.083 | 1.553          | 2.489          | -1.615              | <b>5.018**</b>     | <b>3.387**</b>          | <b>2.888*</b>          | 2.121               | <b>4.625**</b>        |
| Enhances social and cultural life for local people                            | 3.13 | 1.110 | .974           | <b>3.008*</b>  | <b>-2.242*</b>      | <b>4.184*</b>      | <b>2.898*</b>           | <b>2.596*</b>          | 1.205               | <b>6.983**</b>        |
| <b>Positive environmental impacts</b>   |      |       |                |                |                     |                    |                         |                        |                     |                       |
| Incentivizes the preservation of the environment                              | 2.88 | 1.169 | -.197          | 1.829          | <b>-2.229*</b>      | <b>4.617**</b>     | <b>2.553*</b>           | <b>4.374**</b>         | .698                | <b>3.944**</b>        |

Table 3 – Continued

| Statements: Cruise tourism...  | Mean | S.D   | Gender | Age            | Employment reliance | Level of education | Residence-port distance | Residence-tourism area | Length of residency | Contact with tourists |
|--|------|-------|--------|----------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
|  |      |       |        |                |                     |                    |                         |                        |                     |                       |
| Incentivizes better infrastructures (roads, water supply, etc)             | 2.76 | 1.241 | .864   | .047           | -.579               | <b>13.594**</b>    | <b>3.365**</b>          | <b>5.281**</b>         | 1.177               | 1.762                 |
| Enhance the quality of public services                                     | 2.84 | 1.196 | 1.439  | .116           | -1.420              | <b>18.454**</b>    | <b>3.279*</b>           | <b>5.332**</b>         | .902                | 1.228                 |
| Allows to preserve and to exploit the local cultural heritage              | 3.30 | 1.153 | .375   | 1.049          | -1.341              | <b>12.663**</b>    | .773                    | 1.461                  | 2.066               | 1.690                 |
| Enhances the physical and socio-cultural settings                          | 3.03 | 1.167 | 1.284  | .217           | -1.726              | <b>9.851**</b>     | .347                    | .078                   | .900                | <b>4.061**</b>        |
| <b>Negative economics impacts</b>  |      |       |        |                |                     |                    |                         |                        |                     |                       |
| Increases the cost of living   | 2.67 | 1.225 | 1.059  | 1.131          | -1.294              | .054               | <b>5.457**</b>          | <b>6.876**</b>         | <b>4.420**</b>      | <b>2.721*</b>         |
| Produces benefits that go to external business investors for the most part | 3.27 | 1.199 | .533   | <b>6.605**</b> | -.464               | <b>3.921*</b>      | <b>3.131*</b>           | .393                   | .413                | 1.517                 |
| Subtracts financial resources from other potential and relevant projects   | 2.63 | 1.151 | 1.107  | 2.613          | <b>2.768**</b>      | <b>4.034*</b>      | 2.220                   | 2.055                  | 1.128               | 1.268                 |
| <b>Negative socio-cultural impacts</b>                                     |      |       |        |                |                     |                    |                         |                        |                     |                       |
| Increases car-traffic  | 2.45 | 1.185 | 1.083  | <b>4.151*</b>  | .823                | <b>13.477**</b>    | .439                    | 1.125                  | .869                | .897                  |
| I Increase the number of minor crimes                                      | 2.53 | 1.238 | .557   | <b>3.613*</b>  | .610                | <b>20.168**</b>    | .659                    | 1.917                  | <b>3.478**</b>      | 1.381                 |
| Forces me to change the way I manage my daily life                         | 2.03 | 1.172 | .806   | <b>6.231**</b> | <b>-3.112**</b>     | <b>4.909**</b>     | <b>4.835**</b>          | <b>7.270**</b>         | <b>3.996**</b>      | <b>6.440**</b>        |
| <b>Negative environmental impacts</b>                                      |      |       |        |                |                     |                    |                         |                        |                     |                       |
| Alters the ecosystem (sand erosion, flora e fauna are damaged, etc )       | 2.56 | 1.228 | -.431  | .388           | 1.432               | .728               | .333                    | .665                   | <b>2.481*</b>       | 1.997                 |
| Increases air and marine pollution   | 2.87 | 1.261 | -.932  | .168           | .704                | .066               | <b>2.577*</b>           | .317                   | 1.354               | .357                  |

Table 3 – Continued

| Statements: Cruise tourism...  | Mean | S.D   | Gender         | Age             | Employment reliance | Level of education | Residence-port distance | Residence-tourism area | Length of residency | Contact with tourists |
|--|------|-------|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
|  |      |       |                |                 |                     |                    |                         |                        |                     |                       |
| Makes local entertainment facilities and public area overcrowded   | 2.63 | 1.213 | .581           | .101            | .625                | <b>6.666**</b>     | <b>3.149*</b>           | <b>3.679**</b>         | <b>3.588**</b>      | .496                  |
| Produces significant levels of waste/garbage   | 2.80 | 1.329 | .639           | 1.413           | -.217               | 1.253              | 1.747                   | 1.653                  | <b>4.779**</b>      | .395                  |
| <b>Overall opinion about tourism</b>   |      |       |                |                 |                     |                    |                         |                        |                     |                       |
| Overall it brought more benefits than costs  | 3.43 | 1.162 | -.991          | <b>7.497**</b>  | -1.172              | <b>13.342**</b>    | 1.253                   | .857                   | <b>3.698**</b>      | 1.447                 |
| <b>Support for cruise tourism development</b>  |      |       |                |                 |                     |                    |                         |                        |                     |                       |
| The number of cruise ships that arrive in our city should be limited/stopped                                   | 2.41 | 1.223 | -.733          | .708            | .696                | <b>3.726*</b>      | <b>3.029*</b>           | <b>5.516**</b>         | 1.646               | 1.106                 |
| Local institutions should attract (through subsidies, tax cuts, etc) cruise ships                              | 3.80 | 1.118 | 1.312          | <b>5.622**</b>  | <b>-3.947**</b>     | <b>8.378**</b>     | 1.278                   | 1.191                  | 2.199               | <b>2.657*</b>         |
| The revitalization of retail facilities in the city center would be useful to attract more cruise tourism      | 3.95 | 1.016 | -.461          | <b>7.400**</b>  | -.370               | <b>10.274**</b>    | 1.247                   | .359                   | <b>3.801**</b>      | 1.207                 |
| The revitalization of retail facilities outside the city center would be useful to attract more cruise tourism | 3.76 | 1.118 | .205           | <b>10.342**</b> | -1.427              | <b>3.667*</b>      | <b>3.928**</b>          | <b>2.665*</b>          | <b>3.641**</b>      | 1.833                 |
| <b>Which type of tourism would you support the most?</b>   |      |       |                |                 |                     |                    |                         |                        |                     |                       |
| Cruise tourism   | 3.44 | 1.202 | -.131          | <b>11.349**</b> | <b>-4.571**</b>     | <b>5.582**</b>     | 2.347                   | <b>3.620**</b>         | <b>3.079*</b>       | <b>8.613**</b>        |
| Sport tourism  | 3.16 | 1.360 | <b>5.813**</b> | 2.058           | -.959               | <b>10.258**</b>    | 1.328                   | <b>3.038*</b>          | <b>14.763**</b>     | <b>2.631*</b>         |
| Sea, sun and sand tourism  | 3.86 | 1.115 | .606           | 1.748           | -1.912              | <b>23.937**</b>    | <b>6.343**</b>          | 2.195                  | <b>4.102**</b>      | <b>4.052**</b>        |
| Historical/cultural tourism  | 3.92 | 1.144 | -1.707         | <b>8.527**</b>  | -1.956              | <b>19.348**</b>    | <b>4.026**</b>          | <b>4.709**</b>         | .657                | <b>2.578**</b>        |

When the statement “Overall, cruise tourism brought more benefits than costs” is considered, significant differences were found based on age ( $F = 7.497, p < 0.01$ ), level of education ( $F = 13.342, p < 0.01$ ) and length of residency ( $F = 3.698, p < 0.01$ ). In particular, middle aged people ( $M = 3.59, SD = 1.147$ ), average educated residents ( $M = 3.63, SD = 1.218$ ) and those people residing in Messina for more than 30 years ( $M = 3.52, SD = 1.153$ ) assess the balance between positive and negative impacts more positively than the others. Surprisingly, our findings do not show any significant difference based on gender, cruise-related employment, frequency of contacts with tourists, geographical proximity to both tourist areas. Also, our findings seem not to confirm, at least not fully, the results of prior research aimed at investigating residents’ perceptions and attitude toward tourism development (not specifically in the case of cruise tourism development). However, a deeper analysis on each of the positive and negative impacts of cruise tourism reveals that all the socio-economic and demographic variables considered can be taken to be a discriminator of residents’ perceptions and attitude toward cruise tourism development. Unsurprisingly, for example, people showing employment reliance on cruise sector gave a higher assessment for several statements, such as “Cruise tourism increase job opportunities” ( $t = -2.632, p < 0.01, M = 3.65$ ), “Cruise tourism increases the income for local people” ( $t = -5.941, p < 0.01, M = 3.62$ ), “Cruise tourism enhances the quality of life” ( $t = -4.197, p < 0.01, M = 3.44$ ) and “Cruise tourism incentivizes the preservation of the environment” ( $t = -2.229, p < 0.05, M = 3.14$ ). Gender was found to be a discriminator for only one statement, that is “Cruise tourism enhances the local offer of cultural entertainment activities/attractions” ( $t = -2.151, p < 0.05$ ) with females giving a higher assessment ( $M = 3.28, SD = 1.087$ ) than males ( $M = 3.16, SD = 1.070$ ).

When the different statements used to investigate to what extent residents would support further cruise tourism development are considered, all but one of the socio-economic and demographic variables were found discriminating the perceptions and attitudes of residents. No significant differences was found based on gender.

Finally, all the socio-economic and demographic variables were found to be discriminating the extent by which respondents would like to support the four types of tourism we considered in the study. For example, gender differences were found to impact the extent by which respondents would support sport tourism ( $t = 5.813, p < 0.01$ ) with males supporting this type of tourism more ( $M = 3.37, SD = 1.342$ ) than females ( $M = 2.96, SD = 1.349$ ).

When just the extent by which respondents would support further cruise tourism development is considered, we found significant differences based on the following socio-economic and demographic variables: age ( $t = 11.349, p < 0.01$ ), employment reliance ( $t = -4.571, p < 0.01$ ),



level of education ( $t = 5.582, p < 0.01$ ), geography proximity to tourism area ( $t = 3.620, p < 0.01$ ), length of residency ( $t = 3.079, p < 0.05$ ) and contacts frequency with tourist ( $t = 8.613, p < 0.01$ ). In particular, further development of cruise tourism seems to be supported mainly by residents whose income depends on the cruise sector ( $M = 3.98, SD = 1.167$ ), middle-aged ( $M = 3.55, SD = 1.196$ ), highly educated ( $M = 3.55, SD = 1.195$ ), living close to the tourism area (Mean = 3.61,  $SD = 1.1668$ ), residing in Messina for less than 5 years ( $M = 3.58, SD = 1.058$ ) and interacting intensively with tourists in their daily life ( $M = 4.38, SD = .990$ ).

## **6. Discussion**

Ensuring the sustainable development of tourism destination is very difficult and requires collaborative policymaking between local authorities, government agencies, businesses and host communities, who must all work together to plan and regulate tourism development. Prior research indicated that if tourism planning and management is not managed properly, support is likely to reduce as tourism develops. This occurs also when cruise tourism destinations are specifically considered. Nevertheless, research aimed at analysing the perceptions and attitude of residents toward cruise tourism development is still very poor.

The aim of this study was to investigate this somewhat neglected area of tourism research aimed at investigating residents' perceptions and attitudes toward the cruise tourism development within the city of Messina, a call port in Sicily. Given the importance of resident's input in tourism development (Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004), our findings can usefully contribute to the academic debate on community-based tourism and can also support policy makers' in their effort towards a more sustainable model for cruise tourism destinations.

In particular, our findings draw attention to two main points. Firstly, they report residents expressing an overall positive attitude toward the cruise tourism development with rare concerns about the negative impacts it could generate. Secondly, they highlight that several socio-economic and demographic characteristics are discriminating the residents' perceptions about the benefits/ costs of cruise tourism development and the extent by which they would like to support further developments of this tourism market. In particular, further developments of cruise tourism market appeared to be most wanted by residents whose income depends on the cruise sector, middle-aged people, highly educated, living close to the tourism area, residing in Messina since more less than 5 years and interacting intensively with tourists. Then, our findings partially confirm prior research reporting "tourism workers"

working in a related sector and interacting frequently with cruise passengers (Brida, Riaño and Zapata, 2011).

However, when other types of tourism were also considered, residents reported to prefer historic/cultural tourism followed by sea, sun and sand tourism, cruise tourism thus confirming its ranking in prior pioneer research (Gatewood and Cameron, 2009).

## **7. Limitations**

Although our findings contribute to investigate a somewhat neglected area in tourism research, the study does have some limitations.

Firstly, the quota sample was built considering only two of the several socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the local population. Furthermore, the sample we used cannot be considered as an “area sample” even if interviewers were instructed to make interview in the different area/neighbourhoods of the city. This was because to the best authors’ knowledge, no data regarding income level, education level and economic dependency on tourism, etc are available for Messina. Thus, findings cannot be generalized. The authors would therefore caution the readers evaluating the findings of the present study.

Further, the study considered just some of the intrinsic factors that, according to prior research, discriminate residents’ perceptions and attitude towards tourism development.

Finally, findings focus on just one cruise tourism destination and even if they seem to confirm some pioneer research on community based-tourism in the cruise sector they should be considered “site-specific”.

Finally, the study did not analyze to what extent the residents’ perceptions and attitude towards cruise tourism are consistent/coherent with the real impact that cruise tourism is actually having in Messina. The reason for this is that data measuring the impact of cruise tourism in Messina are still scarce, so that it is not possible to assess properly either the economic, environmental and socio-cultural impacts of this kind of tourism or the way it helps to enhance the destination brand (awareness and image), by spreading positive word-of-mouth recommendations (both online and offline) about the destination and increasing the likelihood that a cruise tourist could return to Messina as an “inland” tourist (marketing impacts).

## **8. Future research**

Aside from the limitations just discussed, the present study does highlight several possible future research paths.

The study could be repeated in other cruise tourism destinations in order to verify if its findings can be generalized and/or if they change according to the extrinsic factors of the tourism destination chosen as research site (i.e, the degree or stage of tourism development, the level of economic activity in the host area, the seasonality of tourism, the type of cruise tourism destination to be considered – port of call or home port –, etc). It could also be interesting to carry out a cluster analysis by using the same sample we used in the present study. Future research could investigate the role that other intrinsic variables (community involvement, community attachment, etc) can exert in discriminating residents' perceptions and attitudes toward cruise tourism development. Finally, future research could be carried out to measure the overall impact (economic, environmental, socio-cultural and marketing) of cruise tourism and to assess how far the local residents' perception of these impacts corresponds to the reality.

## **9. Management implications**

According to Lindberg and Johnson (1997) and Madrigal (1995), research findings highlight the pivotal role of internal marketing and communication operations. Indeed, in an effort to increase the favourableness of residents' attitudes toward tourism, local government and policy makers should analyze the different expectations of local stakeholders and then run persuasive communication activities delivering a message which focuses on the positive balance between the positive and negative impacts of tourism (Perdue, Long and Allen, 1990). This is needed because residents cannot be expected to be fully cognizant of the impacts arising from the cruise tourism development and/or they could evaluate these impacts more negatively.

Thus, persuasive communication should not simply reaffirm prior beliefs (e.g. cruise tourism created new jobs) but strengthen the evaluation aspects of these beliefs (for example stating that creating new jobs is important given the high unemployment in the area). Furthermore, messages should be tailored coherently with the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of residents, to their current attitudes and corresponding latitude of acceptance. This latter is necessary in order to avoid the cognitive dissonance.

Messages should be presented not only by local institution and policy makers. This is because their credibility could be questioned by local community as they could be considered "politically-minded". To involve impartial source of information (university, research centres, etc) or organization not belonging to the local community could help in increasing the credibility of the message source (Lindberg and Johnson, 1997).

Finally, in order to effectively increase resident's support for a given project, messages should be obviously tailored according to the different segment of residents to be considered (Brida, Riaño and Zapata, 2011). Indeed, each segment is expected to have a different attitude towards tourism and different expectations regarding government's role in development (Madrigal, 1995).

Findings remind destination manager and policy makers about the importance of involving the local community before tourism actions are taken and the need to truly understand and monitor over time how resident perceive the impacts of cruise tourism development. The measurement of residents' perception should be used as one of several indicators to monitor and assess the tourism sustainability of a destination (Choi and Sirakaya, 2005) as well as its likelihood of decline (Diedrich and García-Buades, 2009).

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