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# 11 Residents' perceptions of cruise tourism in an overcrowded city: The case of Venice

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## The objectives of this chapter are to:

- Study and profile a quota sample of residents in Venice, a homeport in Italy characterized by overtourism, based on their perceptions and attitudes toward the development of cruise tourism.
- Introduce three clusters derived from the study findings, namely 'cautious', 'optimistic' and 'opposers' that significantly differ according to their economic reliance on cruise tourism, relatives' economic reliance on cruise activity, education level and geographical proximity to the cruise port area.
- Address both theoretical contributions and managerial implications, and give future research venues.

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**Keywords:** Overtourism, cruise tourism, community-based tourism, Venice, cluster analysis, homeport Italy.

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## Introduction

Tourism is one of the most important industries in Europe: it represents 10% of the European Union GDP and 12 million people are employed in this sector (UNWTO, 2018). Due to its important contribution to the economy and its impact on the community, it affects the everyday life of residents, both in a positive and negative way. Within the industry, cruise tourism is the fastest growing segment of leisure tourism (Klein, 2011). In the last twenty years, the cruise sector has increased significantly, amounting to 24.7 million passengers in 2016 (CLIA, 2018) and employing 1,021,681 people around the world (BREA, 2017). Further, the cruise sector produces \$57.9 billion in direct expenditures, thus creating a total economic output of \$125.96 billion worldwide. In this scenario, academic research has devoted to analyze the residents' perceptions and attitudes toward cruise tourism development (i.e. Brida et al., 2011; Del Chiappa & Abbate, 2016). However, studies have mostly analyzed cruising destinations in the Caribbean, Arctic and the polar areas (Hritz & Cecil 2008; Diedrich 2010; Klein 2010; Stewart et al., 2013; Heeney, 2015; Stewart et al., 2015; Jordan & Vogt, 2017) and, recently, also in the Mediterranean area (Marušić et al., 2008; Brida et al., 2012; Peručić & Puh, 2012; Pulina et al., 2013; Del Chiappa & Abbate 2016; Del Chiappa et al., 2017; Del Chiappa, et al., 2018b; Del Chiappa, et al., 2018c), mainly focusing on port-of-call cruise destinations. Despite this, only few studies have been carried out on homeport cruise destinations so far (Brida & Zapata 2010), and very few studies exist on destinations where the number of tourists creates massive overcrowding.

This study was therefore carried out by surveying a quota sample of 354 individuals residing in Venice. Venice was selected as the research setting for this study for two main reasons. First, it is the second homeport in the Mediterranean area and one of the most famous tourism destinations worldwide, with around 24 million tourists a year. Second, it is considered to be affected by the so-called overtourism phenomenon (Seraphin et al., 2018). Anti-tourism movements have been growing in the last few years, voicing their concerns toward the continuous growth of the tourism phenomenon in the city, particularly toward cruise-related activities. This renders the research setting particularly interesting for the purposes of this study. Specifically, this paper aims to profile residents in Venice according to their perceptions towards the impacts of cruise tourism, and to ascertain whether there are significant differences among the clusters based on the socio-demographic traits of respondents.

## Literature review

Considering the residents' perceptions, expectations and attitudes towards the impact of a prospective tourism development is pivotal for planning the future of any tourism destination (e.g. Sharpley, 2014), especially to achieve sustainable tourism development and to ensure the community members' support for tourism projects (Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2009). Most of the community-based studies are based on social exchange theory framework (Ap & Crompton, 1993) which links the costs and benefits for the local population with its willingness to support tourism. Indeed, residents will be more inclined to support tourism development when they perceive that the benefits are greater than the related costs. Recent academic studies mainly support this theory, revealing that local communities recognize both positive and negative consequences arising from tourism (Andereck et al., 2005) and their perceptions influence their support (or lack thereof) of tourism development.

In the last decades, community-based studies have sought to understand which factors can affect residents' perceptions and attitudes toward tourism development, and which of these are classifiable as extrinsic factors and intrinsic factors (Faulkner & Tideswell, 1997).

Extrinsic factors mainly refer to characteristics of a tourist destination (e.g. tourism seasonality, the stage of tourism development, tourist-guest ratio, etc.) (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000; Nyaupane et al., 2006) and they are likely correlated with the different life-cycle stage of the specific destination (Butler, 1980), where the attitude towards tourism development decreases over time with the growth of tourism flows (Papathanassis, 2017; Del Chiappa et al., 2018a). On the other hand, intrinsic factors refer to the residents' individual characteristics (e.g. socio-demographic characteristics), their environmental attitudes and beliefs, their economic reliance to tourism, and their perception of positive and negative impacts arising from the tourism development (e.g. Del Chiappa et al., 2018a). Social exchange theory proposes that when residents perceive that benefits from tourism are greater than costs, they are more willing to support tourism development (Ap, 1992).

Hence, recent studies of cruise tourism have moved to analyze the residents' perceptions and attitudes towards it (e.g. Hritz & Cecil, 2008; Brida et al., 2014; Del Chiappa et al., 2018c), thus expanding and deepening our understanding about the perceived impacts of cruise activity within the host community. Existing research highlights that residents usually show