

# Quality of Life of Indianapolis Residents: The Role of Cultural Tourism and a Sense of Community

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Urban regeneration and cultural development strategies have become increasingly integrated (Worpole, 1991), and cultural tourism, in particular, is increasingly used as a strategic tool to meet the needs of visitors and local residents (Yang & Shin, 2008). Indianapolis has focused on arts and culture by launching a cultural tourism strategic initiative to enhance visitors' cultural experiences, improve residents' quality of life and foster a stronger sense of community. The Indianapolis example may provide support for the case that cultural heritage tourism can enhance local values, contribute to positive social attitudes and strengthen the sense of local identity (Coccosis, 2009). This study attempts to measure public support for the city's cultural tourism strategy by investigating the relationship of Indianapolis' residents' awareness, perceived benefits, and enjoyment of cultural tourism with the sense of community and quality of life via a structural model approach. A total of 350 Indianapolis residents who attended downtown cultural and sporting events participated in the study via convenience sampling in 2011. The overall fit indices for the hypothesised model suggest that the model was a fair fit. Residents who felt a greater sense of community and acknowledged greater benefits than their counterparts were more likely to rate their quality of life as better. Tourism development administrators should involve residents in the planning stages, more effectively communicate indirect host community benefits, and address how social costs, if any, would be mitigated.

*Keywords:* quality of life; cultural tourism; sense of community

## Introduction

Tourism is directly responsible for 5% of the world's Gross Domestic Product and employs one out of every 12 people in advanced and emerging economies (World Tourism Organisation, 2012). According to Global Insight (2006), Indiana tourism generated 4.7% of the Gross State Product and supported 257,785 jobs. Tourism thus presents opportunities for host communities, visitors or neighbouring community residents within proximity of the tourism activity to create both economic and social-cultural value. For example, researchers have noted that cities and townships increasingly rely on tourism for economic regeneration and strategic development (Getz 2012; Law, 2002; Rogerson, 2004). In addition, the interaction between tourists and hosts has been seen to increase the awareness of cultural values, practices and heritage (Li 2003; Prentice 2003), as well as interest in expanding education and knowledge (Hamilton et al. 2007; Nyaupane, Morais, & Dowler, 2006). Other social-cultural effects of tourism include improved awareness and a greater sense of civic pride (Cheng & Jarvis 2010; Fredline, 2005), and the creation of nonmarket cultural values (Throsby, 2003).

Since the 1980s, Indianapolis has strategically expanded tourism development via a mix of conventions and meetings, alongside sport- and culture-related initiatives. It is believed that capitalising on the city's tourism amenities and attributes would both attract tourists and improve the quality of life for residents. To date, Indianapolis offers 745,000 square feet of exhibition space, and the convention facility is linked by climate-controlled skywalks to more hotel rooms than in any other US city. The idea of the creative or cultural district serving to create both economic and community value is popular in many urban areas (Bell & Jayne, 2004). When arts and culture are effectively adopted as entertainment and commodity, cultural clusters attract spending and investment (Hing, 2008). Indianapolis is home to six uniquely diverse and authentic cultural districts, ranging from the artsy theatre district called 'Mass Ave' to the hip bar and restaurant scene in Broad Ripple Village. A cultural trail connects these six neighbourhoods and entertainment amenities along the way and serves as the

downtown hub for the entire central Indiana greenway system. A range of local small scale to mega international cultural events, either targeting specific interest groups or appealing to the wider general population, are held in the city throughout the year. Tangible and intangible cultural tourism offerings include art and music festivals, culinary fairs, showcases of heritage arts and crafts, artistic performances, historic monuments and sites, heritage and living museums, etc.

Cultural and heritage tourism is not a new phenomenon and has been regarded for many years as a catalyst for socio-economic growth and development. Cultural tourism includes cultural attractions, sports, living heritage, recent nostalgia, and the daily life of local communities (Howie, 2000). Therefore, it is essential to understand how the Indianapolis host community perceives and is impacted by such tourism related activities. This study will attempt to measure the public's attitudes towards the city's cultural tourism strategy by identifying the residents' perceptions about cultural tourism development, specifically, their awareness, perceived benefits, enjoyment, sense of community and quality of life.

## Related Literature

Governments consider residents' quality of life to be an integral component in their urban development agenda (Galloway, 2006). Various factors contribute to quality of life, such as satisfaction with employment and income (Brown, 1993), community infrastructure (Filkins, Allen, & Cordes, 2000), and satisfaction with government and non-profit services (Sirgy, Gao, & Young, 2008). Baker and Palmer (2006), for example, demonstrated the details of a systematic process and outcomes of quality of life. Their model explains that community pride and community elements are strong predictors of quality of life. Recreation participation and length of residency were also included in their model, but the impact of those variables on quality of life was negative. In a similar vein, Mak, Cheung, and Law (2009) reported that social support played a prominent role in the sense of community and that the sense of community is associated with quality of life.

Research has indicated that the sense of community is an indicator of quality of life among residents.

A sense of community is 'a feeling that members have a belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group and a shared faith that their members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together' (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9). Feelings of belongingness and identification with the community are central components to evaluate the sense of community. The community may be both constructed through formal and informal connections between social groups, based on physical or geographical locations such as neighbourhoods, towns, and cities (Cicognani et al., 2008).

A sense of community is a multidimensional construct that encompasses various concepts such as social participation, social identity, social integration and sense of place. It has parallels with Putnam's (2010) emphasis on social capital, in that connected and inclusive communities are seen to positively add to society. Researchers generally agree that the more residents feel a sense of community, the more likely their quality of life is enhanced (Auh & Cook, 2009; Hombrados-Mendieta, Gomez-Jacinto, & Dominguez-Fuentes, 2009). According to Albanesi, Cicognani, and Zani (2007), a sense of community is associated with social well-being. In order to enhance social well-being, Albanesi et al. suggested that providing opportunities to experience a sense of belonging to the peer group and promote pro-social behaviours in the community is essential. Therefore, positive feelings, attachment to a community, and connection with other residents are fundamental aspects of quality of life.

Tourism activities can develop this sense of community and eventually enhance the quality of life of residents. Governments' initiatives to develop tourism tend to be successful if residents' attitudes towards tourism are taken into consideration (Oviedo-Garcia, Castellanos-Verdugo, & Martin-Ruiz, 2008). Urban regeneration and cultural development strategies have become increasingly integrated (Worpole, 1991), and cultural tourism, in particular, is increasingly used as a strategic tool to meet the needs of visitors and local residents (Yang & Shin, 2008). Belifiore and Bennett (2007) noted that art and cultural events, festivals and the arts have a transformative effect that is complex and layered. Host communities not only gain

economically from cultural tourism (Rizzo & Throsby, 2006): cultural events improve the quality of life of residents, strengthen the sense of community and affect both status and social recognition of the host community (Bachleitner & Zins, 1999; Liburd, 2007; Liburd & Derkzen, 2009).

Having cultural events cannot be an end in itself. Residents need to be aware of the events and tourism development efforts, enjoy the festivities and be part of the tourism efforts as participants or facilitators, and acknowledge the economic and social-cultural benefits derived. For example, Wood (2005) reported that residents who were aware of and attended public sector events reported benefits, looked forward to the event and experienced community pride. Cheng and Jarvis (2010) reported that if event awareness were improved, suburban residents would feel more engaged, and less estranged from the urban 'social-elite' who attended sport and associated cultural events. Residents who were dependent on the tourism sector were more supportive towards cultural tourism (Getz, 1994). In addition, the media effect and publicity can help reposition the host city in the region and globally, and residents' community pride can be enhanced (Dwyer et al. 2000; Waitt, 2003).

### Methodology

Drawing on a number of previous studies, an integrative research model that specifies the underlying mechanisms of urban residents' awareness of cultural tourism, perceived benefits of cultural tourism, enjoyment of cultural tourism, sense of community and quality of life (see Figure 1) was hypothesised. The inter-relationships among the variables were assessed using a structural model approach.

### Sampling and Instrument

A total of 350 Indianapolis residents who attended downtown cultural and sporting events participated in the study via convenience sampling during the fall months of 2011. Participants who were attending downtown events, such as Octoberfest and a jazz festival, were asked to complete pen and paper questionnaires at different times of the day. Based on the studies by Cecil, Fu, Wang, and Avgoustis (2008) and

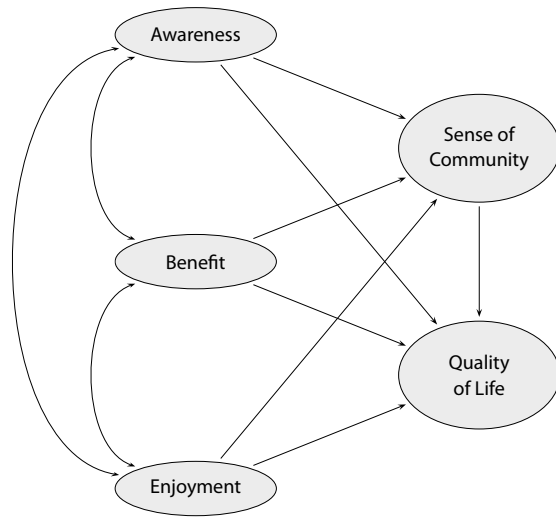


Figure 1 Hypothesised Model for Quality of Life

Wang, Cecil, Fu, and Avgoustis (2006), three items were constructed to measure ‘sense of community.’ Respondents were asked to rate their sense of pride in Indianapolis, based on the living conditions, infrastructure, and services, using a five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree.’ Cronbach’s alpha for the sense of community items was .754. An item derived from a survey designed by Cecil et al. (2008) was used to measure quality of life.

The respondents were also asked to rate their ‘overall satisfaction with the quality of life’ based on the five-point Likert scale. Cultural tourism items were adopted from Wang, Cecil, Fu, and Avgoustis’s (2008) study on quality of life and sport tourism. Of the 21 items in their study, the nine items that assessed ‘awareness,’ ‘benefit,’ and ‘enjoyment’ were adapted. Examples of cultural tourism items are ‘I am aware of the city’s recent accomplishments in cultural tourism’ (awareness), ‘Cultural tourism helps create a positive image’ (benefit), and ‘I enjoy the culture-related events that I can attend’ (enjoyment).

Data Analysis

The structural equation modelling approach was used to investigate the relationships among the study variables. The model was estimated by using *Mplus* 6.0 with robust maximum likelihood estimation. Using

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Per cent
<i>Age (years)</i>		
18–30	119	34.0
31–43	128	36.6
44–56	68	19.4
>57	20	5.7
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	211	60.3
Female	131	37.4
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Caucasian	224	64.0
African American	67	19.1
Asian	7	2.0
Hispanic	10	2.9
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Married	114	32.6
Never Married	172	49.1
Divorced	47	13.4
<i>Household Income</i>		
<\$30,000	64	18.3
\$30,001–60,000	96	27.4
\$60,001–90,000	115	32.9
\$90,001–120,000	37	10.6
>\$120,000	9	2.6

selected fit indices with *a priori* acceptable criteria recommended by Hu and Bentler (1995, 1999) for model fit (e.g.,  $\chi^2$  statistics, standardised root mean square residual [SRMR]  $\leq .08$ , root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA]  $\leq .08$ , comparative fit index [CFI]  $\geq .95$ , and Tucker-Lewis index [TLI]  $\geq .90$ ), the study assessed whether the model fits the data well.

Results

Demographics

As shown in Table 1, the gender ratio of respondents was slightly skewed towards males (60.3%) and the two key age groups were 18–30 (34.0%) and 31–43 (36.6%) years old. With regards to ethnicity, most respondents were Caucasian (64.0%) and African Amer-

Table 2 Cut off Criteria and Observed Indices for the Model Fit

Indexes	Cut-off criterion*	Result**	Fit
$\chi^2$	—	86.450 (df = 36)	No
TLI	0.90 ~ .00	.971	Yes
SRMR	<0.08 or <0.1	.038	Yes
RMSEA (90% CI)	<0.06	.065 (.048 ~.083)	No
CFI	$\geq 0.95$	.955	Yes

Notes \*Recommended by Hu and Bentler (1995, 1999). \*\*Hypothesised model. CI – confidence interval.

ican (19.1%). Approximately 49% of the respondents were never married, and the modal annual household income group was \$60,000–\$90,000.

Structural Equation Model

The overall fit indices for the hypothesised model suggests that the model was a fair fit (see Table 2). All parameter estimates and the signs on the parameters were consistent with the hypothesised model for Quality of Life.

While enjoyment was not significantly associated with a sense of community, the path coefficients of the sense of community on benefits and awareness were significant, and the parameters had positive signs in accordance with the hypotheses (see Figure 2). Awareness and enjoyment were not significantly associated with quality of life, but the path coefficients of quality of life regarding the sense of community and perceived benefits were significant and showed positive relationships. Also in line with study hypotheses, the sense of community was significantly associated with benefits (.316) and awareness (.206), indicating that individuals who acknowledged greater benefits and were more aware of the city’s accomplishment than their counterparts were more likely to feel a greater sense of community. Therefore, the sense of community (.133) and benefits (.385) were significantly associated with the quality of life. Specifically, individuals who felt a greater sense of community and acknowledged greater benefits than their counterparts were more likely to rate their quality of life as better.

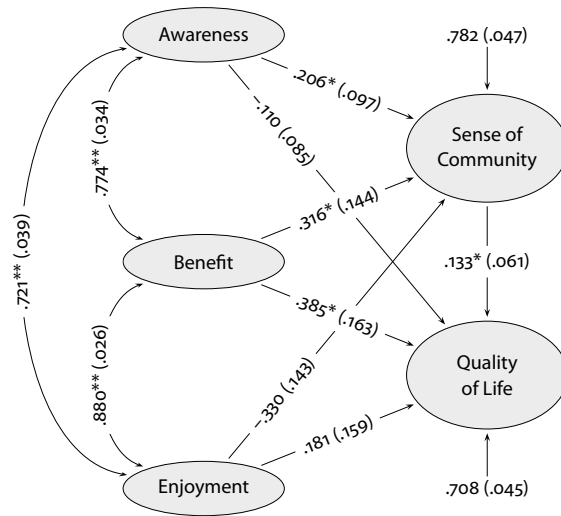


Figure 2 Final Model for Quality of Life

Discussion and Recommendations

The study results suggest that individuals who felt a greater sense of community and acknowledged greater benefits than their counterparts rated their quality of life as better. Thus, ongoing community engagement, the process of working collaboratively with individuals and groups to communicate cultural tourism investments, will allow Indianapolis officials to directly involve their constituencies in the ongoing design, planning, and management of resources. Community engagement provides residents with a venue for participation in and feeling attached to their local community. It also provides a sense of place and offers essential life-enhancing qualities that support community and individual quality of life. Our findings are in congruence with Albanesi et al.’s (2007) study which suggested that sense of community is associated with well-being. By understanding the community benefits of cultural tourism projects, decision makers can develop constituencies that are inclined to sustain their cultural tourism infrastructure over time.

According to an IndyGov (2010) demographic profile report extracted from the US Census Bureau, the Indianapolis ethnic breakdown was approximately 70% white, 24% African American, 4% Latino and 1% Asian. Compared against respondent ethnicity, the sample is fairly representative. There were more male

respondents (60.3%) in comparison to the Indianapolis population (49%) and the sampled respondents were generally younger in age. Census data put median household income at \$40,000 (in 1999 dollars), but study respondents reported higher incomes. This may suggest that the younger and more affluent residents were the ones who participated more often in downtown events, and were thus more disproportionately sampled.

Faulkner and Tideswell (1997) noted that perceptions about impacts differed due to the extent of exposure while Cheng and Jarvis (2010) found that tourism events held in the heart of the city had an alienating effect on residents who lived in the city outskirts. Thus, in addition to typical resident demographics, length of residency and resident's proximity to the events could be further investigated.

Any successful cultural tourism strategy requires considerable investment of time, energy and money by both the public and private sectors. Oviedo-Garcia et al. (2008) reported that tourism initiatives were successful if residents' attitudes were considered. Hence, community input could be key to a successful tourism strategy, especially in financially constrained times like the present. City administrators should do more to encourage community buy-in, especially during the planning stages. Residents' perceptions of and support for cultural tourism development can also vary based on other factors. For example, residents' knowledge about tourism and contact with tourists affected the perceived benefits (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005). Indianapolis is not as culturally diverse as gateway cities such as New York or San Francisco, nor is it a cultural capital like New Orleans or Nashville. The Indianapolis population is fairly homogeneous, and the type and quality of contact with visitors should be considered. Thus, future investigations should include residents' level of knowledge about cultural diversity.

Several studies have documented the positive relationship that exists between the residents' acceptance of tourism and their perceived economic dependency on it (Allen, Hafer, Long, & Perdue, 1993; Jurowski, Uysal & Williams, 1995). In addition, residents are likely to understand event impacts better, by virtue

of their proximity to and hosting of the community event (Delamere, 2001). More needs to be done to create awareness and link indirect tourism benefits to the local community. Furthermore, Avgoustis, Cecil, Fu, and Wang (2005) reported that Indianapolis residents find their quality of life to be enhanced mostly by the cultural tourism attractions in the city. Understandably, in contrast, when tourism develops beyond a certain scale, residents may express heterogeneous perceptions towards tourism development (Schofield, 2011). The social costs could range from increased theft in areas frequented by tourists, to traffic congestion and inflated costs of living for residents. In terms of community attachment, McCool and Martin (1994) report that residents who are strongly attached to their communities are more concerned about the negative impacts of tourism development than those less attached. Thus, city planners need to address ways in which the negative externalities of cultural tourism development can be mitigated, and communicate it to the various stakeholders.

It should be noted that the study is based on the context of Indianapolis settings, such as the type, scale and scope of the events, etc. Therefore, the generalisability of the findings may be limited. A comparative gap analysis to investigate the perspective from tourism administrators and industry partners is the recommended next step.

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