

## **Resistance in destination communities and how tourist businesses deal with it**

**Relevance.** Corporate social responsibility (CSR) literature in tourism usually considers businesses as donors of host communities, which mainly look like passive recipients of various kinds of assistance.

Meanwhile, the resistance to tourism, which has been growing in recent years before the pandemic, has given many examples of active self-advocacy of their interests by communities. The pandemic has softened the problem, but has not eliminated it. On the contrary, the threat of being infected by tourists is becoming a new cause of discontent and potential activity of locals in both Russia and abroad.

At the same time, the influence of the experience of resistance to tourism on the social practices of the tourism business has not yet been comprehended. The first and the second are still being studied relatively independently.

The most recent studies concerning public protests against the tourist have identified the most common causes of conflicts between tourists and residents (e.g., González, 2018), benefits and losses from tourism (e.g., Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012). However, it remains unclear how large the losses of a particular community caused by the activities of the tourist business should be in order to encourage the former to oppose the latter actively. In terms of the mechanisms of organizational cohesion of the community, it remains unexplored why in some cases the emergence of an external threat leads to coordinated resistance, while in others it does not.

Most of the literature on CSR confirms the usefulness of community investment (e.g., Gursoy et al., 2019) and active interaction of tourism businesses with local communities (e.g., Gill & Williams, 2005), but at the same time a number of studies show that community investment is not going where the communities themselves need them to go (e.g., Esteves, 2008).

In general, it remains unclear (1) at what point and under what influence the community, irritated by tourist businesses, moves to action and (2) how these actions affect the behavior of businesses in relation to host communities.

**Purpose.** The study identifies the factors that determine the scale and forms of the active (behavioral) reaction of host communities to the tourist businesses that irritate them and how this reaction affects the strategies of the tourist businesses.

**Methodology.** Qualitative empirical research was based on multi-case study approach (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), which facilitates the comparison of several cases while paying attention to the limited and unchanging set of phenomena/variables in each case.

This empirical study considers attempts to implement three Russian events in five destination communities (one of the projects was attempted in three communities) that provoked negative reactions among their representatives in all cases. 120 publications from a range of data sources were used, including advertisement for the projects, interviews with the organizers, parliamentary debates, official statements, press releases, media reports, resident forums, NGO sites, and public letters.

At the first stage, the reactions of the host communities (the content of the set of statements and the set and sequence of actions) in relation to tourist businesses were analyzed and compared.

At the second stage of the study, the strategies of the tourism business undertaken in response to the statements and actions of local communities were identified and compared.

**Results.** The analysis revealed 4 types of perceptual and behavioral reactions of host communities to tourism businesses: (1) direct damage and mobilization of opponents of the project with the involvement of the authorities; 2) negative externality, lack of mobilization and demands for compensations by the authorities; 3) positive externality, lack of mobilization and passivity of the authorities; and 4) direct benefit, lack of mobilization and support of the tourist business by the authorities.

The parallel analysis revealed 4 types of response strategies of tourist businesses aimed at value and organizational adjustments with host communities: (1) relocation ; (2) prevention of mobilization of opponents and compensation of losses due to investments in non-core assets; (3) mobilization of supporters and involvement of community resources in the main business process; (4) lack of actions for organizational and value convergence.

The results obtained were presented in the form of strategic matrices.

### **Originality/value.**

This study proposed a conceptual framework to explain the factors guiding the businesses when choosing strategies towards destination communities.

This addressed the above listed gaps in the literature on CSR and provide answers to questions that have arisen due to the growth of resistance: “Why are more businesses that depend on tourism not investing in the destinations they serve and in the assets on which their business depends? And why is the industry as a whole not actively engaged in these issues?” (UNWTO, 2017).

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