
Generational perceptions of prosperity on the niche tourism island destination of Ikaria, Greece

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Abstract: This study answers the call for new research approaches by investigating a cross-generational sample of residents involved in niche tourism and their perceptions of prosperity against the backdrop of an evolving niche tourism industry. Data were collected via in-depth, semi-structured interviews with nine participants involved in niche tourism, comprising three generational cohorts (i.e., young, middle, old), on the island of Ikaria, Greece. Data revealed five emergent themes (i.e., dimensions of prosperity) that provide insight into how residents conceptualise prosperity: community, means to an end, connection to place, change, and perceived impacts of tourism. The influences of family, friendship, cultural values, ideals, and health are the strongest indicators of Ikarians' perceived prosperity in the context of niche tourism development on the island.

Keywords: prosperity; resident attitudes; island tourism; niche tourism; quality-of-life; QoL; tourism impacts; Greece.

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1 Introduction

On the Greek island of Ikaria in the Aegean Sea, niche tourism is grounded in the natural environment, the host community, and the cultural heritage of the island. The island draws visitors looking for active relaxation. Active niche tourism offerings in Ikaria include hiking, surfing, rock climbing, kayaking, mountain biking, and agri-tourism (Flanigan et al., 2014; Phillip et al., 2010; Theodoropoulou, 2004). Relaxation-based niche tourism activities on the island include meditation, enjoying hot springs, wine tasting, and communing with nature and local hosts. Many visitors will participate in some combination of active and relaxation-based niche tourism – often self-organised, rather than organised by a tour operator. Niche tourism, being the antithesis of mass tourism (Novelli, 2005), is likely the only kind of tourism that can be sustainable in Ikaria, where the natural features – such as a mix of steep barren rocks and verdant slopes – coupled with residents' attitudes toward tourism development (TD) likely eliminate the possibility of mass tourism.

Unlike the nearby Greek mass tourism island destinations of Mykonos, or the more famous Santorini, Ikaria is a sparsely developed network of villages without nightclubs, commercialised beaches, cable cars, or theme parks. Ikarian hotels are typically small independent properties. The largest hotel on the island is only 60 rooms and the room count in most other commercial hotels ranges from 27 to 37 units. The majority of overnight accommodations are supplied by small guesthouses for rent. TD in Ikaria offers visitors the opportunity to travel slower and deeper through active relaxation. Ikaria provides the opportunity to dive deep into a place for those travellers interested in drilling to the heart of a destination. Much of what visitors find that they enjoy most about Ikaria is tied directly to the heritage and lifestyle of its residents.

Awareness of the islanders' lifestyle has increased since Ikaria was designated by a team from National Geographic as one of the world's five *Blue Zones* – areas where residents live ten years longer than the average US (Buettner, 2005). In Ikaria, this longevity is attributed to diet, physical activity, a sense of community, and napping. While the science behind the *Blue Zone* designation is arguable, the notion of Ikaria as a place for longevity has clicked with popular culture as motivational books, documentaries, and consumer products have been created by non-Ikarians to market this concept. On the island, signage and new products highlighting the *Blue Zone* affiliation have been added to the tourism landscape. The increased exposure has extended the

tourist season and brought in more groups and individual travellers looking for active relaxation, beyond just the desire to observe old people or find a fountain of youth (Ikaria Travel and Holiday Guide, n.d.).

Greece's most recent census in 2011 recorded Ikaria as having a population of 8,423 permanent residents (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2018). While agriculture, livestock farming, fisheries, and commerce remain the primary sectors of employment for these residents, 'a still small but growing percentage of the population' is employed in Ikaria's growing niche tourism industry (Ikaria travel, n.d.). Roughly 25,000 visitors travel to the island each year by plane or ferry. In contrast, Mykonos and Santorini reportedly welcome more than one million and two million visitors, respectively, each year (Smith, 2013; Zikakou, 2016). During the peak season, Ikaria is served by fewer than ten flights and ten ferry boats each week. Flights to Ikaria from Athens take 45 minutes, and the ferry ride from Athens takes roughly eight hours. The high season is July and August with an extending shoulder beginning in May and ending in September. Most hotels, restaurants, rental car companies, and other tourism businesses close between October and April. Despite such seasonality, Ikaria relies more on niche tourism now than it did 30 years ago.

In light of Ikaria's expanding niche tourism industry, this research explores how prosperity is perceived by different generations in this island destination using data collected via personal interviews with local residents. The findings illustrate:

- 1 How Ikarrians define prosperity.
- 2 Similarities and differences in the interpretation of prosperity across three generations.
- 3 How definitions of prosperity have changed over time as niche tourism has developed.
- 4 The varied importance among generations of preserving cultural heritage as niche tourism continues to develop.

2 Literature review

2.1 Niche tourism

Novelli (2005, p.9) describes niche tourism as "special interests, culture, and/or activity based tourism involving a small number of tourists in authentic settings", and distinguishes it from "conventional tourism involving large numbers of tourists in staged settings." Niche tourism includes five macro-niches (i.e., cultural, environmental, rural, urban, other), with each macro-niche being further segmented into micro-niches. The rural macro-niche, for example, includes the farming, camping, wine/gastronomy, sport, festivals/events, and arts/crafts micro-niches (Novelli, 2005). The emergence of niche tourism has coincided with tourists, as consumers, becoming increasingly more discerning. For many tourists, this means seeking out personalised and meaningful travel experiences and immersing themselves in their destinations of choice while pursuing specialised activities that allow them to express their identities and fulfil their specific desires (Sharpley, 2014). Although global firms and mass tourist destinations (e.g., Cancun, Mexico) have become adept at providing standardised niche tourism offerings

(e.g., cooking classes) to meet guests' desires for increasingly sophisticated experiences, these mass packaged niche offerings do not meet the needs of all tourists (Novelli, 2005).

Aside from transnational firms and mass tourist destinations offering standardised niche tourism experiences, another level of niche tourism exists. Novelli (2005) describes this level of niche tourism as small businesses and local communities leveraging tourism as a mechanism for economic development, while preserving their local cultures and surroundings. This conceptualisation of niche tourism characterises the Ikarian tourism industry because the active (e.g., hiking) and relaxation-based (e.g., hot springs) activities that tourists can pursue there are already inherent to island life. In addition, these micro-niche offerings have been developed through purposeful tourism planning that has focused on growing Ikaria's small-scale niche tourism industry in a sustainable way, preserving the way of life for island residents while advancing their economic growth.

2.2 Tourism development impacts

In a comprehensive review of the extant literature on residents' perceptions of TD and its impacts, García et al. (2015) found that most studies broadly characterise tourism impacts as economic, sociocultural and environmental, with each impact eliciting either positive or negative associations among a destination's residents. However, the authors acknowledge that beyond this consensus exists a proliferation of theoretical and empirical research, characterised by inconclusive findings and limited generalisability. This body of research explores an array of variables perceived to influence residents' attitudes toward tourism and spans a range of tourist destinations representing varying stages of maturity. Even in destinations that are seemingly comparable across historical, cultural and social dimensions, locals' perceptions of TD and its impacts may be vastly different, which further highlights the complexity of this area of inquiry (Canavan, 2016; Croes, 2012; Garau-Vadell et al., 2014; García et al., 2015). For example, in a comparative analysis of residents' perceptions of tourism impacts in two Spanish island destinations (i.e., Tenerife, Mallorca), Garau-Vadell et al. (2014) found significant differences across the two destinations and also identified moderating variables (e.g., tourist concentration, quality of interactions between tourists and residents) that may influence residents' perceptions of TD.

Many studies have investigated factors that may explain or predict residents' responses to TD (e.g., level and type of contact between residents and tourists, residents' personal attachment to the destination, socio-demographics), yielding highly localised findings (García et al., 2015). For example, although some research suggests that older residents may view tourism as less favourable than younger residents (Haralambopoulos and Pizam, 1996), other studies have produced the opposite result (Tomljenovic and Faulkner, 2000). Whether age is a variable that can explain a change in residents' attitudes over time also merits further exploration (Huh and Vogt, 2008). It is evident that a universal model explaining residents' perceptions of TD and its impacts may not be feasible (Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2011). Data explicating "The impacts of tourism on communities are highly localized in time and place. The conditions of each context ... create results that, while they might have some common characteristics with other places, are still unique and based on the local" [García et al., (2015), p.40]. Thus, new approaches are needed to advance the study of how host community residents perceive TD and its impacts (García et al., 2015; Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2011).

To study the impact of tourism, Deery et al. (2011) suggest a multi-dimensional approach that considers residents' values and behavioural norms, their interactions with tourists, and how the former evolve over time as TD progresses. Because tourism is a major driver of change in rural locations (e.g., island destinations), perceptions of the impacts of tourism should be explored 'within the totality of residents' social lives' and account for intrinsic resident characteristics and values [Sharpley, (2014), p.48]. In addition, Sharpley (2014, p.47) found that limited research exclusively focuses on the perceptions of residents that have "regular, intentional, and commercial exchange-based encounters with tourists." More common are studies that simultaneously explore the perspectives of all community residents, both those that directly interact with tourists and those with limited or no direct tourist interaction. To address this gap in the literature, the author called for research focusing on the sub-group of residents most likely to influence the tourist experience as these individuals inform the planning and management of tourism in a particular destination (Sharpley, 2014). Research focusing on residents with service-sector jobs and their perceived prosperity, in the context of a developing tourism industry, may illuminate the origins of host community concerns and support for TD, providing meaningful insights for researchers and practitioners (Deery et al., 2011; García et al., 2015; Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy, 2017).

In developing areas, TD can be synonymous with community development (e.g., infrastructure, job creation, education). Thus, a burgeoning tourism sector inherently affects the perceived quality-of-life (QoL) and prosperity of a destination's inhabitants (Andereck and Nyaupane, 2011; Kim et al., 2013). Limited research exists that explicitly considers residents' perceptions of their own QoL and prosperity in the context of an evolving tourism industry. However, research that conceptualises the relationship between TD and QoL may advance the theory-building process and inform tourism planning in a host destination (Andereck and Nyaupane, 2011; Ridderstaat et al., 2016). For example, Gonzalez et al. (2017) measured residents' perceived social prosperity in three Mexican tourist destinations and found significant differences in locals' opinions about how TD has impacted the destinations' distribution of wealth, quality of services, and overall social prosperity. The authors concluded that residents' perceptions of social prosperity in a developing tourist destination may increase with more inclusive tourism planning that involves all industry stakeholders (i.e., government, local residents, entrepreneurs, civic organisations, service industry employees; Gonzalez et al., 2017).

2.3 Tourism development and prosperity

In the context of TD, researchers suggest that the term, *prosperity*, extends beyond the economic windfall that results from a destination's increased tourist activity (Croes, 2012; Crouch and Ritchie, 1999; Gonzalez et al., 2017). Instead, prosperity is situated within a broader framework demonstrating the "interdependence of economic, social, cultural, and environmental well-being" [Crouch and Ritchie, (1999), p.138]. Interestingly, these dimensions of prosperity align with the tourist impact dimensions (García et al., 2015). Kim et al. (2013) developed a model linking each dimension of prosperity to a corresponding life domain in which residents' perceptions of the impact of tourism on their QoL manifest. Residents' perceptions of the economic impact of tourism, such as an improved standard of living, better job opportunities, and increased

revenue streams for local businesses, predict their sense of material well-being. Perceptions of the social impact of tourism, such as availability of better shopping facilities and service providers (e.g., pharmacies) that serve both tourists and locals, predict residents' community well-being. Perceptions of the cultural impact of tourism, such as the extent to which residents value cultural exchange with tourists and use these exchanges to preserve the local cultural identity, predict their emotional well-being. Finally, Kim et al. (2013) found that residents' perceptions of the environmental impact of tourism (e.g., litter/garbage, deterioration of historical sites, and depletion of natural resources) predict their sense of health and safety well-being. Kim et al.'s (2013) model explicates residents' perceived prosperity as a multidimensional construct that evolves over time as the tourism industry advances through each stage of development (i.e., growth, maturity, decline). This holistic model provides the conceptual framework for the present study, guiding the investigation of perceived prosperity (present and future) among three generations of Ikarian residents who are directly involved in local niche tourism.

3 Methodology

To understand the intersection of prosperity and niche tourism in Ikaria, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine people involved in the tourism industry. During data collection, the researchers were on the island of Ikaria for nine days as leaders of an education abroad program. They were travelling with 17 undergraduate tourism management students from the USA who were studying the transformative effects of travelling. One member of the research team had travelled to Ikaria twice prior – once with another student group studying the Ikarian lifestyle and once with family. One of the interviewees, an Ikarian tour operator, had visited the current batch of students at their university in the United States prior to the group's departure for Ikaria. The interaction with the Ikarian host and the multiple visits to Ikaria facilitated the ethnographic analysis and gave the research team a deeper understanding of Ikarian culture and the tourism qualities of the island.

This research explicitly investigates a cross-generational sample of residents involved in niche tourism on an island destination and their perceptions of prosperity against the backdrop of an evolving tourism industry (Deery et al., 2011; García et al., 2015; Sharpley, 2014). Via in-depth personal interviews conducted in the destination, researchers were able to grapple with ethnographic constructs that are unique to remote island niche tourism destinations.

The researchers employed a snowball sampling method to recruit interview participants. The process began with the recruitment of a local hotel and restaurant owner who, through her involvement in the Ikarian niche tourism industry, has contacts who are employed in a variety of tourist service occupations on the island. Noy (2008) proposed that, in qualitative research, snowball sampling is a viable strategy for discerning the dynamics of socially constructed knowledge within a situational context so this method aligned with the objectives of the present study. Interviewees fell into three generational cohorts – younger, middle, and older. Each generational cohort consisted of three

interviewees. Members of the younger cohort were between 20 and 29 years old, the middle cohort were between 34 and 43 years old, and the older cohort were between 55 and 64 years old. Four women and five men were interviewed – each cohort contained at least one man and one woman. All research participants were directly involved in niche tourism in Ikaria. Interviewees were employed as restaurant servers, retail store clerks, tour operators, bus drivers, hotel owners, restaurant owners, and politicians. Most held several tourism-related jobs simultaneously. While not all interviewees were born in Ikaria, all had lived on the island for at least half of their lives. Table 1 provides a detailed profile of the nine interview participants.

Table 1 Profile of interview participants

	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Role in Ikaria's hospitality and tourism</i>	<i>Relationship to Ikaria and future plans for niche tourism involvement on the island</i>
<i>Younger cohort</i>				
Interviewee #1	Male	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works for parents in their family-owned hotel and restaurant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grew up in Ikaria Plans to attend college in the US Wants to work in US hospitality and tourism sector for 15–20 years and then return to Ikaria and continue working in hospitality and tourism on the island
Interviewee #2	Male	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Server in local restaurant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grew up in Ikaria Attended college abroad; studied film directing Wants to film/direct tourism videos and documentaries about Ikaria and its people, serve as event videographer (e.g., destination weddings)
Interviewee #3	Female	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps run father's bakery/coffee shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grew up in Ikaria World travels during low season and returns to Ikaria during high season to run family business with father
<i>Middle cohort</i>				
Interviewee #4	Female	34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bartender/server in local restaurant Has worked in 4–5 local bars/restaurants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grew up in Athens Moved to Ikaria from Athens to bartend/wait tables during summer months Now lives in Ikaria full time. Wants to open small shop and sell products (e.g., jewellery) locally made on the island

Table 1 Profile of interview participants (continued)

	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Role in Ikaria's hospitality and tourism</i>	<i>Relationship to Ikaria and future plans for niche tourism involvement on the island</i>
<i>Middle cohort</i>				
Interviewee #5	Male	43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owns apartment that is rented to tourists during high season. Waiter at local restaurant Wood artisan; sells to tourists and on internet. Enjoys playing music for tourists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grew up in Athens; moved to Ikaria at age 33 Now lives in Ikaria full time; has no plans to leave Wants to open small shop and sell products made from reclaimed wood and hold workshops for locals and tourists; friend that makes ceramics plans to open shop with him
Interviewee #6	Female	43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked in women's co-op making goods; no direct interaction w/tourist customers Has rental units; rents to tourists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grew up and stayed in Ikaria; has no plans to leave the island Parents worked in hotels on the island Now she stays at home with young children b/c husband is a sailor on tourist ferry boat 6–7 months per year
<i>Older cohort</i>				
Interviewee #7	Male	64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior politician in Ikaria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long political career in Ikaria His agenda focuses on expanding Ikaria's niche tourism sector in a sustainable way, preserving local cultural heritage, and improving infrastructure (e.g., roads, ports, ferry schedules, etc.) to support expansion; has plans to address island's seasonality challenges through additional niche tourism offerings (e.g., wine industry, wellness industry)
Interviewee #8	Female	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owner of local beach view hotel and restaurant that includes a working farm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Born in Ikaria and grew up in the US Now lives in Ikaria full time; has no plans to leave the island
Interviewee #9	Male	55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owner of transportation company (e.g., busses) that serves tourists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grew up and stayed in Ikaria; has no plans to leave the island

With the exception of one interview conducted via Skype, the interviews were conducted in person on the island. Although all interviewees could speak and comprehend English, all interviews included a Greek translator to clarify questions and responses as needed. Interviews lasted between 20 minutes and 65 minutes. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed for content analysis. Content analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted by two researchers – first independently, then together to indicate stronger emerging themes and to reconcile differences in interpretation of the data.

The semi-structured interview questions were derived from the extant literature on host community perceptions of tourism impacts and from research on the relationship between TD and residents' perceived prosperity and QoL (Crouch and Ritchie, 1999; García et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2013). Interviews began with the opportunity for each participant to share his or her thoughts on well-being and prosperity. To better ensure interviewees were thinking of prosperity similarly, the Greek term *ευεξία* was initially used to frame the discussion. As they described what well-being and prosperity meant to them, interviewees always focused on emotional aspects more so than on physical or financial needs. Interviewees typically equated prosperity and well-being to being able to euphorically flourish.

Questions then transitioned into thinking about how their opinions on prosperity were formed and how much of their viewpoints were based on how they were raised versus how much of their opinions were formed on their own. Participants were then asked to think about how their lives will compare to their parents' lives in terms of relative prosperity. Interviews then progressed to a discussion of how niche tourism on the island influenced the interviewees' thoughts on prosperity and their hopes for the future of themselves and of their community. The interviews typically concluded with a discussion of how maintaining the cultural heritage and environment of the place will affect their future prosperity.

4 Contextualising prosperity across three generational cohorts

Coding of the qualitative interview data revealed five emergent themes that provide insight into how Ikarian residents conceptualise prosperity. Each theme was evidenced across the three generational cohorts (i.e., younger, middle, older) and encompassed sub-variables that were distinct to one or more groups (see Table 1). The themes – or dimensions of prosperity – are: community, means to an end, connection to place, change, and perceived impacts of tourism.

4.1 Community

The first dimension of prosperity, community, refers to the socio-cultural dynamics of life in Ikaria and the importance of meaningful interpersonal interactions among residents. This way of life includes close-knit family structures, often with multiple generations living in the home, and a collective sense of community beyond the family unit. For example, it is common for Ikarians to share extra harvests from their gardens with one another. Talking about his garden bounty, one interviewee from the middle generation stated, "It's nothing serious for us to give if we have enough. Otherwise, we're going to throw it. Why don't we give it to the other people, always we do that."

Knowledge sharing, especially pertaining to farming and agriculture, is also a common practice among residents. Relying on the community is necessary to prosperity in terms of meeting basic needs, such as feeding a family. Members of the middle generation who were born off-island talked about how they learned from friends new skills as they needed them, such as how to grow tomatoes or raise sheep. To survive, they knew they needed a garden and small livestock, but relied on neighbours to teach them how to live on the island. One admitted, “I didn’t have any clue about gardening. I was thinking the potato was like a tree.”

There is a pressure to treat each other well. As one of the younger cohort mentioned: “Ikarians are good about helping each other in good times and bad. If you do a good thing, we won’t remember it. But if you do a bad thing, we will remember it forever.” Although they help each other, a pressure also exists to keep each other down. One participant in the younger group described the feelings toward peers held by Ikarians, stating, “[i]f she is rich and I am poor, I don’t want to be rich. I want her to be poor. I can’t come to her level, so I want to bring her down to my level.” While acknowledging residents’ appreciation of visitors, he concluded, “amongst ourselves, we are a little bit bad.”

Traditions that bring the community together are also highly valued, such as name-day celebrations. Ikarians, and Greeks in general, celebrate their name-day, or the feast day of the saint after which they are named. On their name days, residents open their homes to a steady flow of friends, family, and community members who bring gifts and well wishes. Guests stay for food, drink, and fellowship before making their way to the homes of other residents who are also celebrating their name day. This theme also relates to the community banding together to accomplish common goals.

The most large-scale example of this banding together is the panigyiri. These celebrations, often associated with saints’ name days or other religious holidays, take place in villages across the island. Each event, which features traditional food, wine, live music and dancing, is orchestrated by the host village. Proceeds from panigyiris fund community development and improvement projects in the host villages. Village leaders are supposed to publically post revenues and expenses associated with these events and detail how profits will be spent to benefit the community. However, interviewees in the younger group pointed out how the traditional panigyiri is changing because of greed. Some restaurant owners will advertise live music and call it a panigyiri because they know that is what many tourists want to see. They also believe that co-opting this tradition for profit will become more common in the future.

4.2 Means to an end

The second dimension of prosperity, means to an end, explains how residents view their economic prosperity. Rather than valuing the accumulation of wealth and material possessions, Ikarians view their income and property (e.g., livestock, gardens) as a means of accomplishing particular goals, such as traveling, providing for their families (e.g., food), and taking care of their health (e.g., mind, body).

For example, when asked if money is important to her, a participant in the younger group responded, “[y]es, to do the things that you like. Like now, I like to travel and I need money for that. I can’t do it. Just like that.” When asked if she felt prosperous, the same respondent replied, “[y]es. Because now I’m trying to make money this summer

and I do the things that I like at the winter time and I have more space.” Existing literature cites the seasonality of tourism as negatively influencing residents’ perceptions of TD (García et al., 2015). However, this finding suggests that age may moderate this negative perception as younger service-sector employees may view the off-season as a period when they have the freedom to travel or pursue other personal interests (e.g., international study) that they have saved for during the high season.

For the younger group, this theme was also impacted by their desired level of freedom to pursue interests and experiences as well as a desire for cultural exposure through travelling (i.e., outbound cultural exposure), or as one interviewee put it, the desire to ‘see the world’. This group also referenced how travelling has instilled in them a stronger appreciation for their upbringing and the way of life in Ikaria. When asked about her travel experiences, one participant stated, “I always said, ‘I don’t like this life and we don’t have anything.’ And then you go out, you see the bad way of life and then you say, ‘Okay, now we’re good.’”

The concept of ‘providing’ was specific to the middle and older groups who were responsible for supporting their children, grandchildren, and in some cases, their elderly parents. Unique to the middle group was the concept of needs being a priority over opportunities. For example, one interviewee discussed having an abundance of livestock and vegetables in his gardens. Although this participant could have been selling his surplus yields for a profit, he indicated that he chose not to do so, stating that the purpose of having crops and animals was ‘just to feed my family’. Based on this interviewee’s comments about the value of spending time with family (i.e., change dimension), he may believe that the additional time it would take to position his farm for commercial exchange would detract from time with his family. Also unique to the middle group was the conscious decision to forego certain conveniences that incur costs. As such, one interviewee has chosen to live without electricity, assuming additional responsibilities (e.g., washing clothes by hand) rather than having to pay a monthly utility bill.

Despite varied motivations to acquire ‘the means’, study participants frequently used the word ‘enough’ to describe their economic prosperity. For example, residents’ stated that they only need enough to provide for their families or pursue their interests. In turn, they only have to work enough to garner the income (i.e., means) necessary to reach the desired end, after which they can forego work in favour of more pleasurable pursuits (e.g., spending time with family or friends, travelling).

4.3 Connection to place

The third dimension of prosperity, connection to place, explains the elements of prosperity that are evoked by the island itself and its inhabitants’ way of life. Study participants discussed how the island environment such as the proximity to the sea, the fertile land, and the diverse topography (e.g., mountains) affect their perceptions of prosperity. In addition, the agricultural yield of the island informs residents’ healthy diets, which are largely plant-based. Because of the island’s geography, exercise (e.g., walking, farming) is a regular part of daily life. Ikarians often attribute good health and longevity to their active lifestyles. An interviewee from the middle group declared, “I like smelling of the oxygen, having the sea and we can swim in it, and make my gardens and the animals and all that.”

This theme also encompasses the desire to give back to the place, for example, through a profession in tourism that allows residents to share their experiences and foster an increased appreciation of the island among tourists. One participant from the middle group envisioned a future business opportunity in the tourism sector that will contribute to her economic prosperity while allowing her to share her love of Ikaria with tourists. She concluded, “I want to have a small shop, and sell things home-made from the island.” Another interviewee from the younger group shared that he is pursuing international study, specifically for filmmaking. After gaining experience in film, he plans to employ his newfound expertise in Ikaria: “I would like one day to show movies of the things in Ikaria in documentaries. I’ve got a lot of stories to say so in a way, the island inspires me a lot, the way I live here.” A participant from the older group provided a more large-scale example of how Ikarians are compelled to give back to the place. She explained, “[b]etween the ‘50s and ‘60s, the hospital that we have was built, and it was built by Ikarians who live in America, by the Icarian Brotherhood there, they financed it. So that gives you an idea.”

Connection to place is also evident in residents’ perceptions of tourism on the island and the need for sustainable development of the industry that preserves, rather than exploits, natural resources (e.g., forests). One younger participant described the natural environment of Ikaria as “authentic” and “outstanding.” He continued, “Ikaria sells something different that you will never find it in other place, and that’s for sure. That will never change.”

Finally, for the younger group, connection to place is evidenced by respondents’ desire to return to the island after having lived elsewhere. One participant discussed his desire to work in America for 15–20 years and then return to Ikaria to build a house. Having already had many experiences off the island, the same participant described feelings of connection when he encounters Ikarians outside of Ikaria. He elaborated, “[w]hen I was in the army, I met five kids from the Ikaria. We make something like family.” Residents not originally from the island highlighted many attributes of the place that prompted them to relocate to Ikaria in the first place and stay there long-term. One older interviewee discussed the draw of Ikaria for tourists wanting to pursue active niche tourism (e.g., hiking, rock climbing) and the appeal of Ikaria as a destination for young people and former residents of the island. She explained, “[s]o we have the Ikarians who live outside of Greece or outside Ikaria. Then we have the younger generation who come here for the festivals in July and August. Because they like our relaxed lifestyle with no stress.” She concluded by discussing how Ikaria’s tourist industry has remained resilient in recent years despite Greece’s economic crisis, stating, “regardless of all these issues going on, Ikaria is a well-loved place for destination.”

4.4 Change

The fourth dimension of prosperity, change, explains how residents’ interpretation of prosperity has evolved over time, concurrent with development on the island. Participants in the younger group credited their parents and older generations with instilling in them strong values and ideals. One interviewee stated, “I love very much Ikaria and I love the way that I grew up in Ikaria,” while another said “[f]rom one point of view our parents taught us to feel okay with the things that we already have.” The younger group also reached a consensus, agreeing that family and health are more important than money, a

perspective that was also expressed by the middle and older groups. The middle and older groups discussed generational continuity, or instilling in young people an appreciation of the island's distinct cultural heritage and traditions, while adapting those traditions (e.g., panigyris) to the present.

A dichotomy exists related to residents' perceptions of prosperity in the context of change – nostalgia for a simpler time (e.g., fewer financial obligations, more free time) and appreciation of the comforts and conveniences (e.g., internet, healthcare) that have resulted from development. The younger group discussed how, in the past, Ikarians had an active lifestyle out of necessity (e.g., walking as a means of transportation, more manual labour), whereas today, with the availability of transportation and a wider range of employment opportunities (e.g., service-sector), they must “make the choice to have a healthy life.” The younger participants also acknowledged that they are the first generation to grow up with many of the comforts to which they have grown accustomed (e.g., electricity, internet, and banking).

When discussing the availability of more conveniences/comforts in recent years, the middle and older groups lamented the associated increase in financial obligations (e.g., more bills, taxes) and expressed anxiety about life's expenses, both for themselves and for the younger generations. One respondent from the middle group explained, “[a]nxiety comes in because everything came in, the utilities, you have to pay the bill, it's too [laughs] it's too expensive.” An older respondent pointed out that, despite the availability of more services (e.g., healthcare), many of the island's residents cannot afford them. “There is no income, so even the dentist, becomes only for rich people.”

Because residents need more income than in the past to sustain their lives on the island, they are working longer hours, which cut into their time to interact with friends and family. Participants in the middle and older groups suggested that although there is less time for social interaction than in the past, some traditions remain sacred, such as the family meal on Sundays. One interviewee from the older group expressed a longing for a simpler time. He elaborated, “60–70 years ago, being happy meant I have a bottle of wine to share with a friend of mine. Today things aren't so simple, more complicated.”

Each group was asked to consider whether future generations would be more or less prosperous. The middle and older groups cited similar responses, believing that although life is now more complicated, future generations will be the same or more prosperous. One older respondent believes that “things are complicated because we are now part of the rest of the world.” When asked whether life on the island will become even more complicated for future generations, he responded, “I hope not.” The younger group generally conceded that their lives would be easier (e.g., technology) than previous generations, yet expressed uncertainty about whether they would be more prosperous. One respondent hesitated, “I don't know yet, it's too soon say that.” The younger group reached agreement that having ‘easier’ lives than their parents may not mean that they will have ‘better’ lives.

4.5 Perceived impacts of tourism

The dimension of prosperity, perceived impacts of tourism, describes residents' positive and negative perceptions of tourism and its impact on QoL in Ikaria. Each of the three groups highlighted similar facets of tourism impact that they perceive as negative. For example, respondents discussed the detrimental effects of having more visitors on the island than in the past (e.g., increased likelihood of crime, environmental effects). One

participant from the middle group expressed concern about the quantity of waste that results from increased traffic on the island stating that, “garbage from one house today is like a whole village used to be.” A younger respondent discussed how residents have become less trusting because more visitors on the island mean a higher possibility of crime. He explained, “[w]e never lock the doors in the houses, so it can always be open and anyone go inside. People start to lock the doors now. In a way, that’s the change, let’s say. The small things that make the difference to people lives.” This example is noteworthy as increased tourist activity in a destination often necessitates gradual changes to residents’ sociocultural practices. A participant in the middle group echoed this sentiment, explaining the importance of a healthy coexistence between locals and tourists: “We like to have the tourism, okay? But the best is going to be if we don’t change our lives, the Ikarian people ... but to keep our balance in our life.”

The co-opting of cultural traditions (e.g., panigyris) into tourist attractions was also identified as a negative impact. Interestingly, the interviewees’ ascribed responsibility for this impact to both tourists and Ikarian residents. Interviewees across the three cohorts all acknowledged that, while the festivals of July and August bring many young tourists to the island, these visitors do not understand the significance of these events, which is to bring islanders together to fundraise for community improvement projects. The increase in annual panigyris festivals in Ikaria, resulting from their growing popularity, was perceived by some interviewees to draw party-seeking tourists who are not interested in the other active and relaxation-based niche tourism activities that Ikaria has to offer, and therefore, are better suited for visits to the larger Greek islands. Interviewees also discussed the positioning of neighbouring islands Mykonos and Santorini as party destinations and that promoting a party culture is not a sustainable tourism growth strategy for Ikaria. The lack of enforced regulations (e.g., tourists sleeping on the beach, litter, drugs), during high season was already perceived by interviewees as a negative impact of tourism, and this impact will only become more pronounced as increasing numbers of tourists visit the island every festival season. For example, a younger interviewee described how additional dumpsters were placed across the island to curtail litter during the recent high season, yet “still people were throwing trash on the ground. Even though the garbage bin, it was right next to them.” Similar perceptions were observed across the three generational cohorts about the influx of young partygoers to Ikaria during the festival season and their impact on the island, further underscoring the notion that there are certain ‘types’ of tourists that Ikaria can cater to if positive perceptions of tourism among its residents are to be maintained.

Another perceived negative impact of tourism during the festival season is a result of the increasing number of panigyris drawing tourists away from local businesses (i.e., bars, restaurants). One younger interviewee stated, “[m]y friend has a bar, okay, and every night we have a panigyris, my friend is not working”, while another member of the younger cohort believed that “some people here want to stop doing panigyris because they are bad for my mom’s business or my friend’s bar.” Because these businesses make most of their annual income during the high season, some have resorted to throwing ‘panigyris’ for tourists in their establishments, co-opting the meaning of this term in order to increase revenue. One older interviewee stated that when restaurants and bars advertise that they are going to throw a panigyris, “[t]he local people won’t go. They won’t go because it’s a misuse of very old tradition that helped a lot of people.” Although the three cohort groups spoke disapprovingly about the local businesses capitalising on

the term, *panigyiri*, there was an acknowledgement that these residents are doing what they have to do in order to maintain their business operations while competing with the festivals for customers during the high season. The three interview groups each emphasised that, as Ikaria's tourism sector continues to grow, tourism planning, including cultural preservation efforts, will become even more important. "You have to be cautious and be prepared. So that Ikaria can truly protect her ways and not let her ways be changed", explained an older participant.

Each group also cited positive perceptions of tourism impacts. The middle and older groups, who do not gain as much cultural exposure through travel as the younger group does, expressed excitement about favourable tourist encounters (i.e., inbound cultural exposure). One participant's love of making crafts from reclaimed wood found on the island has evolved into a small online business. He expressed an interest in offering woodworking courses for tourists in the future. Increased job opportunities in the service sector were also cited as a positive tourism impact. One older respondent discussed the growing employment opportunities in niche tourism. He believes that Ikaria is attracting travellers who are looking for the localised and personal experiences that the industry is able to provide. He believes that continuing to market the island as a niche tourism destination, rather than pursuing large-scale commercial development (i.e., resorts, golf courses) is the best way to ensure longevity of the industry and positive experiences for both guests and the host community.

Lastly, improved service quality at local establishments was recognised as a positive tourism impact, especially among the younger respondents. One interviewee, whose family owns a local restaurant, discussed her family's commitment to offering efficient service to customers. However, she acknowledged a need for continued improvement in service quality across the island to better serve tourists and establish a good reputation for local business. She continued, "[e]very business is good for the island too because it says, 'Okay, we go there. Look at all it has.'"

Findings from the interviews suggest that the perceived impacts of tourism in Ikaria manifest in four domains (i.e., economic, social, cultural, and environmental) and that perceptions of each impact exist on a continuum from ranging from very negative to very positive. These findings are consistent with previous research (e.g., Garau-Vadell et al., 2014; Haralambopoulos and Pizam, 1996; Ribeiro et al., 2017; Ward and Berno, 2011) exploring the perceived impacts of tourism in other island destinations. A dichotomy related to tourism impacts was also identified – optimism and uncertainty. On one hand, residents are optimistic that, through careful planning, Ikaria can further position itself as a vibrant active relaxation niche tourism (e.g., wellness, rock climbing, and scuba diving) destination. Despite this optimism, residents also expressed uncertainty about future TD, citing issues such as ease of doing business and island accessibility as challenges. Nonetheless, interview participants across the three age groups seem hopeful that, in the long-term, TD and its impacts (i.e., economic, social, cultural, and environmental) can positively influence island residents' QoL and prosperity.

Table 2 Dimensions of prosperity across three generational cohorts

	Younger	Middle	Older
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of community • Working as a community/banding together/community projects (e.g., panigy/iris) • Community project money 'disappearing'/greed • Small town feel/gossip/jealousy/grudges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of community • Working as a community/banding together/community projects (e.g., panigy/iris) • Knowledge sharing (e.g., farming) with friends • Selling wares with friends • Sharing extra harvest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of community • Working as a community/banding together/community projects (e.g., panigy/iris)
Means to an end	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking care of health • Freedom to pursue interests/experiences (e.g., travel, international study) • Cultural exposure through travel (i.e., outbound) • Not concerned with accumulation of wealth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing for family, taking care of health • Needs are a priority over opportunity (e.g., need to have crops to eat, do not necessarily need to sell them) • Want only enough money to sustain family • Not concerned with accumulation of wealth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing for family, taking care of health • Not concerned with accumulation of wealth
Connection to place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give back/get involved through job in tourism • Share with others about place • Inspiration provided by place (e.g., family, diet, exercise, geography/physical landscape) • Physical and mental health • Contentment/discontentment • Feelings of connection when encountering Ikarians off the island (e.g., in Athens) • Aim to leave island for a period, then return 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give back/get involved through job in tourism • Share with others about place • Family • Healthy lifestyle • Subsistence through agriculture • Appreciation of natural surroundings (e.g., ocean air, sea, gardens, animals) • Out of the city, able to raise animals/farm land • Came to place/raised in place and want to stay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give back/get involved through job in tourism • Share with others about place • Family • Healthy lifestyle • Appreciation of natural surroundings (e.g., ocean air, sea, gardens, animals) • Came to place/raised in place and want to stay
Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciation of previous generations • Familial influence • Optimism for better life than parents; too soon to tell • Easier life than parents may not mean a better life • Focus on health now a choice vs. necessity • More conveniences/comforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generational continuity/teaching young people • Evolving/adapting traditions • Money does not go as far/changing financial needs (e.g., electricity, taxes) • More anxiety about life expenses • More conveniences/comforts vs. nostalgia for simpler time • More contact with each other in the past • Now more influenced by events in Athens • Future generations will be the same or more prosperous/more complicated lives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generational continuity/teaching young people • Evolving/adapting traditions • Money does not go as far/changing financial needs (e.g., electricity, taxes) • More anxiety about life expenses • More conveniences/comforts vs. nostalgia for simpler time • More contact with each other in the past • Now more influenced by events in Athens • Future generations will be the same or more prosperous/more complicated lives

Table 2 Dimensions of prosperity across three generational cohorts (continued)

	<i>Younger</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Older</i>
Perceived impacts of tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects of more visitors on the island (crime, lack of trust, effect of environment, etc.) • Lack of regulations (bonfires on beach, sleeping on beach, trash, drugs, etc.) • Need for tourism planning • Co-opting traditional customs for profit • Optimism/uncertainty • Need cultural preservation efforts • More rapid cultural changes • Improved service quality • Plan for and anticipate changes • Think things are not changing but discuss how things are changing • Local culture stronger than outside influences • Outside investment increasing • Projects not happening or not happening in timely manner • Unorganised businesses • Perceive some Ikarians' as averse to change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects of more visitors on the island (crime, lack of trust, effect of environment, etc.) • Culture exposure through tourists (i.e., inbound) • Need for tourism planning • Co-opting traditional customs for profit • Optimism/Uncertainty • Preserving cultural heritage while adapting for the future • Preserving traditions with tourists/selling wares to tourists/selling on the internet • Effects of more visitors on the island (crime, lack of trust, effect of environment, etc.) • Differing levels of acculturation among island residents (e.g., people in mountains vs. people on the coast/in town) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture exposure through tourists (i.e., inbound) • Need for tourism planning • Co-opting traditional customs for profit • Optimism/Uncertainty • Preserving cultural heritage while adapting for the future • Target certain type of visitor whose ideals align with local offerings/culture, maintain local authenticity • Lack of perceived agency in ability as locals to impact direction of island development • Insider vs. outsider perspective for bringing in new tourism developments • Transparency with potential visitors about type of experience to expect in Ikaria (e.g., lodging, etc.)

5 Conclusions and discussion

Over the past 30 years, an extensive body of research has amassed on residents' perceptions of TD and its impacts (i.e., economic, sociocultural, environmental), spanning a range of destinations and representing industries in varying stages of maturity. Inconclusive findings and limited generalisability suggest that host community perceptions of TD and its impacts are highly localised in both place and time and that a universal model explaining this relationship may not be attainable (García et al., 2015).

Data were collected via in-depth, semi-structured interviews with nine participants, comprising three generational cohorts (i.e., young, middle, old), on the island of Ikaria, Greece. All interviewees held jobs in Ikaria's niche tourism sectors. Content analysis of the qualitative interview data revealed five emergent themes that provide insight into how Ikarian residents conceptualise prosperity. The themes, or dimensions of prosperity, are community, means to an end, connection to place, change, and tourism influence. Each dimension of prosperity encompasses sub-variables that are distinct to one or more groups. Underlying the five dimensions of prosperity are strong socio-cultural influences (e.g., family, friendship, cultural values, ideals, health and wellness). These influences are the strongest indicators of Ikarians' perceived prosperity in the context of an evolving tourism industry.

With respect to *perceived impacts of tourism*, each cohort broadly supported TD in Ikaria, purportedly because of having direct involvement in the local niche tourism industry (Sharpley, 2014). The cohorts had a shared desire to contribute to tourism planning on the island to ensure the industry's longevity, each offering unique perspectives for improvement based on their own experiences. For example, the younger cohort, all of whom have travelled or lived off-island for a period, criticised the slow speed in which development projects are accomplished. This may be due to their exposure to other cultures in which deadlines are more rigid than in Ikaria, considering that the middle and older groups did not share this criticism. Each of the three cohorts expressed cautious optimism coupled with uncertainty when considering the future direction of Ikaria's tourist industry, yet envisioned a symbiotic relationship between the industry, tourists, and the local community. Each cohort discussed the need for efforts geared toward preserving cultural heritage and the island's natural environment. Furthermore, interviewees' only comments about tourism impacts that were resoundingly negative were those citing a harmful impact on cultural heritage (i.e., co-opting traditions) or the environment (e.g., litter/garbage, deterioration of historical sites, and depletion of natural resources).

The dimension of prosperity, *change*, is characterised by the strength of the family structure, including the younger group's appreciation for previous generations and the middle and older groups' desire to instil in the younger generation strong values and ideals. There seems to be a consensus that life on the island is more complicated than in years past (e.g., changing financial needs), but that incremental improvements in prosperity should be expected from one generation to the next. Similarly, the *community* dimension of prosperity hints at Ikarians as a collective whole, or family. Despite the discussion of gossip and jealousy by the younger cohort, there is general agreement across the three cohorts that Ikarians can rely on their community in times of need. The dimension, *connection to place*, explains how Ikaria's natural environment inspires residents' lifestyle (e.g., health, wellness) and how their strong ties to the place influence

their perceived prosperity. The dimension, *means to an end*, includes sub-variables that are unique to each cohort, yet illustrates how Ikarians do not define their prosperity in economic terms, but instead by the end goals that income helps them achieve. Interviewees' perceived their job roles in niche tourism, and by extension, the niche tourism sector itself as the engine through which they reach a desired end (e.g., providing for family, travel), rather than as a means of 'getting rich'.

As TD continues on the island, more residents, through employment in the tourism sector, will have the means of getting 'enough' to achieve their desired end (e.g., rising from poverty). However, despite the growing interconnectedness with the rest of the world, none of the interviewees believe TD will substantially change the island because of the attachment to cultural heritage that is passed down from generation to generation. As older generations have done, protecting and preserving the cultural heritage will allow future generations to enjoy prosperity resulting from niche tourism.

The five dimensions of prosperity – community, means to an end, connection to place, change, and perceived impacts of tourism – would likely be found among generational cohorts in other islands with similar tourism destination attributes. However, the relationships of these dimensions may be different in island destinations that have moved, or are in the process of moving, from niche tourism to mass tourism. For example, the perceived impacts of tourism may skew more toward the negative with the arrival of more tourists or direct foreign investment in the tourism sector. A negative perception of tourism may lead to a weaker connection to place, a weaker sense of community, a different end goal geared more toward material wants than emotional needs, and an over-abundance of unwanted change.

5.1 *Future research*

In order to study the impacts of tourism, this research adopts a multi-dimensional approach that considers residents' values and behavioural norms, their interactions with tourists, and how the former evolve over time as TD progresses. The present study utilises the variable, prosperity, for this exploration. Future research may explore prosperity in other tourist destinations to determine whether this variable may take on a difference meaning based on the location (e.g., maturity stage, size) and the distinct characteristics of the local population.

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