Tourists' Beliefs About Destination Sustainability

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Abstract: As the tourism industry expands, more destinations are developed to meet the increased demand. The literature suggests that successful tourism areas will be developed following a model that ensures the long-term viability of all destination resources. However, the extant literature has largely ignored tourists' beliefs concerning the sustainability of destination resources, including natural, man-made, and cultural assets. The purpose of the research was to study tourists' beliefs concerning the natural environment, the artificial physical (man made) environment, the host culture, the historical attributes, and the economic environment at a tourist destination. By using focus groups and the Critical Incident Technique, the beliefs underlying tourists' behaviors are explored and presented. The study provides a methodology that may serve as a template future research. Further, our findings indicate that tourist beliefs may be articulated into a two dimensional temporal framework that classify tourism impacts into six distinct categories reflective of the tourist's beliefs.

Keywords: sustainability, tourist, beliefs, behaviors

Introduction

The environmental issues concerning tourism destinations have been discussed mostly through the concepts and definitions of sustainable tourism or sustainable development. Often included in this debate is the concept of ecotourism (Khamouna 1998). Two key concepts to defining all of these terms are environmentally and socially responsible tourism. Ecotourism, sustainable tourism, and sustainable development include concern not only for the natural environment but also concern for the local populations inhabiting the area. The studies that focused on the environmental impacts of tourism development, however, have been conducted without concern for the tourist's environmental behaviors. However, with the assumption that the tourist (consumer) may take on a significant role at the environmental level and influence tourism management and development strategies, it becomes necessary to analyze and understand the behaviors or perspectives of tourists toward the environmental changes at destinations. Studies into these issues may provide a new perspective for environmental conservation as well as research directions for sustainable tourism.

Because a specific behavior is determined directly from values, beliefs, or attitudes, tourists' environmental behaviors may be predicted by some beliefs or general attitudes that the tourist has concerning the environmental attributes of

destination. However few studies address tourists' environment attitudes or beliefs. Therefore, these characteristics of vacationers need to be explored in order to diagnose the demand for environmental development or the occurrence of environmental behaviors. For this purpose, this study was designed to analyze the contents of the tourist's environmental beliefs or attitudes using qualitative research methodologies.

Impacts of Tourism and Tourism Development

While tourism might not significantly harm the natural environment beyond its carrying capacity, it might cause a change in the culture of the people living at or near the destination. The change in the host culture may cause the destination's appeal to tourists to decline, possibly to the point of destroying or severely damaging the environment or cultural heritage they came to explore (Gamper 1981; Keating 1992; MacCannell 1973; MacNaught 1982; Sheldon & Var 1984). The environmental issues of tourism impacts or sustainable tourism have been studied in two major categories. One is whether it is possible to develop the destination in state of preservation, thereby ensuring the long-term viability all physical and social environmental attributes from the supplier's perspective. The other is how tourism impacts or tourism developments are perceived by the host population. In both cases, the views and concerns of the tourists are neglected.

First of all, the environmental issues from the developer's perspective are considered. In defining sustainability, the World Commission on the Environment and Development (in Khamouna 1998) identified two components to their definition. Development that is sustainable meets the demands of the current generation without harming the ability of successive generations to meet their demands. Missing from this definition is any reference to the type of demands made. This lack of specificity makes the definition suitably universal, allowing for the inclusion of both natural and cultural resource protection. Carter (1993) extended the definition to sustainable tourism development by including the needs of the tourists and the need to protect the natural environment in order to meet the needs of current and future generations of indigenous populations and tourists. The underlying concept in Carter's definition is economic development, and his definition is useful for the less developed, Third World countries that attempt to increase foreign exchange through the export of tourism. Inskeep (1991) also expressed similar concerns for the people and culture of tourist areas, stating that these resources, along with the natural environment, are necessary for the development of tourism. The management of destinations in ways that promote the viability of human, cultural, and natural resources is also necessary to successful tourism development.

Hunter (1997) found the gap between the traditionally "exploitative," economically beneficial development, and the "extreme preservationist," socially

and environmentally beneficial development of tourism problematic to the concept of short and long term sustainability. Each of these polar visions precluded the other, allowing for a dichotomous but lacking perspective toward an acceptable definition of sustainable tourism development. The middle ground of this debate centers on the interchangeability of natural and man-made resources. One faction argues that the natural assets must be kept at a predetermined level or increased, while the other contends that there is an acceptable degree of substitution between natural and man-made resources.

On the other hand, for several years, scholars have debated the benefits of tourism. Forster (1964), Butler (1974), and Jafari (1974) identified several impacts of tourism, including economic effects, changes in the standard of living, commercialization of destination attributes, changes in traditions and rituals, prostitution, resident-tourist conflict, changes in political power, and the immigration/emigration of persons to the host community. Many of these changes often lead to the modernization of the community, meaning the community lost some of its environmental and social characteristics in order to provide the infrastructure, services, and cultural displays tourists expect. Some of the positive effects of tourism identified by Butler included the preservation of local customs, better medical care, improved transportation and public services, and more recreational facilities.

Other researchers examined the impacts of tourism by focusing on the perceptions of the hosts (Sethna 1980; Belisle & Hoy 1980; Davis, Allen, & Cosenza 1988; Ap 1992). Particularly, these studies focused on the social and cultural influences of tourism. This perspective may be compared with the research concerning sustainable tourism that addresses the natural or physical environment of destinations. Typically, empirical studies on impacts of tourism rate the perception level of the hosts with respect to the social and/or cultural change of the destination (Husbands 1989; King, Pizam, & Milman 1993; Pizam & Milman 1986; Ross 1992). For example, Rothman (1978) studied the impacts of tourism on the residents of two Delaware resort communities. In both of the communities, residents felt tourists contributed to noise pollution, litter, traffic congestion, increased crime, overcrowding of beaches and other natural resources, decreased time with family members, increased tension in the community, and inflation. Positive benefits derived from tourism were the revenues generated by tourism, seasonal employment, expanded commercial and public services (e.g. shops and recreational resources), and making and/or seeing friends. The residents even attributed changes in local architecture to tourists. The impact of tourism on the environment, public services, and the economy has also been studied (Allen et al. 1988). However, most studies of tourism impacts relied on exploratory methods and did not report the psychometric properties of the instruments used (Ap 1992). Aside from any issues concerning validity and reliability, tourism impacts generally may be divided into three factors: economic environment,

social/cultural environment, and natural. In addition, most of the reviewed studies focus on tourism as an influence on the indigenous population and physical environment at the destination on one of two levels. The first perspective is from the development/managerial level, which often adopts a macro-environmental perspective and is the level most often cited in the literature. The second basis is the tourists' perceptions or micro-level perspective, on which there have been few studies.

In the above descriptions of the impacts of tourism and sustainable development/ tourism, the ecology of the region and the viability of the local society are of paramount concern. An underlying critical component to all of these arguments and concepts is the tourists. Yet, with the exception of Hunter and Carter, the tourist's perspective is deemed irrelevant or assumed to be handled by market forces. However, if the tourist is not considered in the sustainability of tourism developments, then the destination will most likely fail. If left to the market, destinations will most likely follow a product life cycle (Cooper & Jackson 1989), either to decline and eventually disappear from the tourist's potential choice set or to be recycled (Hunter 1997). These alternatives fail to support the notions of sustainable development or sustainable tourism. Further, when considering the fact that the core element of the tourism phenomenon is the tourists, it should be explored how tourist's behavior and views relate to the environmental development and tourism impacts.

Tourists' Environmental Behaviors and Beliefs

The demands or behaviors of tourists affect the environmental attributes of destination through in a variety of ways. First, some demands of tourists to the environmental conditions could be reflected on the strategies of marketers or developers (Hunter 1997). Second, tourist's behaviors may directly impact the physical and social environment of the destination, directly and indirectly. Therefore, the tourist's environmental behaviors should be considered a critical component in the study of destination sustainability. If this is the case, the question becomes what are the antecedents to tourist's environmental behaviors? Social psychologists contend that an attitude determines a specific behavior, even though they debate the nature and effects of attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken 1993; McGuire 1985; Olson & Zanna 1993). Even if there is no universally agreed-upon definition, influential theorists variously define attitudes primarily in terms of evaluation, affect, cognition, and behavioral predisposition (Olson & Zanna 1993). For example, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) defined an attitude as a learned predisposition to response in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object. Based on this perspective, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and Fishbein (1980) proposed "the reasoned action theory" that describes the causal relationship among cognition, affect (i.e., attitude), behavioral intention, and behavior [Beliefs > Attitudes > Intentions > Behaviors]. The concept of belief is regarded as one of the basic elements of this theory and

defined as a cognition or information about the linkage between the object and some of its attributes (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975). With respect to ecological or environmental attitudes, some environmental psychologists have supported Fishbein and Ajzen's view (Weigel, 1983; Weigel & Newman, 1976), while others have used it as a basis for measurement of environmental attitudes (Maloney & Ward, 1973; Maloney, Ward, & Braucht, 1975).
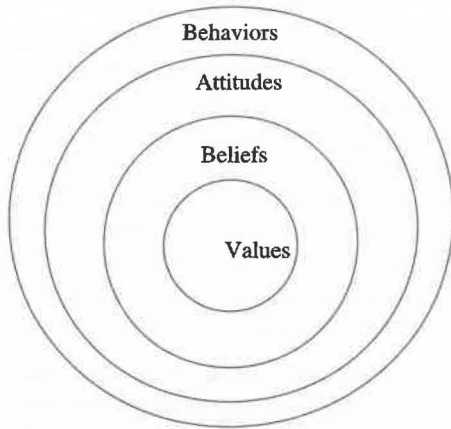

Figure 1: The relationship among beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors

In contrast to the reasoned action theory, authors of value theories disagree the argument that attitude should be defined at a specific level (Kelman 1974; Rokeach 1973, 1979a,b). If the concept of attitude should be measured at the object level and in a given context, while the possibility of the covariate of attitude with the predicted behaviors may be increased, the measured attitude cannot be a stable construct. Therefore, for researchers emphasizing values, the concept of attitude is regarded as a general attitude, a composition of beliefs, that may be unchanged over time and across contexts. Rokeach (1968, 1979a) studied behaviors using this paradigm, and defined attitude as an organization of all kinds of beliefs, compared to Fishbein and Ajzen who proposed a specific belief as an antecedent of a specific attitude. Rokeach formulated four kinds of beliefs: (1) existential beliefs that provide descriptions of world as perceived by the individual; (2) evaluative beliefs that are used to pass judgments about the world in which a person lives; (3) prescriptive-proscriptive beliefs that encourage laudable ideas or actions that correspond to personal values; and (4) causal beliefs that are assertions accounting for the why and how of an object (i.e., causal attribute). These four types of beliefs are often interwoven into one belief about the object currently confronted by the individual (1979a, p. 263-264). On the other hand, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) defined a belief simply as the information a person

has about the object. A more important difference between the above two perspectives is in the different level of analysis. While Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) and Fishbein (1980) considered attitude and belief at a very specific level, that is, with a specific object and specific situation, Rokeach (1979a) argued that there is a general attitude (an organization of beliefs) developed from global values beyond a specific object and situation. Therefore, Rokeach's concept of beliefs or attitudes should stem from one's values. He called this the principle of belief congruence.

Because the present study concerns the relatively stable and general belief system of tourists' view toward and behaviors affecting destination sustainability, the Rokeachian view concerning the concept of beliefs and attitudes is used (Figure 1). In order to avoid conceptual confusion, beliefs will be used in lieu of attitudes. Therefore, this study has assumptions congruent with Rokeach (1968, 1979a,b): (1) tourists have general belief systems that determine their overall behaviors; (2) belief systems are relatively stable and continuous; (3) belief systems are rooted in values that are global beliefs which transcendently guide actions and judgements across specific objects and situations; and (4) belief systems toward an object can be measured and compared over individuals, times, situations, etc.

Based on the limitations to the previous work on the impacts of tourism and assessments of tourism sustainability, the purpose of this study was to determine the behaviors of tourists that might affect the sustainability of a tourism destination. In order to achieve this goal, the attitudes of tourists concerning the attributes desirable in destinations must be uncovered. Once exposed, developers and advocates of sustainable tourism will have more scientific information on which to base their long-term destination development decisions.

Methods and Procedures

Because of the exploratory nature of this research, two methods of data collection were used. The first method utilized was focus group interviews (FGIs). By using a qualitative method such as FGIs, the research process may be continually revised and many iterations may be used, allowing each new interview to build from the knowledge gained from previous iterations (Spiggle, 1994). For this study, two focus groups were interviewed. The first group consisted of six students recruited from undergraduate classes. Residents of Connecticut, USA, with varying occupations (e.g., lawyers, claims representatives, and managers) comprised the second group.

The second method of data collection utilized a modified form of the Critical Incident Technique (CIT). This technique allows researchers to examine specific instances of behavior to determine the underlying causes (beliefs) for that behavior. Smith (1976) found the CIT useful when many incidents of the behavior under study could be observed. The goal of the CIT is to observe multiple instances of the most acceptable (desirable) and least acceptable (undesirable) behavior

and then use those behaviors to develop criteria for measuring performance-based behavior. For the current study, the method of recording tourists' behaviors was an open-ended structured interview developed as a modified form of the CIT. Interview items were developed from the two FGIs and reviewed by a panel of experts for clarity, wording, and content. The tourists interviewed were encouraged to report on their past behaviors and/or those of their traveling companions. By using the CIT in this fashion, it is possible to find common, underlying beliefs that the tourists hold toward the destination's potential for sustainable tourism. For this segment of the data collection, interviews with 44 informants were conducted using 16 questions in the described CIT format. In order to facilitate participation, the informants responded to a maximum of six questions. The questions were grouped by topic (e.g., impacts on culture, the natural environment, and historic sites). The respondents included both university students and residents of Connecticut. In order to analyze the data collected from the CIT interviews, content analysis was completed using the coding scheme developed for the FGIs.

In order to facilitate the categorization of the data gathered using the focus groups, a temporal two-dimensional coding scheme was developed (see Table 1). As a grounded model (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), this analysis frame was set through the authors' skimming of the collected data in a naturalistic paradigm perspective, and was improved with successive iterations of data interpretation. The rows represent destination attributes that might influence the tourists' perceptions of the destination, and the columns represent the type of impact tourists' behaviors have on the destination. Most cells in the figure contain reported behaviors of tourists as related to destination attributes.

Table 1
Coding Scheme for Interview Results and Examples of Results

Destination Attribute	Positive Sustainability Behavior	Negative Sustainability Behavior	Other Sustainability Behavior
Natural environment	Tourist doesn't litter	Tourists allow pets to defecate on the beach	Tourists are ambivalent to the natural environment
Artificial (but physical) environment	Tourists appreciate the planning that went into the destination	Other guests abuse the hotel facilities	
Host cultural climate	Tourists frequent destinations to interact with locals	Tourists seeking out the services of prostitutes	Tourists interact only with hotel staff
Historical attributes	Tourists visit historic sites to better understand the local heritage	Some tourists become immersed in history and miss the current culture	
Economic environment	Tourists spend dollars in local shops	Apparent poverty of locals makes tourist want to stay at resort complex	
Miscellaneous	Travel partners make trip enjoyable	Overcrowding of the destination is disgusting	Tourists bend morals while on vacation

The rows include the natural environment, the artificial physical (man made) environment, the host culture, the historical attributes, and the economic environment of the destination. Natural environment refers to the destination attributes that are not man made. These include the local flora and fauna, climatic, and geographic attributes found at the destination. The artificial environment is the man-made attributes at the destination. The cultural norms, laws, and preferences of the destination are included in the host cultural environment. The historical attributes of the destination include all historic sites, relics, and structures at or near the destination. The economic environment corresponds to the prices, inflation, taxes, and other economic factors related to the tourist destination. A final category, miscellaneous, was included for behaviors not conceptually or practically included in one of the other five categories.

Results and Analysis

The informants provided some valuable insights into tourists' beliefs about sustainability of vacation destinations. Focus group 1 primarily reported information concerning the destination environment and the culture of the locals. Both the natural and the man-made environments contributed to the appeal of a destination. For example, Hilton Head Island, North Carolina, USA, was mentioned as an example of a destination at which the natural environments blended well together. One woman said:

"...everything is so planned...Everything is...made so it still looks like an island even though there's malls...or golf clubs, country clubs, everything out there but it still looks like an island...it's kinda like a jungle."

This use of integrated development enhanced the destination's appeal, making it a favorite for two of the focus group's members. Furthermore, informants cited the Island's development plan as a desirable destination trait. Because of the planning and integration of man-made structures with natural scenery (palm trees, Spanish moss, and plants), the developers created a *"non-city U.S.A."* appearance found attractive by tourists. These comments indicated the tourist belief that it is possible to develop a destination integrated with the natural environment if there is well-planned development.

Another environmental factor influencing the sustainability of the destination is the attractiveness of the environment. Commenting on Puerto Rico, one participant claimed the island's *"mountains, deserts, rainforest, beaches...everything that you can imagine is all on this tiny island and it's gorgeous."* The two group members who visited Hilton Head Island also described it as beautiful. When asked what made the Caribbean Island of St. Martin so beautiful, an informant replied *"the scenery."* Tourists believe that the aesthetic beauty of the naturally occurring scenery increases the destination's appeal. The native flora and fauna made apparent the relationship between the natural environment attributes and the sustainability of the destination: the more

beautiful the natural environment of the destination, the more likely the tourist will want sustain that destination's environment. This relationship should result in tourist sustainability behaviors that benefit the environment, if the natural environment appears unspoiled.

Other informants felt, for example, that resort developments *"...add more beauty to the environment... Without hotels and resorts we are...seeing different people and seeing different cultures. [They] are a big plus to adding to the natural environment."* The belief that development may add to the natural environment extends the above findings by indicating that tourists believe development may improve the sustainability of the destination and also encourage tourists to behave in ways that positively effect the sustainability of the destination.

ᴌiving in a popular tourist destination affected one participant's behavior during her own vacations:

"...my back yard is everybody's tourist spot...People come here and they just figure "Oh, I'm on vacation, I own this place...this is my vacation, so I'm going to do whatever I want..." I make sure that when I go on vacation, I don't act like that. Because it irks me...So when I go on vacation, that's why we do the sandbag [for her mother's cigarette butts] and... we make sure we don't disrupt anything wherever we go...it's not fair to the people that live there."

Having others pollute her home environment influenced her behavior at vacation destinations. The sustainability behavior of tourists at destinations may be affected by the pollution of the tourist's home environment. In this citation, there is also an escapist perspective toward the tourists' treatment of the destination environment. When some tourists are away from home, they feel as though they "own" the destination and behave in ways that reflect total disregard for the natural environment. Furthermore, because other tourists believe the natural environment of a destination should not be polluted, they believe other tourists visiting a destination should also avoid polluting the natural environment. Based on this content, another tourist belief may be extracted: it is unfair to the residents of a destination to pollute the natural and man-made environments of a destination.

In talking about Hilton Head Island, informants made other comments concerning the treatment of the destination environment. The woman who visited the island many times related a story about dogs on the beach:

"I remember some people had their dogs on the beach, and I remember seeing the dog go to the bathroom and I was like eewww! Why'd the dog go to the bathroom on the beach ya know if everything's so clean."

The context of this comment showed the informant's awareness of the destination's cleanliness. One man claimed that if the destination is clean and well maintained, *"...you felt guilty if you trashed it."* Two beliefs become evident

here. Tourists' are less likely to pollute an environment that looks clean. The second is that some polluting behaviors repulse tourists and should therefore be avoided by residents and tourists of the destination or banned by destination managers and policy makers. A third belief, that residents are not responsible for cleaning up tourists' messes, is obvious from one man's comment that he *"didn't feel like making [the locals] clean up the mess that we made...So we cleaned up...ourselves everyday."* Clearly, not all tourists are like those who visited Cape Cod; they do have some respect for the destination environment and the persons living there.

Despite the importance of cleanliness of the destination, other informants commented on the squalor of the local residents' homes. *"Locals [of St. Martin] aren't too clean. Like their houses and stuff like that aren't clean but the hotels are kept very well."* Tourists believe the entire destination, not just the resort or hotel, should be kept clean. In addition, the locals' role in keeping the destination clean is expanded from keeping destination attractions clean to keeping their home environments clean. An informant summarized this belief: a destination is *"perfect [if] it's clean, and the people are nice."*

As the preceding quote indicates, the hosts also play an important role in the sustainability of the destination. Of particular importance are the rules, norms, laws, traditions, and rituals of the host culture. All informants indicated that friendly, helpful residents made a destination more attractive. Again commenting on what made St. Martin so beautiful, one informant found *"...their way of living is totally different from here. All the people...were very friendly...more laid back."* Having residents behave in a friendly, relaxed manner toward tourists affects the sustainability of the destination. According to social psychologists (e.g., Eagly and Chaiken 1993), psychological evaluation of an object makes a person form an attitude toward the object. For example, if a resident is relaxed and friendly with tourists, tourists form positive attitudes (and potentially positive beliefs) toward the resident and possibly the destination. A destination with hospitable, easy-going residents therefore appeals to, and is frequented by tourists, ensuring the long-term viability of the destination through the positive affect between the tourists and the locals.

Two informants commented on the "freedom" that the hosts inspired: *"...they knew how to laugh and how to live free. They did not take life for granted."* The belief that residents knew how to enjoy themselves and life again produced positive affect in the tourists. Therefore, tourists who believe that residents "know how to live" are more likely to behave in ways that positively effect the destination's sustainability. The positive affect inspired by the lifestyles of the host presented above directly conflicts with other experiences, to be discussed later in the paper, that produced negative affect in tourists.

Other group members commented on the attitudes of the locals toward the tourists. When asked if the locals behaved amiably, one group member qualified her answer to depend on the type of attraction being visited:

"If we went to an antique shop, they'd be a little bit more snotty, 'cause we came in from the woods, so we weren't...the best dressed or the most clean, but...if we went to the farmers market, we just blended right in and the farmers, they were great...They were open about everything."

This again shows the relationship between resident behavior, tourist attitude, and belief formation as it relates to sustainability behavior. The results for this person, however, are both negative and positive.

Informants found the celebration of and rituals associated with holidays different and interesting at a foreign destination. One woman, visiting St. Martin, stated:

"It's just weird how they celebrate [Christmas]. Like they celebrate Christmas, but it's like in your briefs. When we were there...Santa Claus came on a jet ski for all the little kids. So it was cool."

The difference in lifestyles and climatic conditions, combined with the difference in ritual celebrations, to create a unique and memorable experience, which contributes to tourism sustainability as tourists may find these differences "cool."

Other informants presented several interesting experiences related to laws and law enforcement at the destination. For example, one informant experienced difficulty with Israeli customs officials because he found some of the surprises left by his girlfriend. The customs official became *"...very disturbed. "What's that?" he said. He realized that there was something in this suitcase that [the informant] did not immediately recognize. He grilled him for a + hour."* Another group member took a friend from Ireland to a N.Y. Yankee baseball game on bat day. This resulted in the friend having a bat in her luggage that resulted in *"...being...with [airport] security for almost 12 hours. The British police kept her there all night. This was a little girl."* However, not all informants experienced rigorous customs procedures. One group member said:

"What's funny is that if you are travelling to Europe on New Year's Eve, customs is dead. I didn't even have to go through customs because there was nobody there. It's like nobody cared. I could have had all sorts of bombs."

While customs seemed problematic for those tourists detained or searched, this last comment about New Year's Eve demonstrates that although officials may be an inconvenience, when the security they provide is missing, it is very noticeable. Therefore, customs could affect the sustainability behavior of the tourists positively, by providing a destination that is perceived as safe, or negatively, by harassing tourists as they enter the destination. Tourists believe that customs provides a screening mechanism that helps to ensure the safety of the area. If

this safety is missing, tourists may engage in behaviors that negatively impact the destination's sustainability. However, because negative experiences may result in negative psychological processes which lead to negative behaviors, the tourist belief that customs is an unpleasant experience may lead to behaviors that detract the sustainability of the destination (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975).

Economically, two informants reported interesting experiences. The first related to salespersons at the destination selling "packages" to bars. While the salespersons were attractive and offered apparently good deals, many of the bars and clubs included in the package only honored the coupons during off hours or for patrons 21 years of age and older. This resulted in the tourists being leery of *"people tryin' to sell you a lot of stuff."* Similar to the formation of beliefs as a result of cultural interaction mentioned above, over-aggressive salespersons may also lead to tourists forming negative attitudes toward the local retailers because of economic issues. These beliefs may negatively affect tourists' sustainability behaviors, particularly their buying behaviors. Therefore, the actions of the salespersons may both the cause and result in negative buying behaviors and beliefs held by tourists.

Another example of economic issues influencing tourists' sustainability behaviors relates to the apparent poverty of the destination. One informant related a story about the beggars of Ecuador who would entertain tourists by singing to them. There was a catch, however: they wanted money.

"...they just get up and come to your car and they're all disgusting like unbathed and all that...they'd start singing to you in Spanish...Every time we'd laugh hysterically at them while we're giving them the money."

The abundance of beggars and homeless families supply an entertainment service that may detract from the appeal of the destination by presenting unkempt persons who need money from tourists. The presence of beggars in tourist areas and along routes to attractions may lead to the development of a belief that the residents of the destination live in poverty. This negatively affects the destination's sustainability by creating tourist beliefs that the destination is poor and in disrepair, which, as mentioned above, could lead to behaviors that negatively affect the sustainability of the destination. These behaviors could be tourists harming the natural and/or manmade environment or disregarding the residents' culture.

The economy of the destination area also may inhibit cross-cultural interaction among local people and tourists. This is especially true if the lifestyle of the residents is economically poor relative to that of the tourists. As one group member stated:

"...when it comes to how they live, I tend to back away...When we were in Mexico, we were on a bus for 3 hours and we got to see these poor people who

live in shacks that were literally half the size of this kitchen and it broke my heart to see them like this...I thought that I really did not need to see what I saw today ...I'm pretty content to be on vacation and enjoy the ethnic food and dress and then go back to my normal life...It breaks my heart to know that people live this way."

The economic poverty of the Mexican people who lived on the countryside strongly affected this informant. After seeing their living conditions, she wanted to remain in the resort or areas similar to it and enjoy the aesthetically pleasing sights, sounds, and foods of the culture she was visiting. Some informants "hated" the apparent poverty at less economically developed destinations. Tourists believe that the developer and/or the policy makers should improve economically poor conditions so tourists do not have to view these conditions during their visit to the destination.

Other tourists, or their traveling companions, knowingly broke the laws of the destination they visited. Most of these infractions were of a minor nature: the illegal purchase of and bargaining for alcoholic beverages and speeding while driving a car. One incident, which happened with a friend of one of the informants, involved a more serious crime:

"It was Christmas day and the guy I was living with was bored. So we decided to go on a road trip to Montreal. He brings $200. Halfway up, he announces to me that he wants to find a hooker. First start with the strip joints and then find a hooker...So we're walking down the street and these ladies were coming up to me asking me if I would like to partake. And [my roommate] is waving $20's in Montreal."

While the informant never stated if a prostitute was found, it was clear that an illegal act was foremost in his friend's mind. From this search for sex, three tourist beliefs become apparent. The first is that tourists may behave in any way they want, regardless of the laws and cultural norms of the local people. Another belief is that the climate of the destination contributes to tourist behaviors, and these could affect the sustainability of the destination. Depending on the destination, they may negatively or positively impact the destination by promoting tourist beliefs that result in behaviors that either appreciate or depreciate the local residents. A final belief arose from the boredom of the two men: they sought a destination providing enjoyable, and possibly illegal, activities. Believing that the destination alleviates boredom may aid in the sustainability of the destination.

Other informants found the culture of the residents at the destination very interesting, but they also thought that tourists observe the culture while not absorbing it. Because of this, cultural barriers are often erected around tourists. For example, informants, when visiting a destination at which a language other than English was spoken, expected the locals to speak English. Another

informant, using food as an analogy, claimed that *"a lot of people go to a foreign country and want to look for an American restaurant to have a good American meal with a side of something foreign."* The prevalent belief found in this case is that tourists want limited exposure to the culture. If tourists are too immersed in the host culture, they might not enjoy their stay and not return or recommend the destination to their friends, thereby negatively affecting the sustainability of the destination. Another belief is evident from these findings: the host culture should have some of the tourist's home conveniences or attributes. That the tourist should find attributes similar to his or her home culture reflects another belief: destination development should include these attributes.

The interviewees identified a barrier to cultural interaction other than the need to maintain cultural relativism. This barrier was that tourism is a business. *"There's also that sense of having business to transact, which is very American. Time is precious and some people haven't time to socialize."* This aspect of tourism, according to the informants, discourages interaction among the hosts and guests. Therefore, if the tourist wishes to avoid cross-cultural contact with the hosts, they may use the business aspect of tourism to do so. The majority of the informants, however, sought cultural contact and found the "tourism as a business" attitude a barrier to meaningful cultural contact with the host population. This lack of meaningful interaction with the residents of the destination could result in the decline of destinations promoting cross-cultural interaction as an attraction.

Informants identified the history of the destination as a vital resource for the sustainability of the destination. Informants enjoyed visiting historical sites as a vacation activity. The informants appreciated another aspect of the destination: the people who lived through historic events. One informant, who frequently visited Germany, thought *"It was cool to hear stories from [a] grandmother about WWII."* This comment reflects the relationship between culture and history. Historic sites provide tourists with a sustainable resource as an attraction, and the local people contribute to tourists' understanding and appreciation of these sites. Appreciation of such monuments, and of the persons who have lived during historic events, reflects another tourist belief: the historic attributes of the destination should be preserved for future generations.

The relationship between history and culture may not always provide the tourist with a more profound understanding of the culture(s) associated with the destination. While a tourist may *"learn more about...Italian heritage"* by visiting ancient sites and talking with local residents of the destination, other informants felt

"You can insulate yourself from the current culture by being attracted to the history. You can go and be totally immersed in the history of the town but you're not learning about the current culture. You keep yourself separate from the life that's going on now."

Exclusively learning about the history of the destination indicates a tourist belief that the history of the destination is more valuable than the current culture of the destination. Because of the tourist belief that the historic sites are separated from the current culture of the destination, tourists may not behave in ways that promote the sustainability of the destination, excepting the historic sites.

The real value from this part of the group discussion was the realization of the dynamic aspect of culture that history lacks:

Marge- There is a big difference between absorbing the culture and absorbing the history. In culture, there is that element of danger.

Jen- Right, but history is safe.

From these comments, it should be clear to the reader that tourists believe there is safety from cultural contact by the tourist's focusing of attention on historic attributes. Tourists believe there is an element of danger in culture, which may lead to negative attitudes about the residents of the destination. As previously stated, negative attitudes may lead to negative behaviors, and thereby detracting from the sustainability of the destination.

Informants also offered information that did not fit into any of the five identified sustainability categories. For this reason, the miscellaneous category was created to capture this information. The bulk of this data focuses on the role of travel partners in an enjoyable vacation experience, the bending of morals or self-imposed rules while on vacation, and the crowding of the destination. For example, one informant said that she would go to bars without the company of a man while on vacation, which is something she had never done at home. Other personal rules are also forgotten. One informant claimed *"I'll do things that I normally don't do when I'm on vacation... kinda push the envelope a little bit."* The morals of tourists also change, but to a very limited degree. *"On the periphery, it [morals] should change,"* but core morals don't change when on vacation. One informant best summarized this view: *"When someone goes on vacation, they're taking themselves out of their normal life. What you choose to keep the same depends a lot on who you are."* Therefore, some change is acceptable, but core value changes are not likely. These three comments are indicative of the tourist belief that it is acceptable for tourists behave differently while on vacation, thereby affecting the sustainability behaviors of the tourists while at a destination.

One informant indicated that tourists *"... will do things to preserve the [natural] environment if they are properly reminded to do so."* Therefore, it is possible to infer that cues must be present in a destination environment that prompts the tourists to behave in a sustainable manner. The general consensus of many of the informants, however, was that *"... tourists don't give a rip about the environment, in general, while on vacation."* The belief inherent in this statement is that the destination environment is unimportant. This may result in

unsustainable behaviors by the tourists who visit the destination. Some informants even reported that *"tourists cannot resist touching or taking a piece of the environment with them as a momento."* These comments indicate that the informants feel tourists often do not make an effort to support the sustainability of the destination's environment.

Discussion and Conclusion

If the sustainability of the destination includes such factors as the natural, cultural, social, and historical attributes of the destination (Khamouna, 1998), then these data suggest that tourists are aware of their potential role in sustaining the tourism destination. The impact of tourists on the environment is made clear again by comments from informants, supporting the results of studies by Allen et al. (1988), Butler (1993), Carter (1988), Rothman (1978) and others. The information given by the participants of this study, however, suggests that tourists may also be aware of their role, as groups and individuals, in ensuring the long-term viability of the destination. As many informants clearly indicated, the destination environment is important to them. This includes both the natural and man-made environments. Unfortunately, the informants also felt that tourists feel no responsibility toward behaving in a manner that promotes environmental sustainability. Destination developers may help in promoting environmentally friendly behavior by designing man-made structures that are well integrated with the natural environment. The residents of the destination may help too by keeping the area clean and free of visible pollution, possibly making the tourists feel "guilty" should they pollute the destination environment. Finally, the tourists should be reminded to use environmentally friendly behaviors. The resort staff and management and those promoting the destination could facilitate these behaviors through reminders that are both verbal and written (Moscardo, Verbeek, and Woods 1998).

The cultural heritage should also be tourist friendly if the destination is to remain sustainable in the long term (Bramwell and Fearn, 1996; Rudd and Davis, 1998). Having friendly, easy-going people at the destination make it more appealing to tourists. Furthermore, law enforcement should also be somewhat "laid back" to facilitate the tourists' relaxation of personal rules and peripheral morals while still providing enough structure to ensure tourists that their way of life is not completely without order. The use of familiar languages, especially English, would also increase the appeal of the destination to the informants interviewed for this study. The exclusive use of English, however, would result in the depreciation of the local population's culture by the tourists, thereby endangering the sustainability of the destination. There needs to be a mixed use of both the tourists' language(s) and the language of the indigenous population.

There is also a clear need to maintain historic sites. Most informants felt that historic sites should be preserved at the cost of developing those sites for touristic

activities. This view was not universal among the informants, but the vast majority of those informants addressing this issue indicated that they would not support a resort or hotel that was built on a site that was the location of an historic structure. The historic value of the destination may also be appreciated through cross-cultural interaction. Tourists may actually seek out local residents of the area who either have learned the history of the area or who have lived through what are now considered to be interesting historic times. If an effort is made to keep and maintain the history of the destination, including sites, structures, and people, the sustainability of the destination should be increased to the benefit of both tourists and local residents, and the progeny of these two groups (Carter 1993; Hunter 1997; Inskeep 1991).

Economic conditions may also affect the sustainability of the destination from the tourists' perspectives. Several informants stated an aversion for seeing poverty stricken locals during ventures out of the resort area. Because of this aversion, many informants stayed within the resort compound, thereby limiting the economic exchange to the owners and employees of the resort. If the destination and the surrounding attractions are to remain economically viable, the appearance of the local homes and streets should be improved. Achieving this goal, however, may not be realistic or desirable. However, if the goal of tourism development is to increase the wealth and standard of living for the local population, the economic benefits must be distributed so that the local population has better housing, clothing, and food. This should eliminate the apparent poverty in which the residents of many destinations live.

Finally, there are other factors that affect the sustainability of the destination from the tourist's viewpoint. The most prominent of these are the overcrowding of the destination and the rampant commercialization of the tourist destination. The tourism developers and local policy makers may address both of these issues. If the destination is poorly planned, the number of tourists at the destination could seem very high, making it less attractive to some tourists. Therefore, planners should adequately distance not only resort compounds from each other, but also various facilities and amenities within the compound. Policy makers play a role in limiting the commercialization of tourist attractions, hotels, and resorts. By creating local ordinances that limit or prohibit the development and the type, size and number of signs and displays, policy makers can greatly influence the appearance of the destination, potentially influencing the long-term sustainability of the destination from the tourist's perspective.

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