

Martin, Steven R. 1995. Montanans' attitudes and behavioral intentions towards tourism: implications for sustainability. In: Linking tourism, the environment, and sustainability. McCool, S. and A. Watson (eds.). USDA Forest Service Intermountain Research Station, General Technical Report INT-GTR-323.

Abstract

Tourism is increasingly recognized as an important economic development tool in many rural western states. If tourism is to succeed within a state or community, its residents must be willing partners in the process (Allen *et al.* 1988). Because residents interact frequently with out-of-state visitors, their behavior and willingness to serve as gracious hosts are critical. The issue of sustainability of tourism has long been recognized. Young (1973), Doxey (1976) and Butler (1975; 1980) were among the earliest to recognize the potential negative impacts of tourism, and to recognize an evolution of residents' attitudes from "euphoria" to "antagonism" as the negative impacts of tourism overtook the benefits. Inskeep (1991) includes improving host community residents' quality of life as a goal of sustainable tourism, and includes promoting uses and activities that reinforce a sense of community identity as an implication of that goal. Antagonistic attitudes on the part of residents is a sure sign that the sustainability of the industry, as well as sustainability of residents' quality of life, is threatened.

Numerous studies have examined residents' attitudes toward tourism. These studies have helped gauge how residents feel about tourism, and have identified issues or concerns that the tourism industry can work to resolve in order to minimize the negative impacts that tourism may have on a community. But attitudes can also be helpful when used to understand and predict people's behavior. This study sought to examine not only residents' attitudes toward tourism, but also to examine behavioral intentions, and the relationship between attitudes and behavioral intentions.

The multi-dimensionality of tourism's consequences has long been recognized and examined, traditionally in terms of the economic, social and environmental benefits and impacts (*e.g.* Mathieson and Wall 1982; Caneday and Zeiger 1991). But there has been much less examination of the multidimensionality of residents' attitudes toward tourism. This study sought to examine the multidimensionality of attitudes toward tourism, and to segment residents based on their attitudes toward tourism. A survey questionnaire was developed and pre-tested. Twenty-seven attitude statements reflecting various aspects of tourism were included, along with a separate section including ten statements pertaining to the consequences of future tourism increases. To measure behavioral intentions, 11 questions posed hypothetical behavioral situations or opportunities; respondents indicated (on a 5-point Likert type scale) how likely or unlikely it was that they would perform the behavior.

Completed surveys were received from 1,128 adults selected from state motor vehicle registrations (a 65% response rate). A principal components analysis was performed on the set of 27 attitude statements. The resulting four factors represent tourism attitude dimensions, and define the general aspects of tourism about which Montanans hold consistent attitudes, namely the positive benefits of tourism, the negative impacts, perceptions of equity between tourists and residents, and the extent and distribution of economic benefits.

In order to better understand the attitudinal characteristics of the sample, a cluster analysis was performed on the four attitude indices, and four groups emerged. This same process (factor and cluster analyses) was then performed on the set of ten attitude statements relating to future tourism increases, and on the set of behavioral intention questions. This process made clear the fact that Montana residents are segmented into constituencies that hold favorable attitudes toward all four tourism attitude dimensions (59%), those who hold mixed but predominantly favorable attitudes (22%), those who hold mixed but predominantly negative attitudes (6%), and those who hold uniformly negative attitudes (13%).

With respect to behavioral intentions, results indicate that attitudes toward current conditions, and especially attitudes toward future tourism increases, are closely associated with behavioral intentions. A sizable minority of respondents (34%) indicated that they were likely to actively engage in behaviors supportive of tourism, while very few respondents (8%) indicated they were likely to actively oppose tourism; the majority of respondents were behaviorally passive. A path analysis revealed that perceived personal benefits derived from tourism (including but not limited to economic dependency) was most responsible for respondents' attitudes.