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Stage-based tourism models and resident attitudes towards tourism in an emerging destination in the developing world

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Many researchers have used stage-based and life cycle models to describe destination development and local residents' changing reactions to tourism. Typically, they report that resident attitudes towards tourism, and its perceived outcomes for host populations, worsen with increasing experience and involvement in tourism. However, stage-based models traditionally focus on mature destinations in developed countries. In contrast, scholarship on ecotourism derives largely from developing countries and suggests that increased participation leads to more favourable outcomes and attitudes towards tourism. This paper breaks new ground by exploring attitudes to tourism in an emerging destination in a developing country and linking that exploration to a revised stage-based model. It uses ethnographic data to evaluate responses to recent tourism development in Nicaragua. While findings are complex and do not support a linear relationship between the level of experience in tourism and the attitudes of local residents, they do indicate a relationship between these two theoretical perspectives that can be used to inform one another. Notably, workers in tourism are more critical of the tourism industry than residents are. Important amendments to stage-based models are suggested that will assist tourism planners with the creation of more sustainable, community-centred development.

Keywords: community participation; ecotourism; resident attitudes; tourism impacts; tourism development; social change

Introduction

Many tourism scholars have used stage-based models to describe destination development and local residents' reactions to tourism (Ap & Crompton, 1993; Butler, 1980; Dogan, 1989; Doxey, 1975). Others have largely eschewed such models in their assessments of resident views of tourism and instead characterized general support for tourism as coming primarily from those residents who enjoy direct economic benefits and employment (Jurowski, Uysal, & Williams, 1997; Keogh, 1990; Lankford & Howard, 1994; Lui, Sheldon, & Var, 1987; Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Perdue, Long, & Allen, 1990; Pizam, 1978). These writings have been widely cited, especially Butler's (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC), which Hall (2006) reveals as the single most cited peer-reviewed article in tourism studies. According to most results, resident attitudes towards tourism, and outcomes for host populations, worsen with increasing experience and involvement in tourism.

However, "the majority of tourism studies on residents' attitudes have been conducted in industrialized countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia and several European countries. Such studies in developing countries . . . are scarce, if not non-existent" (Sirakaya,

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Teye, & Sönmez, 2002, p. 57). As is evident in Butler's (2006a, 2006b) edited volumes, writings on stage-based models focus predominantly on case studies of relatively mature tourism destinations in industrialized countries and offer little analysis of resident attitudes towards tourists in emerging destinations in developing countries. When scholars explored resident support for tourism in developing countries (Britton, 1982; Brohman, 1996; Freitag, 1994; Kayat, 2002; Upchurch & Teivane, 2000), their findings "support the outcome of studies done in industrialized countries as well as in more developed tourist destinations" (Sirakaya et al., 2002, p. 65), that is, while support for tourism development is most closely linked to direct economic impacts and employment from tourism, those with more exposure to, and experience with, tourism have the least favourable attitudes towards it. Notably absent from all of these writings on resident reactions to tourism is the substantial body of scholarship focusing on ecotourism.

While ecotourism can be found in some form almost everywhere, it occurs predominantly in developing, biodiverse tropical countries of the global south (Buckley, 2002; Christ, Hillel, Matus, & Sweeting, 2003). It got an early start in lesser developed regions of Latin America (Honey, 1999), "arguably the region with the greatest amount and diversity of ecotourism activity in the world" (Stronza, 2008, p. 8) and also where the term was first coined (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1988). Derived largely in developing regions, studies focused on ecotourism have tended to produce results that are contrary to attitudinal studies using stage-based tourism models, that is, many ecotourism scholars have found attitudes and outcomes for local residents *improve* with experience and involvement in tourism (Alexander, 2000; Belsky, 1999; Honey, 1999; Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan, 2010; Mbaiwa, 2005; Stem, Lassoie, Lee, Deshler, & Schelhas, 2003; Stronza & Pegas, 2008; Wunder, 2000).

Little synthesis of these two parallel lines of research on resident reactions to tourism is available. We believe the former line of research that focuses predominantly on quantitative measures of economic value of tourism can be informed by the latter work on ecotourism, which includes qualitative data as well and yields rich narratives on the social and cultural impacts and historical context of tourism development. To that end, this paper draws inductively on ethnographic data, ecotourism scholarship and the classic stage-based models in tourism studies to evaluate tourism employee and resident responses to tourism development in south-western Nicaragua. Of particular interest is whether employees and residents are positive or negative about tourism at an early stage in the destination, and why.

Study area

Nicaragua suffered a long dictatorship, a devastating series of natural disasters and prolonged armed conflicts that delayed the country's development. In 1972, the colonial centre of the capital city of Managua was completely levelled by an earthquake. The aid money that poured into the country was pilfered by the dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle. Sharp inequalities and human rights abuses attributed to the dictatorship led to the 1978–1979 popular insurrection led by the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (FSLN). The USA supported the dictator's former National Guard, commonly referred to as the *contras*, in a counter-revolution against the Sandinistas from 1983 to 1990. These armed conflicts claimed the lives of nearly one-fifth of the country's population (EM-DAT, 2012). The associated social and political turmoil left Nicaragua virtually devoid of tourists during the 1980s (Hunt, 2011).

The Department of Rivas borders Costa Rica and was of strategic importance during the conflicts. Since the conflicts, the tourism industry has expanded rapidly in Rivas. Overnight tourist arrivals, overall, in Nicaragua have nearly tripled from 358,439 in 1997 to 1,060,031

in 2011; revenues from tourism in the same period have more than quintupled from \$74.4 million to \$377.11 million (INTUR, 2011). Though Rivas is the least populated and most rural department along the Pacific Coast, its seaside town of San Juan del Sur is currently undergoing massive tourism development (Figure 1), including high-end hotels, luxury vacation home communities, cruise ship arrivals and real estate speculation (Hunt, 2011).

In 2008, the primary author conducted six months of field research in the municipality of San Juan del Sur as part of a broader study of cross-cultural differences in community participation in ecotourism. In addition to data gathered via participant observation, ethnographic interviews were conducted with three groups of individuals representing different degrees of involvement in the local tourism industry: (1) those directly employed at the luxury nature-based tourism "ecolodge", Morgan's Rock, located 25 km from San Juan del Sur, (2) those indirectly involved in tourism-related activities through their employment at the integrated "hacienda", a hardwood plantation located on the same property, owned by the same individuals and sharing the same name as the ecolodge, and (3) local residents living in closest proximity to the "hacienda and ecolodge" property and who were only passively involved in tourism. This array of perspectives from individuals involved in tourism at varying degrees offers a nuanced understanding of local attitudes towards tourism development along the Pacific Coast of south-western Nicaragua.

The focal project, Morgan's Rock Hacienda and Ecolodge, is a 15-cabin enterprise integrated with a tropical hardwood tree plantation. The operation is owned by the Ponçon family through their company *Desarrollo Ecoforestal S.A.* This family emigrated from France in the late 1970s and owns many properties and businesses in Nicaragua, including a coffee farm, a timber business and other tourism enterprises.

While the degree to which Morgan's Rock embodies the lofty principles scholars have developed for ecotourism has been debated (Hunt & Stronza, 2011), perusal of the online community (e.g. Trip Advisor), a review of travel guides (e.g. Rough Guides, Moon handbook for Nicaragua, etc.), print media reports (National Geographic, Conde Nast Traveler, Travel + Leisure, New York Times, etc.), a recent World Travel Award as Mexico and Central America's Leading Green Hotel, and the project's own claims of being "ecotourism at its finest" has made it clear that the industry and the tourists see the lodge as a prototypical example of ecotourism. It is the ambiguous nature of tourism at Morgan's Rock, and in this region of Nicaragua in general, that makes the present comparison of traditional tourism scholarship and ecotourism-specific scholarship especially compelling.

Resident views of tourism

In 1975, Doxey presented a four-stage model explaining hosts–guests interactions in tourism destinations. This model suggests that over time the relationship of hosts towards guests moves from *euphoria* (industry, visitors and investors are welcome) to *apathy* (tourists are taken for granted; contact between residents and outsiders becomes more formal) to *irritation* (residents begin to show misgivings about tourism) and eventually to *antagonism* (outsiders are seen as problems, personal and societal). While simplistic, Doxey's Irritation Index highlighted that not all locals respond favourably to tourism development. This research focused on Niagara, Ontario and the Barbados.

In a literature review, Dogan (1989), like Doxey (1975), focused on how residents adjust to tourism development. The strategies that Dogan identifies for adjusting to tourism include *resistance, retreatism, boundary maintenance, revitalization* and *adoption*. Resistance and retreatism usually surface when the thresholds for touristic development are exceeded. Boundary maintenance involves balancing the interests of hosts and guests,

Figure 1.   Map of Nicaragua and study area context.

with the expectation that tourism's negative impacts will be nullified by newly introduced economic benefits. Revitalization is a more common strategy where culture is the focus of tourism, while adoption may indicate a desire to use tourism as a vehicle for changing existing social structures or to assimilate western culture. Ap and Crompton (1993) later proposed yet another stage model of resident reactions to tourism. These researchers studied Texas communities where hosts and guests differ little, demographically, from one another. This research led to the development of a four-stage continuum of resident reactions: *embracement* (eager welcoming of tourism), *tolerance* (enduring tourism's negative aspects out of recognition of its contribution to the community's economic vitality), *adjustment* (scheduling of activities in order to escape tourists) and *withdrawal* (temporary removal of oneself from the community).

In the most influential of the stage-based tourism models, Butler (1980) applied the product life cycle model from marketing research to tourism destinations. His well-known TALC model describes tourism areas evolving through the stages of *exploration, involvement, development, consolidation* and *stagnation*, at which point the area either falls into decline or is rejuvenated. Weaver (2000, p. 217) describes Butler's model as "the most cited and empirically investigated model for describing growth of tourism within particular destinations". Even critics of the life cycle model maintain that it "still provides a useful framework for description and interpretation" (Hovinen, 2000, p. 227) and that it provides a "close resemblance" of the resort dynamics (Agrawal, 1997, p. 72).

As Figure 2 summarizes, these tourism researchers have each established a clear theoretical relationship between time and local response to tourism. Common is the tendency for the relations between hosts and guests to become more adverse with time, experience and participation in tourism. The relationships described in the models of Doxey (1975), Butler (1980), Dogan (1989) and Ap and Crompton (1993) have been further examined by

Tourism Stage Models				Time/Experience/ Participation in Tourism	Citizen Participation		Ecotourism
Doxey (1975)	Butler (1980)	Dogan (1989)	Ap & Crompton (1993)		Arnstein (1969)		Scholarship
Antagonism	*Stagnation*	*Resistance*	*Withdrawal*	**more**	*Citizen Control Delegated Power Partnership*	*Citizen Control*	*More Benefit*
Irritation	*Consolidation*	*Retreatism*	*Adjustment*		*Placation Consultation Informing*	*Tokenism*	
	Development	*Boundary Maintenance*					
Apathy	*Involvement*	*Revitalization*	*Tolerance*		*Therapy Manipulation*	*Non-participation*	
Euphoria	*Exploration*	*Adoption*	*Embracement*	**less**			*Less Benefit*

Figure 2.   Theoretical frameworks.

many scholars (Agrawal, 1997; Akis, Peristianis, & Warner, 1996; Baum, 1998; Faulkner & Tideswell, 1997; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Mason & Cheyne, 2000; Smith & Krannich, 1998; Tosun, 2002), including a two-volume exploration of the TALC edited by Butler (2006a, 2006b).

Despite this proliferation, Lagiewski's (2006) chapter in Butler's (2006a, 2006b) state-of-the-knowledge volumes on TALC research presents a survey of 49 prior studies that apply the TALC concept. Only seven of these studies were from lesser-developed countries and none were from Latin America. When Butler (2006, p. 9) does apply the concept in developing countries, he suggests that such areas actually bypass the initial two stages to start with *development*; nevertheless, he recognizes the lack of empirical evidence to support this assertion. While Dogan (1989) did address tourism in the "Third World", he likewise lacked empirical data. Doxey (1975) and Ap and Crompton (1993) conducted their empirical research in Niagara Falls (Canada) and Texas (USA). Scholars have almost exclusively focused their explorations of TALC and stage-based models on relatively mature destinations in developed countries.

Resident views of tourism have been assessed outside of stage-based models. In Pizam's (1978) assessment of outdoor recreation-based tourism in Cape Cod (MA, USA), it was found that heavy tourism concentration leads to negative resident attitudes towards tourism and tourists, though in the case of economic dependence on tourism, attitudes were positive. Mathieson and Wall (1982) demonstrated a relationship between economic impacts and favourable attitudes towards tourism, yet indicated that research on the impacts of tourism lacked strong theoretical foundations at the time. Perdue et al. (1990) tested a hypothetical model of support for additional outdoor recreation-based tourism development in Colorado (USA), finding that favourable attitudes towards tourism development were unrelated to socio-demographics but indeed related to the perceived economic impacts of tourism.

Ap (1992) evoked the social exchange theory to explain how residents weigh and balance the factors influencing their support for tourism. Though results were not wholly supportive of the theory's tenets, other scholars have found varying degrees of support for this theory via quantitative assessments of resident attitudes and perceptions of tourism (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Brunt & Courtney, 1999; Fredline & Faulkner, 2000; Jurowski et al., 1997; Kayat, 2002; Lindberg & Johnson, 1997). In many cases, social exchange theory is explored in conjunction with one or more stage-based models (Ko & Stewart, 2002; Mason & Cheyne, 2000; Sirakaya et al., 2002). Unfortunately, as Harrill (2004) notes, the results of these studies have been inadequately applied to tourism planning, especially in regions newly introduced to the tourism industry. This is of increasing concern as rural communities are drawn into tourism development by the decline of agriculture and extractive industries (Davis & Morais, 2004).

There are emerging lines of research that address the limitations of previous efforts. Sebastian and Rajagopalana (2008) look at newly developed tourism projects in India and demonstrate how planned community-based ecotourism interventions avoid many of the socio-cultural challenges that communities experience when thrust into tourism haphazardly, without planning. Zamani-Farahani and Musa (2008) express similar concerns in their research on newly introduced tourism in Iran. Hernandez, Cohen, and Garcia (1996) compiled narratives from interviews to assess Puerto Rican residents' attitudes towards enclave resort development in rural Puerto Rico, drawing on Miossec (1977) and Lundberg (1990) to propose the notion of a "pre-tourism" phase or a period when residents have little or no exposure to tourism.

Thus, Mathieson and Wall recognized in 1982 the theoretical "underdevelopment" of the theory on resident attitudes and Ap reasserted that the literature on resident perceptions remains "underdeveloped" in 1992. In 2002, Sirakaya et al. pointed out how little quantitative data is gathered where tourism is "in the beginning of a 'destination cycle'", further noting: "to date, the majority of tourism studies on resident attitudes have been conducted in industrialized countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia and several European countries" (p. 57). Moving into the fourth decade, scholars need to further develop our understanding of residents' attitudes towards tourism (1) at the early or pre-tourism stages of development, (2) in lesser developed regions of the world that represent the vanguard of later tourism development and (3) with inclusive qualitative data that provides richer details about the ways residents negotiate the new challenges introduced with tourism development.

Ecotourism research exhibits many of these characteristics; however, its contribution remains notably absent in the literature reviews of mainstream tourism scholars of resident perceptions and attitudes towards tourism. This paper seeks to integrate the two parallel lines of research. We now review relevant ecotourism scholarship.

Scholarship on participation and involvement in ecotourism

The Brundtland Report (Brundtland, 1987) ushered in the era of sustainable development. By then, scholars had begun to urge more participation and engagement of local residents to make tourism more sustainable (see Krippendorf, 1987). Participatory approaches to tourism development soon became common in developed countries, but were slow to be adopted in the developing world (Tosun, 2005). The approaches originating in the developed world made little allowance for local socio-cultural, environmental and political conditions, or else, did so only after development had already proceeded in an ad hoc fashion. This was equally true of ecotourism projects (Campbell, 1999; Hunt, 2011).

Despite promising rhetoric, scholarly reviews of ecotourism in practice are mixed. Scholars criticize ecotourism for providing few economic incentives to conserve biodiversity (Bookbinder, Dinerstein, Rijal, Cauley, & Rajouria, 1998), being less effective than utilizing the same funds for direct conservation of ecosystems (Ferraro, 2001; Kiss, 2004), providing incomes that permit more efficient means of environmental destruction (Langholz, 1999; Stronza, 2007), having impacts similar to mass tourism (Weaver, 2001), reinforcing existing inequities in communities (Belsky, 1999) and further entrenching social and political relations of power (Stonich, 1998).

Other researchers, however, claim ecotourism impacts that go far beyond mass tourism (Honey, 1999) and involve the adoption of a "nature-centred" versus a "tourism-centred" approach (Diamantis, 1999). Positive outcomes demonstrated include the ability to empower communities (Scheyvens, 1999; Stonich, 1998; Stronza, 2007), direct economic support

for protected areas (Honey, 1999), economic incentives to conserve biodiversity (Lindberg et al., 1996; Wunder, 2000) and support for cultural revitalization (Stronza, 2008).

One promising line of research looks beyond the economic aspects and explores how people participate in ecotourism. Arnstein's (1969) eight-rung ladder of citizen participation has been influential in conceptualizations of participation in tourism. This continuum positions powerless citizens against existing power-holders, with the relations that exist between them ranging from manipulation to full citizen control. The lowest levels of participation are referred to as manipulation and therapy and they represent non-participation; they are substitutes for legitimate participation. At these levels, power-holders "educate" or "cure" the participants of their opposition to elite interests. The next rungs on the participation ladder – informing, consultation and placation – are referred to as tokenism. They allow citizens to hear and be heard, though the rights to decide remain with the power-holders. The highest rungs – partnership, delegated power and citizen control – represent actual citizen power. Here, citizens have the power to negotiate and engage in trade-offs, to obtain the majority of the decision-making seats or to achieve full managerial power.

Echoing Arnstein, Campbell (1999) in Costa Rica, Stronza (2007) in Peru and Stronza and Pegas (2008) in Brazil, all suggest that economic benefits, while necessary, are simply not sufficient to achieve long-term conservation outcomes from ecotourism. Scholars have confirmed that increased participation, particularly in management and ownership of ecotourism operations, is related to positive attitudes towards ecotourism (Campbell, 1999; Lindberg, Enriquez, & Sproule, 1996), while the lack of participation in decision-making is associated with negative attitudes and ecotourism failure (Alexander, 2000; Belsky, 1999). Likewise, higher levels of participation are linked to increasing support for ecotourism-related conservation (Alexander, 2000; Lindberg et al., 1996; Mbaiwa, 2005; Stronza, 2007), and poor participation and earnings are associated with lack of engagement in conservation (Bookbinder et al., 1998; Stem et al., 2003). Ecotourism-specific literature clearly indicates that favourable attitudes towards ecotourism are related to increasing levels of participation, particularly in management and ownership.

Thus, as Figure 2 summarizes, two theoretical perspectives towards local involvement in tourism have been reviewed. Examined almost exclusively in developed countries, the stage-based models indicate local resident attitudes towards tourism worsen over time with increased experience and involvement in tourism. Ecotourism, on the other hand, occurs predominantly in developing countries. The scholarship on ecotourism indicates that increased involvement, experience and participation in ecotourism projects leads to more favourable outcomes and attitudes towards tourism. We now present ethnographic data from Nicaragua to explore these theoretical perspectives in the context of a recently emerging destination in one of Latin America's least developed countries.

Method

The work presented here is part of a four-country research project sponsored by the National Science Foundation's Cultural Anthropology Program. The research initially sought to compare different ecotourism management and ownership schemes with resource management institutions, attitudes towards conservation and economic changes resulting from participation in ecotourism. A subset of the ethnographic data gathered in Nicaragua between January and June of 2008 is referenced to reflect resident opinions of the rapid tourism development occurring around San Juan del Sur and to inductively assess those opinions against the existing scholarship. The fieldwork and analysis were informed by the knowledge acquired during the primary author's experience as an assistant ecolodge

manager in the central highlands of Matagalpa in 2005, as well as by intervening travel to Nicaragua. Additional data gathered during this research was used to assess the ethical performance of Morgan's Rock (Hunt & Stronza, 2011) and to outline a broader political ecology of tourism development in this region of Nicaragua (Hunt, 2011).

Data collection

The primary author spent two months living at Morgan's Rock. In exchange for access to employees, he gave the guide, reception and restaurant staff English classes. Being housed in the employee quarters provided rich participant observation data (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002) documented in detailed field notes (Emerson, Fritz, & Shaw, 1995) using SIL FieldWorks software. In addition, 40 semi-structured, open-ended interviews ranging from 45 to 90 minutes were conducted in a manner consistent with Bernard (1999) and Spradley (1979). Approximately 45 lodge employees live on the premises 26 days out of each month. Twenty members of this staff were purposively sampled to reflect the range of professions offered by the lodge (Babbie, 2001; Bernard, 1999). Interviews took place in their on-site housing area and reflected the perspective of those with a high degree of involvement in tourism.

Another 85 individuals work and live at the tree plantation/hacienda in humbler housing. They interact regularly with hotel staff during work and social activities. Hacienda employees also interact daily with visitors during tours of the property and provide evening security patrols. Thus, their involvement reflects more intermediate levels of involvement in tourism. Twenty members of this staff were also purposively sampled to reflect the range of professions offered at the hacienda and interviewed at the hacienda headquarters.

Later, the first author conducted additional semi-structured interviews, following the same interview guide, with 20 neighbouring residents. Those located in closest proximity to Morgan's Rock were purposively sampled. Despite this proximity to the lodge, few interviewees in this third group had direct experience in tourism and thus provided a low involvement perspective. In addition to jotted notes, interviews were audio recorded using a portable mp3 player. Full transcriptions were inserted into an Excel interview database and analysed in a manner consistent with LeCompte and Schensul (1999) and Spradley (1979).

Although categories of involvement are broadly meaningful, within each group, there was a range of involvement and experience with tourism. Individuals at the hotel (e.g. gardeners) may have had a similarly low level of interaction with tourists as certain plantation workers or even less than those who participated in tree planting tours with visitors. Likewise, local residents with little direct employment from tourism may have had tourism experience in the past.

Data analysis

The present analysis focuses on qualitative information that speaks to the degree of change resulting from tourism development: (1) The historical nature of tourism in the region and (2) impacts of rapid tourism development in and around San Juan del Sur. Interviews typically provided rich detail and, despite the purposive nature of the sampling employed, exhibited a high degree of consensus and saturation within the groups as the last interviews were gathered. This was corroborated by participant observation and interactions with non-interviewed individuals (Bernard, 1999). Table 1 shows basic descriptive information about the 60 interviewees.

Only one hotel employee interviewed was from the municipal region of San Juan del Sur. Additional surveying of the entire hotel staff ($n = 45$) revealed that this was not a sampling

Table 1.   Descriptive information of interviewees.

	Neighbouring residents	Plantation employees	Hotel employees	Overall
Origin: San Juan del Sur	20	0	1	21
Other Rivas	0	11	6	17
Other dept.	0	9	13	22
Sex : Female	13	1	4	18
Male	7	19	16	
Age	35.5	38.2	35.6	36.6
Household size	5.2	6.1	5.3	5.7
Number of children	3.7	3.4	2.1	3.1
Years of education	3.7	4.9	9.7	6.2
Cultivated area	0.5	4.0	5.2	3.46

issue. Only 7% of the employees were from the municipal region of San Juan del Sur, 36% were from the same department of Rivas and 57% majority came from more distant departments. This phenomenon of importing labour was also noticed in the plantation, with 45% of those interviewed from other departments. In comparison, all neighbours are lifelong residents of the municipality.

In addition to this origin bias, a gender bias existed. Workers at both the plantation and the hotel were primarily male. Household visits for the neighbouring resident interviews were made during daytime hours when the patriarch – when present – was often working outside the home and was therefore unavailable. Thus, primarily, females were interviewed in the neighbouring households. Despite the gender bias, there is little reason to believe that this affected the participants' responses in a meaningful way. The remaining data in Table 1 show a few additional differences. The hotel workers have fewer children and much more education than the other groups. The neighbouring residents report far less land under cultivation than the employee groups noted. Tourism development in San Juan del Sur Land has led to land concentration and displacement; however, Morgan's Rock employees originate largely from elsewhere and use higher incomes to acquire more readily available land in their home departments (Hunt, 2011).

Qualitative results: attitudes towards tourism

The following sections compare attitudes on select themes. Interviews with local residents neighbouring Morgan's Rock Hacienda and Ecolodge were conducted during brief household visits. Thus, the empirical information is not as rich as the interviews and accompanying participant observation gathered from lodge and tree plantation employees during the residency at Morgan's Rock. Nevertheless, there is a high degree of corroboration on many themes.

History of tourism in south-west Nicaragua

When you don't know about something, you only ask yourself "I wonder what that would be like".

The above quote from an unemployed resident of San Juan del Sur reflects the dominant perspective on tourism in Nicaragua in the 1990s and earlier – that it simply did not exist. To describe the situation in the 1980s, two tree farm employees noted that "because of the

war, the people did not think anything about tourism" and "there was a blockade against investors and they all went away. During the war, the president threw them out and closed the door". As in much of the late twentieth-century Latin America, Nicaragua's development strategy hinged on agriculture: a lodge employee explains, "they (*the government*) didn't look to the future. They thought tourism didn't work in Nicaragua, that Nicaragua could move forward without tourism, but we couldn't. We only thought about cotton, sesame, and now rice". Clearly, the attitudes and perspectives held during that time could not be characterized as exploration, adoption, euphoria or embracement, and thus pre-date any of the stages of development or of the tourism life cycle. At this time, there was a total *absence* of tourism and an *unawareness* of it. The government, and therefore the populace, held a *concerned*, *hesitant* stance towards its development.

After the Sandinistas lost the 1990 election, a fundamental shift towards external investors and to tourism development took place. A hacienda worker explains, "When the changes of Doña Violeta (subsequent president Violeta Chamorro) came along, many gringos started coming into Nicaragua to make their buildings, to travel around. Now there is a reason it was developing, now it happens on a national level". As a result, popular perception of tourism began to shift as well, as another tourism worker alludes, "It was seen as a source of little income for the country. In fact, it was seen only as outgoing money that INTUR (National Institute of Tourism) was spending. And now a noticeable advance is seen. Now they know it internally supports PDB (*Producto Interno Bruto*), the domestic product. It is income!"

In 2002, Nicaragua had one of the most unequal distributions of wealth in the world (World Bank, 2002) and in 2005, in Nicaragua, 45.1% of the population lived on less than US$1 per day and 79.9% lived on less than US$2 per day (UNDP, 2005). The 2007 purchasing power of the gross national income per person – US$1707 – is little improvement over the 1950 levels of US$1616 (Gapminder, 2012). Such a dismal economic situation perpetuates a universal hope among those interviewed that tourism will improve their economic situation. However, those working in tourism, most from rural areas with extremely high unemployment rates, have no bets to hedge on tourism, as epitomized by a tree farm staff member, "What we think (*about tourism*) is that we have a job!" Elaborating, a tree farm employee stated, "After the war there was total poverty. There was nothing to eat, to take home to the family. Hunger was the only thing that mattered at that time. People knew about the damage, but even so, without jobs, without money, it was still necessary to give food to the family". For most, the only alternative strategy involves working illegally in Costa Rica. A middle-aged female lodge worker describes, "When I was young we ate only *yuca* (manioc) and sour milk, and mangos for every meal. My father went to Costa Rica and they threw him in jail for being illegal - for looking for food to feed the family. We went to sleep with a warm glass of *pinolillo* (ground corn beverage) - with no bread nor tortillas. The old times - today is tough but it used to be worse. From 1995 onward everything has changed".

The nature of change resulting from tourism development

By 1995, tourism was Nicaragua's #4 export and quickly rose to #1 by 2001, where it has remained every year but one (INTUR, 2011). Although the characteristics of the early stages of *exploration*, *adoption*, *euphoria* and *embracement* appear in interviewees' comments, some differences in perspectives are noted between the three groups of interviewees depending on their degree of involvement in the tourism industry. For neighbouring residents who receive little direct income or employment from tourism, there are mixed feelings

towards the industry. As noted elsewhere, one change brought about by the rapid emergence of tourism is the displacement of local residents and consolidation of land amongst wealthy investors (Hunt, 2011), as one matriarch queries, "What is there to think about? We are simple people. We thought it would be better, that there would be more sources of income even though the people were all losing their lands".

For other residents, there is a trade-off inherent to tourism development in their community, reflected by one agitated resident, illustrating how opportunities in tourism are limited to low-skilled, low-paying positions:

> We cannot go to the beaches anymore, to look for food or anything. The entrance is guarded, the guards are armed. Ooo, it is barbarous. The tourism has changed and the people have changed, mostly here in the south. It has changed a lot here. Before there was no work, now with tourism everything is open and now there are jobs – security guards, cleaning, laundry, construction.

Nevertheless, when asked how their life has changed as a result of tourism, 77% of the interviewees stated that their lives have improved; 52% cited the primary benefit of working in tourism being the employment opportunities, as reflected in the quote above. Residents with no experience in the tourism industry continue to perceive tourism as a positive force for the country, even if they themselves do not directly benefit. Rather than enjoying improvements in the quality of life stemming from tourism development, most local residents note either no direct positive impacts (e.g. improved infrastructure) or else negative impacts (e.g. loss of access). As this rural resident notes, "They don't allow the people to go to the beach - no one knows why. We just want to go to the beach, nothing more. There is no harm in that. They always have guards. On the issue of electricity, they didn't want to pass it along the road here. Their electricity enters from the other side".

Other residents are concerned about less tangible impacts, such as those on culture: "It might be the corruption, or the breaking of an order that a community has. The foreigners don't think like Nicaraguans. They change their mode of thinking. And sometimes the prices are high - in Costa Rica the prices are low for citizens (and higher for foreigners), but here they charge the same to everyone. And for the children, now there is nothing left of Nicaragua for them - they think like foreigners. The people are more ambitious - they always want more".

Tree plantation workers at Morgan's Rock have a different perspective. Although they do not see themselves as working directly in tourism, they do have a greater insight into the lifestyle of tourism employees via their interactions with the ecolodge. The lodge often draws employees from the plantation staff. This is perceived as a promotion: "Those guys hardly have any duties, and yet they get everything, the tips. We get nothing. They come over here to buy their sodas and stuff. If we do that, it doesn't leave us anything to send home!" Still this employee notes in reference to a former lodge employee, "Before there were no waiters, no servers - now there are. They learn English, computers and stuff. *Marcos* (pseudonym) learned English and everything here, and then he left with it all to work somewhere else. He was able to buy a car and everything". Table 2 categorizes the attitudes of interviewees towards tourism in general in Nicaragua as well as specifically towards Morgan's Rock.

The employees of the tree plantation display evidence of the *euphoria* and *embracement* associated with the early stages of tourism development. One worker states, "It is important, great, great. Because they come to the hotel, it benefits us. They give work to us, the poor people. Because without tourism there is none of that. The money runs out. But when tourism comes, they see all the beautiful things. Without that there is nothing to help

Table 2. Overview of resident attitudes towards tourism.

	Ecolodge employees	Hacienda employees	Neighbouring residents
Level of involvement	High	Medium	Low
Ecotourism at Morgan's Rock	±Mixed	+Positive	−Negative
Tourism in general in Nicaragua	+Positive	+Positive	+Positive

us improve". *Hesitance* and antipathy towards tourism and outsiders is absent from this worker's statement, "If it weren't for the foreign investors, who knows where we'd be. Just five years ago there wasn't any work at all. The country needs tourism". Unlike the concern demonstrated by the neighbouring residents about negative cultural impacts, this hacienda employee perceives a favourable influence, "Yes, yes, if you are speaking of tourism, not just for me but for all of Nicaragua, tourism comes bringing many things, elevating our consciousness to not throw out our papers and trash everywhere. That is a welcome change. It sticks with one, makes one think".

Interestingly, this group holds a strong association between tourism and conservation: "I don't know what that is called, the anti-hunting. It has to do with threatening the animals. Here, they only enter [Morgan's Rock property] to hunt in hiding. That is because this whole place is a . . . . what do you call those places that take care of animals? A reserve. This place is a reserve. Here the security walks around armed to make sure no one is threatening the animals". Despite the association of tourism with environmental concern, a tree plantation employee echoes the concern of neighbouring residents that lands are being increasingly consolidated among foreign and wealthy investors, "Look around, there are hotels everywhere. Have you been to Ometepe - the island? It is totally covered in hotels and pure foreigners there. But that is the only thing that gives the people work. This government doesn't give us anything. Tourism supports nature more than it threatens it. It has a positive effect on the environment. But the lands are all running out - people have bought up all the land".

Ecolodge employees have differing degrees of experience in tourism. Some joined the staff while the research was being conducted; others had been with the lodge since its inception and a few worked in tourism prior to its opening. In comparison, neighbouring residents and those at the hacienda had little or no prior tourism experience and thus were more homogenous in that regard. In examining responses from the lodge employees such as the two below, we see a much more critical perspective of tourism, similar to the neighbouring residents, yet different in subtle ways:

What is a benefit here? I don't see it as a benefit for myself when the hotel generates income. Here they need me. They don't just give to me but I give to them my services. Since we live here they have more control over the employees. They can call us to work at any time. There is more availability yet they don't pay us overtime for such things. Also, without a place to stay and the food, no one would work here because of the lack of transportation. It would be impossible to pay for transportation every day.

One learns more working in tourism - to relate to other people, to know other cultures, how to express oneself. If you keep at it you can really improve your situation - maybe not in my case since I'm already old, but maybe 20 years ago, looking to now, I have improved a little, but with more English, or another language, I could have done even more.

While neighbouring residents and lodge employees were both more critical of tourism than those in the hacienda, the neighbours' quotes are reflective of earlier less-involved

stages of tourism development, whereas those of the employees reflect the more advanced stages of tourism development. For example, unlike the evaluations of the other two groups, lodge employees draw attention to the extra-economic factors in their evaluations of tourism. In the first quote above, the employee highlights extra-economic factors related to tourism such as cultural interaction and educational opportunities. This is consistent with the *development* stage, whereas noting the language barrier indicates a mechanism for *boundary maintenance*. While both quotes reflect a *tolerance* of tourism, the second one also embodies the *irritation* stage of tourism development, implying an impending *resistance* and perhaps even *withdrawal* to tourism should working conditions change even slightly. The perspectives of these individuals reflect not only more experience in tourism but also more variation in experience with tourism in relation to the other two, more homogenous groups. Their critiques are more informed as is typical of the later stages of tourism development.

Implications for stage-based tourism theory

Currently, the perception of, and attitudes towards, tourism in Nicaragua are consistent with the stage-based models. Given the absence of tourism in Nicaragua during the 1980s' civil war and its rapid development since 1990, the San Juan del Sur region appears to be in the stages of euphoria (Doxey, 1975), exploration/involvement (Butler, 1980), adoption (Dogan, 1989) or embracement (Ap & Crompton, 1993). This is reflected in the universal approval of tourism development in general, especially on economic grounds, as a provider of employment in this historically underemployed region. However, unlike findings elsewhere (Jurowski et al., 1997; Keogh, 1990; Lankford & Howard, 1994; Lui et al., 1987; Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Perdue et al., 1990; Pizam, 1978), residents with more direct employment history in tourism were more likely to state negative attitudes of exploitation and disappointment with the ecological and cultural impacts of tourism development in the region. These findings are inconsistent with social exchange theory.

Certain responses are characteristic of later stages in the model such as *apathy/irritation*, *development*, *boundary maintenance/retreatism*, or *tolerance/adjustment*. Several individuals are biding their time for more desirable employment outside of tourism (*retreatism*) or, in some cases, are interested in using their experience to obtain better positions in tourism elsewhere (*adjustment*). Characteristics of these stages are reflected in the responses of local residents who have lost access to forest and marine subsistence resources. This type of "spatial dichotomy" privileging the powerful elites and tourists with choice beach access while marginalizing the rural poor to less productive interior lands is consistent with writings about resident frustration with enclave tourism (Britton, 1982; Brohman, 1996; Freitag, 1994).

However, despite the negative impacts that neighbouring residents have personally endured, including lost access to important resources, 75% of the interviewees in this group support their children working in tourism. As King, Pizam, and Milman (1993) note, those perceiving negative consequences of tourism are not necessarily opposed to tourism. By recognizing the benefits of tourism development for Nicaraguans in general, despite negative impacts for themselves personally, residents support the "altruistic surplus theory". Applied primarily in developed countries, this is an alternative to the social exchange theory which "envisages the trade-off being externalized in such a way that the costs to the individual might be tolerated in the interest of broader community benefits" (Clifton and Benson, 2006; Faulkner & Tideswell, 1997, p. 24; Haralambopolous & Pizam, 1996).

For the rural residents around Morgan's Rock, the opportunity costs of working in tourism are inordinately low because few if any other employment alternatives exist. In

contrast to the neighbours, only 45% of Ecolodge employees support their children working in tourism. These lodge employees are more educated and capable of finding work elsewhere. A higher opportunity cost applies to them and contributes to their capacity to recognize negative aspects of tourism. Such subtle trade-offs challenge full acceptance of the altruistic surplus theory.

Implications for ecotourism research

The reviewed research on participation in ecotourism indicates that a lack of meaningful involvement (e.g. participation in management and/or ownership) leads to unfavourable attitudes towards tourism. The data here provide similar results. The lack of opportunities to participate in management, decision-making or ownership at the ecolodge appears to explain, at least partially, the negative attitudes towards the project and its owners. Here, the nature of participation is consistent with Arnstein's (1969) original conceptualization of non-participation. Residents who are for the most part denied employment opportunities were also prone to exhibit negative attitudes towards Morgan's Rock. The quality of participation plays a significant role in defining attitude. Without opportunities beyond entry-level employment, attitudes between lodge employees who benefit economically and residents who are disadvantaged by the project are comparable on many topics. This similarity exists despite differences in educational levels between the two groups.

Increasing involvement via direct employment in tourism is associated with an increased capacity to identify negative aspects of tourism development, especially environmental impacts, as Lui et al. (1987) and King, Pizam, and Milman (1993) note. Negative perceptions of tourism were almost wholly absent among the two other groups, both less involved in tourism. While this is consistent with the traditional stage-based models that suggest that increasing involvement and experience in tourism leads to more aversive reactions to it, careful consideration of the qualitative information gathered here indicates such conclusions can be reconciled with the ecotourism-based perspective. These lodge employees have no opportunities to participate in management or ownership; this lack of meaningful participation may explain the lack of positive attitudes towards Morgan's Rock even though attitudes towards tourism in general remain high.

Amending the tourism area life cycle

With armed conflict continuing into 1990, it is not surprising that the interviewees' responses from all three groups confirm a historical absence of tourism in Nicaragua, and this region in particular, into the late 1990s. When asked about the nature of tourism in their community 10 years prior to the study, 95% of the lodge and hacienda workers and 100% of the neighbours indicated that no tourism existed in the area. Interviewees described having no concept of tourism. They were not adopting, exploring, embracing or euphoric about tourism and thus not exhibiting attitudes characteristic of the early stages of the models. Baum (1998) suggests that destinations in developing countries may experience tourism growth more rapidly than in other parts of the world, leading to leap-frogging of life cycle stages, yet residents were not tolerating, adjusting to or developing tourism at this time. They did not exhibit characteristics of the middle stages of the models that Butler (2006a) indicates is where enclave resorts in developing countries typically enter the cycle. Thus, the initial phases of the stage-based tourism models appear to only have relevance where residents already have at least some understanding and exposure to tourism prior to its *development* or *consolidation*.
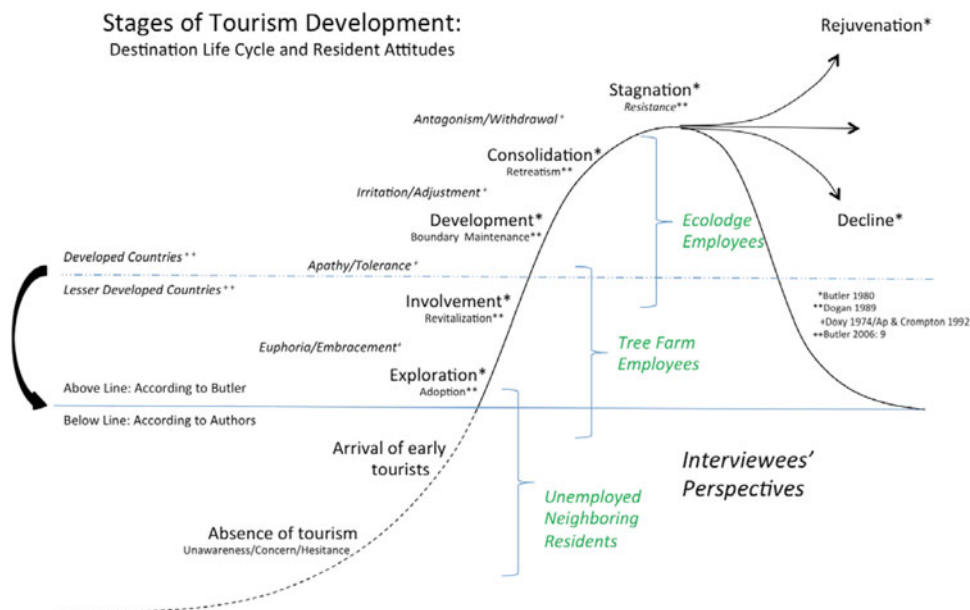
Figure 3. Appended stages of tourism development.

We therefore contest Butler's (2006a, p. 9) assertion that destinations in developing countries enter the TALC at the development stage and propose an alternative that accounts for the nature of resident perspectives gathered in this study. In accordance with Hernandez et al. (1996), we propose the incorporation of additional stages at the front end of these stage-based models (see Figure 3) to better reflect the conditions where tourism has yet to occur, as in this region into the 1990s. This allows for better integration of the traditional tourism perspectives with ecotourism research stemming largely from newly emerging destinations.

Interviewees reveal a historical naivety towards tourism that reflects the unawareness, concern and then hesitance as tourists began to trickle in to their communities. This is understandable given their lack of exposure to tourism, and in Nicaragua, may have been reinforced by the Sandinista policy in the 1980s of distrust towards foreigners, especially North Americans. Nevertheless, naivety to tourism among residents in emerging destinations or to proposed tourism developments has been documented elsewhere (Hernandez et al., 1996; Keogh, 1990; Lepp, 2008; Mason & Cheyne, 2000; Sirakaya et al., 2002). By not accounting for an earlier pre-tourism phase, existing stage-based models have misled tourism planners, developers and scholars alike. We offer a theoretically consolidated and amended conceptual model of the stages of tourism development and their corresponding resident attitudes in Figure 3.

Conclusion

> It has two faces, doesn't it? No really, it is OK. Instead of looking for the bad side, we should look for ways to improve the good side! – Hacienda assistant manager

This paper draws on two seemingly disparate theoretical perspectives to explain resident responses to south-western Nicaragua's recent and rapid tourism development. The ethnographic data reveal complex attitudes and perceptions towards tourism among three

groups of individuals representing different degrees of involvement with tourism. Residents neighbouring an ecotourism project held guarded yet positive attitudes towards tourism, derived from the uncompensated loss of access to subsistence resources on one hand and the observed inflow of revenues to this historically impoverished region on the other. Those indirectly involved in tourism via their employment at the on-site tree plantation exhibited mostly favourable attitudes towards tourism. Employees of a lodge who are directly involved in the tourism industry held very mixed opinions of tourism, including the harshest overall critiques noted here.

In drawing on tourism scholarship to inductively explain these differences, it was found that mainstream literature on local reactions to tourism development uses stage-based models to show that increasing experience with tourism leads to increasingly negative reactions to tourism. This contrasts with ecotourism scholarship that indicates that increasing participation in ecotourism leads to more favourable attitudes towards tourism. Based on our data, in early phases of tourism development, new economic opportunities, whether assessed individually or collectively, dominate perceptions and attitudes towards tourism. As exposure to tourism increases over time, the deficiency of opportunities for equitable and empowering participation in decisions related to tourism development leads to more negative reactions characteristic of the stage-based models. These findings support neither a positive nor a negative linear relationship between the level of experience in tourism and the attitudes of locals towards it. Rather, the ethnographic data contribute additional complexity to these theoretical perspectives and reveal opportunities for integrating the parallel lines of research, conceptualized in an elaboration of the stage-based models informed by both lines of research. High internal validity of the ethnographic approach also improves our understanding of how these theoretical perspectives manifest in reality in Nicaragua.

Tourism is new to this region and the elaboration of the stage-based model presented here includes the period in emerging destinations' recent history when tourism did not exist. This accounts for the perspectives of a large segment of the local population who once lived in its absence. The data suggest that tourism and the responses to it have yet to move beyond the initial "honeymoon" phases here. There are, however, small indications of a progression to later stages among tourism employees with more experience in the industry. This is particularly evident when no opportunities for further skill development or meaningful participation are offered. Their attitudes shift, their expectations increase and they begin to exhibit characteristic attitudes of the later stages, including negative attitudes towards the industry that employs them. These conclusions may serve as hypotheses for further research explorations in the developing world and emerging destinations.

Tourism has existed as a major industry for just over 20 years in Nicaragua. As it continues to mature as a destination, the application of later phases of the stage-based theoretical models of tourism development may become more relevant as locals gain experience with the industry. To the extent that tourism developers offer opportunities for meaningful participation and other "extra-economic" benefits for local residents, such as those in successful ecotourism projects elsewhere, the adverse attitudes exhibited by residents in the later stages of the traditional tourism models may be offset by more favourable impacts on the residents' quality of life. Creating such opportunities decreases the likelihood of entering the stagnation phase of destination models and should make all forms of tourism more sustainable.

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