

## **Using Social and Political Values to Assess Host Community Perceptions of Tourism**

*Margaret Deery\**, *Leo Jago<sup>o</sup>* and *Liz Fredline<sup>~</sup>*

\* Victoria University, Australia, [margaret.deery@vu.edu.au](mailto:margaret.deery@vu.edu.au)

<sup>o</sup> Victoria University, Australia, [leo.jago@vu.edu.au](mailto:leo.jago@vu.edu.au)

<sup>~</sup> Griffith University, Australia, [l.fredline@griffith.edu.au](mailto:l.fredline@griffith.edu.au)

### **Abstract**

Tourism, like any other endeavour, operates within the social and political domains of a community, and it is therefore likely that residents with different social and political values would hold different representations of tourism. In the US, Snepenger and Johnson (1991) found that 'conservatives' were more negatively disposed to tourism than 'liberals'. Lindberg and Johnson (1997) found support for a model that suggests that resident values regarding economic gain are positively related to perceptions of tourism. In using host resident social and political values to examine perceptions of tourism, it is possible to understand the levels of support or otherwise for tourism and tourism development within those communities.

This paper presents the findings from a study of two coastal tourism communities, one being a large, mature destination, the other being a small, underdeveloped tourism community. Using Inglehart's (1981) materialist/post-materialist values which explore a number of goals, it was possible to link these values to perceptions of tourism development. Respondents were asked to choose six from a list of 12 social goals, half of which represented materialist values (economic growth, strong defence, maintaining order, controlling prices, a stable economy, the fight against crime) and six of which represent post materialist values (public participation, beautifying communities, freedom of speech, more humanity, community consultation and less emphasis on money). In addition, respondents were asked to name the political party with which they most closely identified.

Data were collected using a mailout survey from residents and property owners of Coles Bay (Tasmania) and the Gold Coast (Queensland). A range of questions were asked including demographics and perceptions of specific impacts of tourism on the community. With regard to Inglehart's list, respondents who chose 5 or 6 post materialist values were classified as such, while people who chose 5 or 6 materialist values were put into this group. Others were defined as mixed. The findings show that materialists rated the community level benefit of tourism as being much higher than did post materialists. The study tests and confirms Inglehart's (1981; 1999) assertion that determining materialist/ postmaterialist values allows

researchers to predict an individual's stand on social issues, in this case, the development and impact of tourism on communities. The paper concludes with the implications of the knowledge obtained from the study for destination managers and tourism policy. In particular, it considers the types of strategies and communication messages that destination managers can utilise in support of tourism depending on the value systems of the dominant groups within a particular community.

## **References**

- Inglehart, R. (1981). Post-Materialism in an Environment of Insecurity. *The American Political Science Review*, 75, 880-900.
- Inglehart, R. and Abramson (1999). Measuring Postmaterialism, *The American Political Science Review*, 93 (3): 665-677.
- Lindberg, K., & Johnson, R. (1997). Modeling Resident Attitudes Toward Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24(2), 402-424.
- Snepenger, D. J., & Johnson, J. D. (1991). Political Self Identification and Perceptions on Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 18(3), 511-515.