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RESIDENTIAL PERCEPTION OF TOURISM IN TOWNS NEIGHBORING CANCUN, MEXICO

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RESIDENTIAL PERCEPTION OF TOURISM
IN TOWNS NEIGHBORING CANCÚN, MEXICO

BY

ALISON MACRAE

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
IN
MARINE AFFAIRS

#43396670

THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

1999

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines local perception of tourism in two towns neighboring Cancún, Mexico. In response to the economic success of Cancún, tourism development in other nearby towns is growing at a rapid pace. In order to mitigate unwanted impacts and guide tourism development in smaller towns, it is necessary to identify residential attitudes toward local tourism as well as the type of tourism displayed in Cancún. The two towns chosen for this study are experiencing different stages of tourism development, and are also differentially located with respect to Cancún. This thesis tests three hypotheses: a) the two towns will demonstrate differences in residential perception of tourism impacts, b) the two towns will exhibit differences in attitudes towards Cancún, c) both towns will encourage local tourism development and growth.

The results of the Chi-Square analysis suggest that there are subtle differences between the towns with regard to some negative tourism impacts, as well as attitudes toward Cancún. It appears that greater exposure to tourism induces greater perception of both positive and negative impacts of tourism. Similarly, residents who live closer to Cancún displayed stronger negative feelings about all aspects of Cancún. Despite the differences, the vast majority of all residents displayed negative feelings toward Cancún and valued the traditional qualities of their own towns. Also, the majority of all residents were very positive about all aspects of tourism, and welcomed local tourism industry expansion. Therefore, local tourism should continue to grow and develop, but in a manner that is consistent with existing town character and goals.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND METHODS

Statement of Problem

Selling sun and sand in tropical countries is big business. Mass tourism development throughout the world has generated millions in foreign exchange, created jobs, and boosted economic development. However, in countries such as Mexico, decisions regarding tourism developments are made by a leadership emphasizing economic success, without much consideration for the local populations. It is the local populations, however, that will live and work with the new development, and are consequently directly effected by the tourism industry. It is generally argued that tourism development will benefit local people by creating jobs and income, but it may also create unwanted social and environmental costs such as pollution and degeneration of the quality of life.

This study will examine residential perceptions and attitudes towards the growing tourism industries in two coastal towns near Cancún, Mexico. Over the course of just 25 years, Cancún has quickly become the leading tourist destination in all of Mexico, attracting over 2.5 million people a year. The city generates roughly US \$2 billion a year in revenues, almost one-third of the US \$6.8 billion that the entire country draws from tourism revenue (WTO Website, 1997). In response to this success, many other towns and cities along the Yucatan Peninsula coast are increasing tourism development, often

at a rapid pace. Puerto Morelos, located approximately 22 miles south of Cancún, and Isla Mujeres, an island community situated approximately 5 miles offshore from Cancún are two such towns, and have been chosen for this study (Figure 1).

The main objective of the study is to identify the inherent differences between the towns with respect to the local tourism industry, and the tourism industry in Cancún. Puerto Morelos is a small town with a permanent resident population of about 3,500. The town is beginning to attract its own tourists, and during the high season accommodates roughly 100 tourists a night (Uscanga, 1998). Puerto Morelos is roughly 22 miles south of Cancún, but the distance between the two destinations seems even greater due to the expanses of undeveloped land along the highway and the isolation of the town of Puerto Morelos.

Conversely, Isla Mujeres is an established vacation destination, with a sizeable permanent resident population of around 15,000. In the high season, the town accommodates over 1000 overnight guests per night, as well as hundreds of “daytrippers” daily from Cancún (Martínez, 1998). It is likely that residents of Isla Mujeres have greater day to day contact with tourists than do residents of Puerto Morelos. This increased contact may develop more definite attitudes towards tourists, and the tourism industry as a whole. Also, Isla Mujeres is geographically very close to Cancún, and the two tourism industries are closely linked by frequent ferry crossings. Therefore, residents

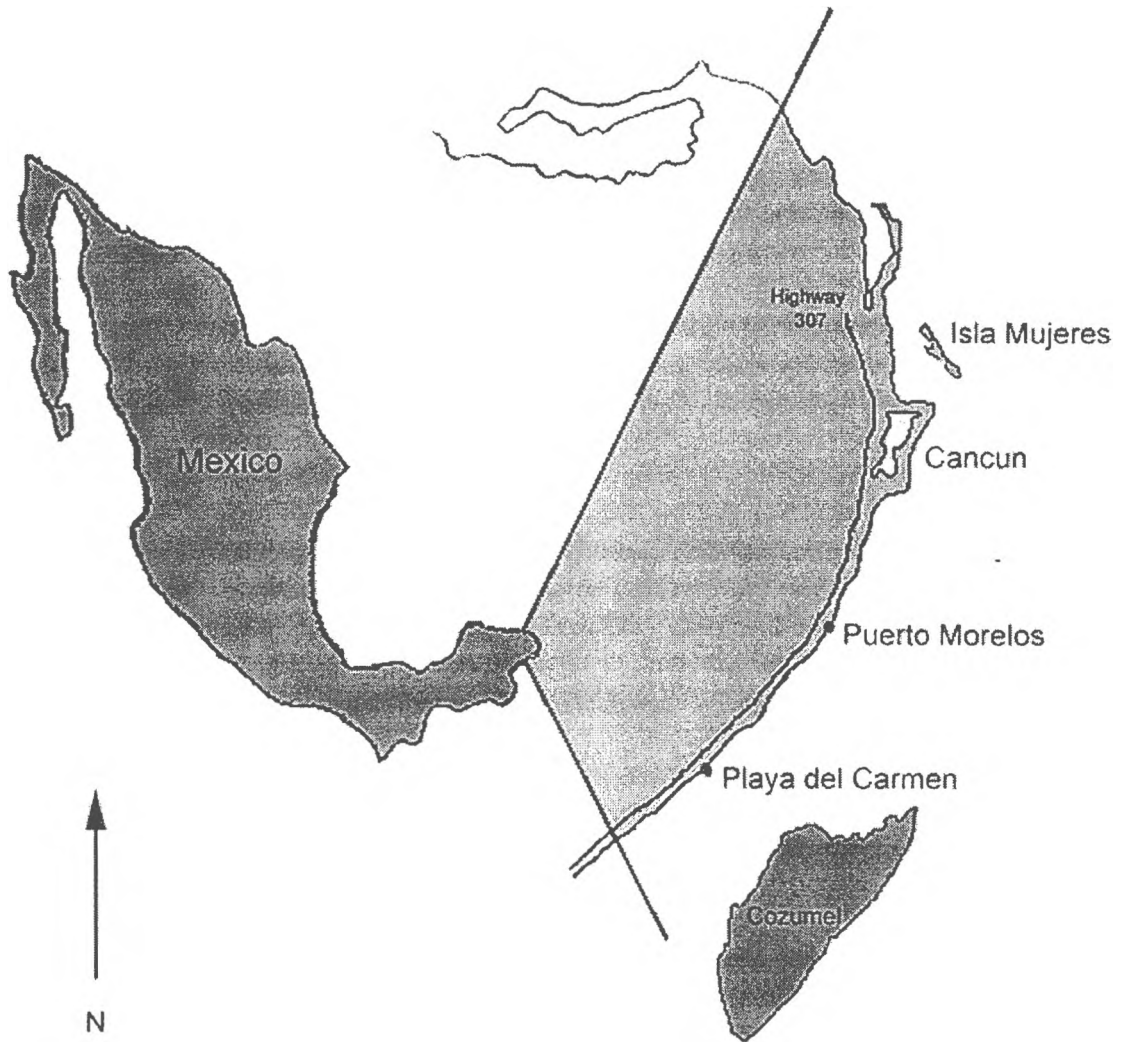


Figure 1. *The Yucatan Peninsula*

of Isla Mujeres may be more familiar with the tourism industry in Cancún, and may have formed stronger opinions about it.

The differential proximity to Cancún and the difference in tourism exposure provide the basis for assuming that perception of the town residents towards tourism is not the same. Findings on residential perceptions of tourism in an established destination such as Isla Mujeres may be helpful in directing future tourism growth of towns such as Puerto Morelos. Similarly, it is of interest to identify attitudes towards Cancún. Cancún is considered a success story by many accounts in Mexico, and government officials may attempt to emulate its “brand” of tourism in other towns along the Yucatan Coast without knowing how local people feel about it.

HYPOTHESES

H₁: Due to the varying degree of local exposure to tourism, it is hypothesized that there is a statistically significant difference between residential attitudes toward the impacts of tourism in the towns of Puerto Morelos and Isla Mujeres.

H₂: It is hypothesized that there is a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of residents in Puerto Morelos and Isla Mujeres toward Cancún due to the differential geographical proximity of the two towns with respect to Cancún.

H₃: It is hypothesized that there is no statistically significant difference in the attitudes of residents in Puerto Morelos and Isla Mujeres toward tourism growth and development since tourism is considered a viable means of economic gain.

Hypothesis 1 can be further broken down into subhypotheses as there may be attitudinal differences between economic, environmental or social impacts of tourism. Several assumptions have been made to support these hypotheses:

1. Residents will answer questions honestly and openly, despite the fact that the interviewer is a foreign researcher.
2. Residential attitudes and perceptions can accurately be measured and quantified using appropriate statistical analysis.
3. Residents have frequent contact with Cancún.

METHODS

The term “methodology” can be interpreted as a rational way, or journey, undertaken in pursuit of a specified goal (Dann, Nash and Pierce, 1988). Good research methodology should “be located on a continuum with respect to the procedures of conceptualization, operationalization, measurement, data gathering and data analysis” (Dann, Nash and Pierce, 1988). Each of these facets will be discussed individually with respect to the research design.

This research project was originally conceptualized by the author on a 1996 vacation to the town of Playa del Carmen, which is located approximately 50 miles south of Cancún along the Yucatan Coast. It was evident at that time that the town was experiencing rapid growth and development, and the impacts of this growth had already begun to take its toll on the surrounding environment. Water quality in certain inlet areas was visibly very poor, presumably due to massive amounts of sun tan lotion washing off of tourists. Trash and litter on large sections of beach was prevalent. It was clear that tourism development was spreading like wildfire, but so was a lack of comprehensive planning. By 1996, some regional towns such as Playa del Carmen, Cozumel and Isla Mujeres were already considered mature tourism destinations, but other towns such as Puerto Morelos were experiencing the very beginning stages of development. Cancún is the anchor and driving force behind tourism development in the area, and as a result, this author thought it would be of interest to study the towns of closest proximity, one of which happens to be well developed, the other just beginning. The purpose would be to uncover resident feelings, perceptions and attitudes towards the regional growing industry.

Survey Design: The fact that attitudes and perceptions can be measured has been proven to be true by many other research investigations (Liu and Var, 1986; Pizam, 1978; Smith, 1989; Doxey, 1975). This project will draw from this research and hopefully expand the knowledge base of residential

perception using a comparable approach between two populations. The conceptual framework has been operationalized into three hypotheses that can be tested.

Attitudes and perceptions were measured with a questionnaire (Appendices A and B). The survey design was created by examining other studies that measured the impacts of tourism on local populations (Lu and Var, 1986; Lankford and Howard, 1994; Milman and Pizam, 1988). Demographic data such as age and number of children provided nominal data, and could be analyzed as such. However, since the majority of the survey was meant to measure levels between attitudes and perceptions, an ordinal Likert Scale was used. Categories in an ordinal scale stand in some kind of relation to one another, but the level of difference between categories is not quantifiable (Siegel and Castellan, 1988).

The survey design did not fully take shape until arrival in Mexico, with the input of local people who had suggestions for valuable and applicable questions. The survey was pre-tested on seven residents of Puerto Morelos, and was altered slightly due to comments regarding the specific wording of questions. The use of a Likert Scale to measure attitudes and perceptions proved to be confusing when translated at first, as the conventional Likert Scale values of “Strongly Agree” and “Strongly Disagree” were not easily translatable. The final four categories of: “I Agree, I Agree Partially, I Disagree Partially and I Disagree” were ultimately agreed upon. With some preliminary instruction, it was evident that people understood that the scale

was measuring the *degree* to which they agreed with the question, and the scale was effective. It was decided not to use “Neutral” or “Does Not Apply” for a Likert Scale choice, as respondents may rely on these choices instead of expressing their true feelings.

Data Collection - Surveys: Karla Peregrina, a student from UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, or University of Mexico) was hired to assist with translation and survey administration. In addition, a recent graduate of the University of Rhode Island named Stephanie Miele assisted with all aspects of project support. Unfortunately, due to a lack of accurate census data, and the time it would have taken to perform a census ourselves, we did not take a true random sample of the towns. Instead, we used an opportunistic sample approach, and administered surveys to as many different segments of the population as possible. Puerto Morelos is geographically small in size (developed area less than one square mile, although spread out) and it was possible to survey in all public locations and almost all streets. Isla Mujeres is considerably larger, but by using taxis and golf carts it was possible to survey all parts of the island and obtain a good representation. Questionnaires were administered during different times of the day, including two nights in Puerto Morelos and one night in Isla Mujeres. All data collection was conducted between May 28 and June 21, 1998.

Respondents were approached in public places, places of work, or in homes. The purpose of the study was explained, and instructions were

provided on how to complete the survey and use the Likert Scale. In five cases of illiterate respondents, the researcher read the survey aloud for them and recorded all answers. In all other cases, the questionnaire was dropped off and picked up in roughly 30 minutes, and respondents were told to wait until pick up if they had a question. According to Bernard (1995), "The best method of survey data collection for anthropologists who are working alone in the field, or who are working in places where the mail and phone system are inefficient, is the drop-and-collect technique. A response rate similar to that for a face-to-face survey can usually be achieved with this technique." Due to the time it would take to read each survey aloud, making new contacts with respondents, and the travel time between interviews, this method was preferred and successful. Compliance rates were extremely high: 91% in Puerto Morelos and 88% in Isla Mujeres. One hundred thirty nine questionnaires were completed in Puerto Morelos, and 136 were conducted in Isla Mujeres during the survey period.

Data Collection - Interviews: In addition to the 275 residential questionnaires, 8 formal interviews (5 in Puerto Morelos and 3 in Isla Mujeres) were conducted with the help of Karla acting as translator. These key informants were considered "important" members of the community, such as local business owners or political figures. All key informants were presented with a consent form that explained the nature of the project, and gave the researcher permission to use anything said in the interview. Only one person refused to

sign the waiver but insisted on having the interview nevertheless, and as a result, that interview will not be included in this research paper. To compliment these longer interviews, at least 15 informal interviews were conducted with local people of all different backgrounds. Similarly, people often offered comments upon survey pickup, and these notes were recorded as well. These respondents did not sign waivers, and as a result, information used will be cited as “local conversation.”

Data Analysis: The first step in analysis was to prepare the questionnaire data using SPSS statistical software package for the social sciences. The data sets were initially analyzed by frequency comparisons, to find relationships between the two populations. To find whether or not differences existed between the two independent groups, the Chi-Square Test (or N by N Chi-Square Contingency Analysis) was used. This is a non-parametric test used to analyze ordinal data, and determines differences between groups based on their expected and observed values (Siegal and Castellan, 1988). A confidence level of 95% was used to determine level of significance. If the table statistic (probability level) is less than 0.05, then the degree of difference between the two data sets is considered statistically significant. In addition, comparisons of means and variances were used to support the chi square statistical tests. The mean is the average of all responses, and the variance represents the spread of observations around the mean.

The information gathered from the interviews will not be analyzed in a formal manner, but will be interjected into the text where appropriate.

Dialogue and comments from local people reinforce and strengthen test statistics.

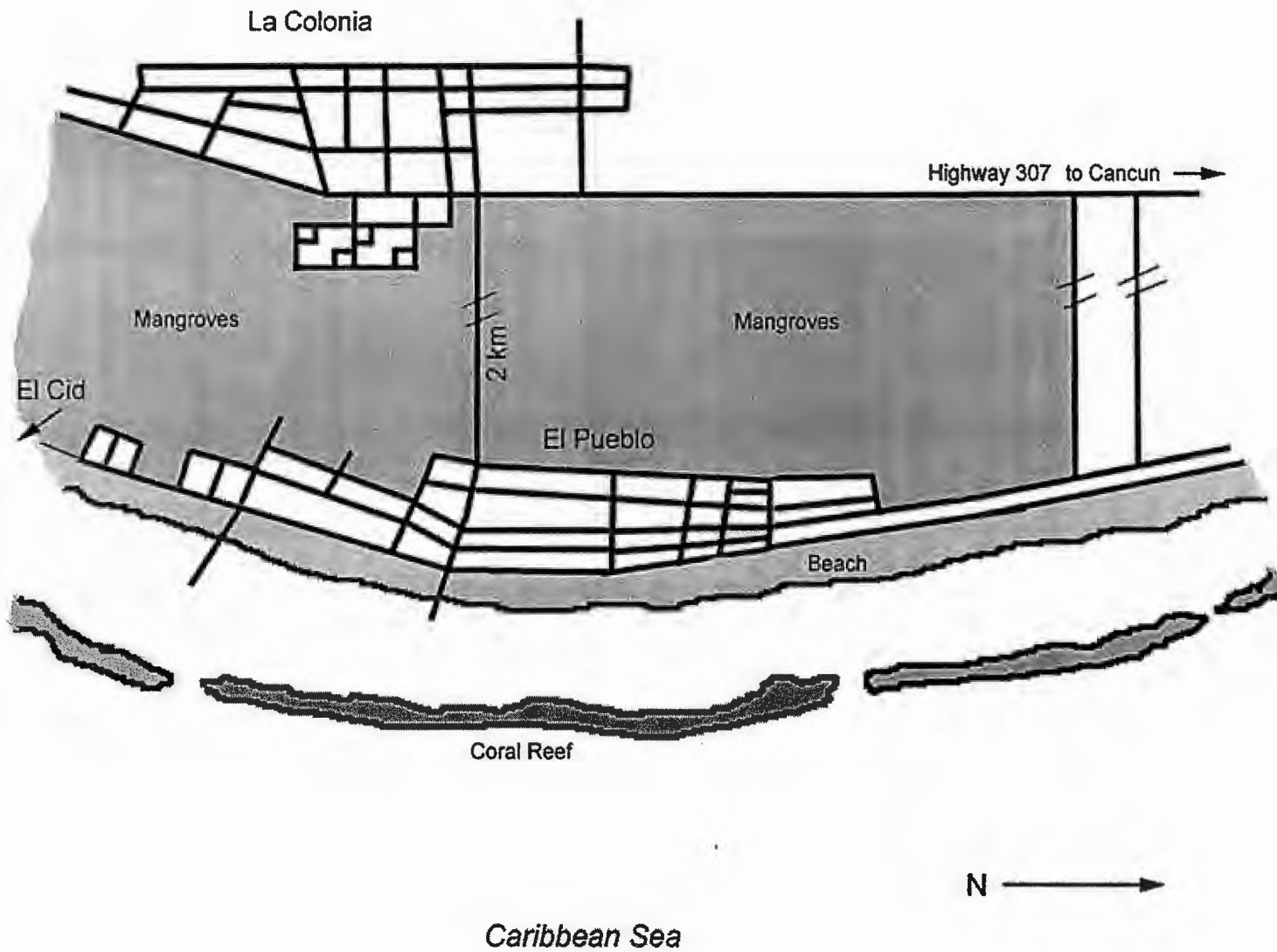
Town Bias: The researchers were housed at a government field station in Puerto Morelos for the duration of the project, and as a result, an unequal amount of time was spent in each town. It was more difficult than anticipated to commute to and from Isla Mujeres; it could take up to 3 hours each way after taking taxi to bus to taxi to ferry. As a result, the researchers stayed in a hotel on the island for several days at a time instead of returning each night to the Puerto Morelos station. This was beneficial because it was possible to experience more fully the daily life of the people in Isla Mujeres. However, it was more expensive and lacked access to office equipment, supplies and telephone communication. Fortunately, homes and businesses in Isla Mujeres are spatially concentrated, and as a result it did not take long to administer the questionnaires.

The Study Sites: Puerto Morelos and Isla Mujeres

PUERTO MORELOS

Puerto Morelos is a small village located approximately 22 miles south of Cancún on the Yucatan Peninsula in the state of Quintana Roo (Figure 2). Quintana Roo is the youngest state in Mexico, gaining statehood in 1974, with

Figure 2. Puerto Morelos



a total population of 703,536 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI), 1995). Puerto Morelos is divided into two sections by Highway 307, which runs down the length of the peninsula to the south. “El Crucero” (the Intersection) or “la Colonia” (the Colony) is the name for the part of town located just west of the highway. Behind the developed area is the “selva” or jungle area. East of the highway, buffered by extensive mangrove swamps stands “El Pueblo” (the Town) or just simply “Puerto Morelos” which is the original settlement site. According to the 1990 Mexican census, there were 740 people living in El Pueblo, and 880 living in El Crucero for a total of 1,620. However, since then the population has increased dramatically. Although there are no concrete census numbers available, the Mayor of Puerto Morelos gave a figure of 3,500. While both sections of town are called “Puerto Morelos” by the Mexican government, it is interesting to note that some people living in El Crucero said that they did *not* live in Puerto Morelos. For the purpose of this study, El Crucero and El Pueblo were considered one research site, and will be referred to collectively as Puerto Morelos.

Perhaps the most notable feature of the Puerto Morelos environment is an offshore coral reef complex. Extending between 400 -1000 meters offshore, the reef is the most prominent natural feature associated with the town, visible from shore by the breakwaters at the reef crest. Reaching down to Belize and Guatemala, this barrier reef is the second largest in the world. Much of the economic and recreational activity in town today revolves around this feature.

Fishing has long been a way of life in Puerto Morelos, and the people who live here (especially those living in El Pueblo) are very connected to the ocean and reef. For the past eight years, the town has sponsored a “Torneo de Pesca Deportiva” or “Sport Fishing Tournament” to celebrate fishing and its fishermen. The entire town gathers for an entire weekend on the beach and town pier to eat, drink, listen to music, and catch fish. This year’s winner caught a blue marlin that was over 10 feet long.

In the 1980’s, there were at least 70 fishermen in this town, but now there are very few. This decrease is attributed to the loss in fish stocks, mainly lobster (Herrera, 1998). Lobster is the most lucrative fishing industry so most fishermen don’t bother with other species and focus all of their energy on the lobster season. A fisherman can be paid up to \$10 US for one live lobster (local conversation). Certain areas of the Cancún’s Lagoon Nchupte used to be highly productive breeding grounds for lobster, but since they are now either closed off or polluted, the stocks have decreased. In response, the number of fishermen has decreased, and those that remain are looking to expand their income in other ways. One way to do that is by taking tourists out for sport fishing, and the local fishing cooperative is looking at ways to formally incorporate this into its mission. Today, more than 60% of the population of Puerto Morelos depends economically on the coral reef. Twenty-seven percent rely directly, such as fishermen and dive operators, while 33% rely indirectly, such as those who work in hotels and restaurants,

construction workers, taxi drivers, and others affiliated with the tourism industry (UNAM website, 1998).

Tourism: At this point in time, the tourism industry is very small in Puerto Morelos. In the summer of 1998, there are 13 dive shops, 15 hotels, 7 restaurants, and 5 souvenir shops to cater to tourists (UNAM website, 1998). During the high tourist season from December to April, it is estimated that Puerto Morelos houses 700 tourists a week. There are 425 rooms in Puerto Morelos; approximately half are hotel rooms, while the rest are found in condos and homes that rent out rooms individually (Uscanga, 1998). During the low season, there are reportedly between 50-120 people a week, but this author saw only 20 or so during the entire six weeks, and believes these figures may be a bit inflated. Also during the high season, cruise ships stop offshore once a week for 25 weeks, unloading 120 people per vessel. These tourists come just for the day, mostly snorkeling on the reef. Using these figures, it would be safe to say Puerto Morelos hosts at most 20,000 tourists each year. Compared to the 2.5 million that visit Cancún, Puerto Morelos is clearly a small tourist destination. However, another source stated that 80,000 people on average visit the reef in Puerto Morelos (UNAM website, 1998). This estimate was derived from information gathered from the dive shops in town. One explanation of the large discrepancy may be that perhaps the number of 80,000 reflects the number of *visits* to the reef, as opposed to number of tourists staying in town.

There is no doubt however, that the number of tourist arrivals is increasing. Numerous condos and homes are for sale or rent. Fishermen have left their jobs to become taxi drivers. But perhaps the biggest indication, literally, is the new mega-development project called “El Cid.” The owner is from the Mexican west coast town of Mazatlán, and although it is quite controversial, construction of El Cid began on May 28, 1998. There were several different accounts of what the end result would be, but the Mayor conveyed that there would be a large marina for 300 boats, a hotel that will have 250 rooms (more than all combined hotel rooms in 1998), a museum, and at least one restaurant. However, a representative from the local NGO “Lu’um K’aa nab” (“Land and Sea” in Mayan) said that El Cid was projected to have 5 hotels, with 2000 rooms, a golf course, marina and several restaurants. It is unclear which plan is correct, and it is likely that the reality lies somewhere between the two. It will be situated just south of the existing town, connected by a road that will be plowed through the mangroves, which are “protected” by law.

The Mayor believes this project is just what Puerto Morelos needs. He says that it is well planned, and that biologists are working with the project to ensure that it is “eco-friendly.” He thinks that Puerto Morelos should market to nature lovers, because of the mangroves, forest and offshore reef. He also said that if you want to benefit from the environment, you must destroy some of it, but over time, it will recover. The project will create much-needed jobs, and as a result, people will enjoy a better way of life.

The reason why El Cid is so controversial is because of its sheer magnitude. One Cancún newspaper reporting the story claimed that El Cid would employ 4,000 people - while only 3,500 currently inhabit the entire town. Opponents argue on two fronts: the construction will destroy the natural environment (most notably the protected mangroves) and the multitude of outsiders moving to Puerto Morelos for employment will severely impact the local population. There will be fierce competition for all kinds of jobs, and most likely the current residents of Puerto Morelos will not obtain the higher-end management positions. The Mayor said that he plans to ask the owner of El Cid to pay for a technical school to be built in Puerto Morelos, so that the local people will be qualified for all types of jobs.

Another controversial issue that may be on the verge of being resolved, is that of tour operators from Cancún taking people to Puerto Morelos for the day just to snorkel the reef. Busloads of 40 people arrive in the morning, may or may not use a local dive operator, spend the day on the reef, and then bus back home in late afternoon. Or a large catamaran loaded with tourists will sail the 22 miles south, stop to snorkel, then turn around and head back without ever even docking. Locals feel they are getting the short end of the stick. "People just come to damage the reef, and leave no money here" (Herrera, 1998). Fortunately, new laws have recently been enacted that should cut down on this business.

Creation of a National Marine Park: On February 2, 1998 the local people of Puerto Morelos won a major victory: their reef was declared a National Park by the Mexican government. In mid-1995, Lu'um K'aa nab gathered members from all parts of the community and held meetings to increase awareness of reef issues and gain support for the idea of a National Park. These meetings gave birth to the Puerto Morelos Nautical Association, which represents local business interests with respect to the reef (primarily dive shop affiliates). The aim of this group is to protect and conserve the reef resources. While they can not make "rules" regarding the use of the reef, they do ensure that all guides are properly trained, and that all tourists receive training before entering the water (Cusi, 1998).

Mexican law states that the area of land reaching 10 meters inland from the shoreline is public land called the "Federal Zone." The new National Park begins at the landward end of the Federal Zone and extends out past the reef. The perimeter simply follows the outline of the reef. The town is in the process of developing a Directive Committee for the park that will represent different sectors of the community. This Committee will be able to create zones within the park to protect the most fragile areas. Also, all National parks are regulated by the government agency SEMARNAP, which has recently cancelled almost 400 requests from Cancún to take people to the Puerto Morelos reef (Herrera, 1998). This has spurred businessmen from Cancún to attempt to establish operations in Puerto Morelos, but they are met with strong opposition from local groups such as the Nautical Association.

ISLA MUJERES

Isla Mujeres (Isle of Women) is a small island five miles long by one mile wide, situated approximately five miles North of Cancún in the Caribbean Sea (Figure 3). This study focuses on the *island* of Isla Mujeres, although there is a large section of land (420 square miles) on the Yucatan Peninsula that is part of the same municipality and shares the same name. Both the island and mainland belong to the state of Quintana Roo. The island boasts beautiful, expansive beaches including the famous “North Beach” situated just north of the downtown tourist district. The eastern, seaward coast of the island is rocky and inhospitable for swimmers.

Despite its small size, Isla Mujeres is very populated. The 1995 census found 8,750 people living in the municipality of Isla Mujeres, including those living on both the island and mainland (INEGI, 1995). However, a worker for the potable water authority Aguakan (which provides service to 100% of the island) reported an island population of 12,000 to 13,000. Still another figure came from the Director of Tourism, who reported an island population of 15,000. The main arteries for reaching the island are two ferries: a high-speed passenger ferry from Puerto Juarez, which is just north of Cancún, and a car ferry that leaves several times a day from Punta Sam, located just north of Puerto Juarez. There is also a short airstrip situated in the center of the island for small aircraft.

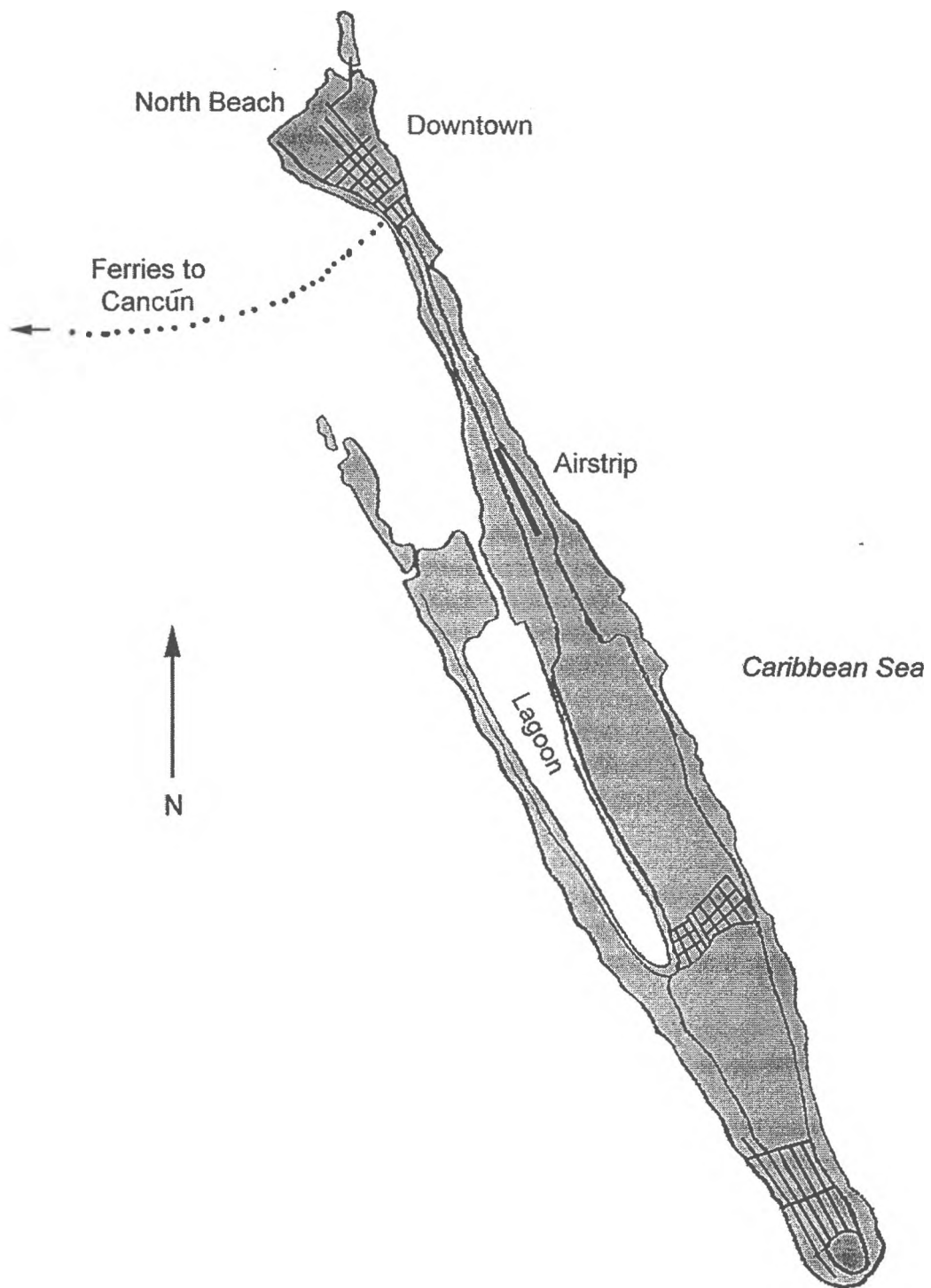


Figure 3. Isla Mujeres

Like Puerto Morelos, tourism and fishing both compete for the title of “most important industry” in Isla Mujeres. According to one local, “everyone fishes, tourism cannot take that away.” Although this may be true, it is probable that tourism is of more economic importance. Still, fishing is part of the island’s identity. According to Felipe Trejo, the Treasurer of one Fishing Cooperative, there are five Cooperatives on the island, and about 500 fishermen – most are members of Cooperatives, but some are independent. His cooperative is the oldest on the island and was established in the 1940’s. All of the fish caught is sold locally in town or to Cancún, none is exported. He is sure that there are more fishermen today than there were 10 years ago, as fishermen from all parts of Quintana Roo come to the island to fish.

The fishermen of the island fish for grouper, snapper, hogfish, shark, but mostly for lobster. The preferred method of catching lobster is to use SCUBA gear or skin dive, although nets and lines are also used. For the most part, although a few fishermen use GPS, compasses and fishfinders, most use experience as their guide (Trejo, 1998).

The reason why some fishermen rely on high-tech equipment is that fish are not as plentiful as they used to be. Another fisherman of the Cooperative said that because of the increase in the number of boats, the fish are “scared and have moved away from the island.” Also, he said that they know they must respect the breeding season and size restrictions, but neighboring countries like Cuba and Belize do not. Because most species are migratory, the fisheries in Isla Mujeres suffer. Years ago it was possible to

fish right off of the island, and all species including lobster were plentiful. Now it is necessary to go way off shore to find the same amounts, and takes a lot more work (local conversation).

Due to the increased difficulties with fishing and the popularity of tourism, Trejo said that the Cooperative is attempting to integrate tourism as another form of income. He believes that fishermen are the most qualified to take tourists out on boats because they are the experts and know where to go. A tourist may pay \$300 for a day of sport fishing, and catch two or three fish that would have been worth a fraction of that to the fisherman. However, the Cooperative does not want to replace fishing with tourism. They plan to concentrate on fishing the lobster season from July through February, and to fish with tourists during the other months.

Tourism: “The island is here for the tourists, that is what the island does best,” according to one lifelong local. Tourism has indeed flourished over the past 50 years, and today Isla Mujeres has a well established tourism market. Isaac Sulu Martínez, the Director of Tourism for the island stated that there are 33 hotels, including one five-star hotel and one five-star condominium complex, for a total of 730 rooms on the island (most are Mexican-owned). During the high season, the rooms are filled to 85% capacity, and during the low season they fill to approximately 55%. On average, Isla Mujeres sees roughly 340,000 tourists a year: many more than Puerto Morelos, but still considerably

snorkeling, and can cost up to US \$45 - little of which actually benefits Isla Mujeres. The souvenirs sold in Isla Mujeres are similar to those sold in Cancún, but more expensive so daytrippers tend not to buy very much. Daytrippers congest the streets, and only spend on average \$10 a person a day (Martínez, 1998). The Director of Tourism in Isla Mujeres said that he doesn't like to work with package deals from Cancún, and would rather people come to stay on the island itself.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TOURISM INDUSTRY WITH EMPHASIS ON MEXICO

Defining Tourism and Tourists

“Tourism,” including the people and places associated with it, is a multi-dimensional, complex enterprise. The industry is difficult to define because of the assorted travel activities and the diverse reasons why people travel. Lundberg (1976) states that tourism industry is the “business of the transport, care, feeding and entertainment of the tourist.” Smith (1989) defines tourists by stating, “in general, a tourist is a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change.” An international tourist can be defined as a person visiting a country other than that in which he has his place of residence, and staying for at least one night (Singh, Theuns, and Go, 1989). Many studies identify tourists with a desire to “get away from it all” (Pearce, 1990; Smith, 1992; de Kadt, 1979). Often linked with tourism is the idea of recreation, or “re-creation,” which is supposed to renew and energize, while providing a break from the regular routine of work. Finally, the word “vacation” is derived from the Latin word “vacare” which means “to leave (one’s house) empty.” This definition emphasizes the popular modern day belief that not leaving home for vacation would in essence be no vacation at all (Gaburn, 1989; Nash, 1989).

Smith (1989) gives a breakdown of five major categories for tourism: ethnic, cultural, historical, environmental, and recreational. Ethnic tourism

refers to small-scale intimate visits to the homes and villages of indigenous and often exotic people. Cultural tourism is similar, but may not be as intimate: tourists may stay in hotels and travel in larger groups. Historical tourism highlights monuments, ruins and museums, and caters to education-oriented visitors, while environmental tourism leads the tourist to far corners of the untouched earth. Finally, recreational or mass tourism, associated with “sand, sea, ski, sun and sex” is by far the most common form of modern day tourism. Each type attracts a different clientele, and the impacts generated on the host country vary widely.

Cohen (1972) has divided up tourists into several categories to encompass the range of tourist types: the drifter, the explorer, the individual mass tourist, and the organized mass tourist. Each type seeks a different tourist experience, and as a result does not frequent the same tourist towns or resorts. The drifter is the most aimless of tourists, with no set itinerary or time frame, often spending time in towns unprepared to accommodate tourists. The organized mass tourist is the least adventurous of all tourist types, and doesn't stray from the predetermined package deal. The itinerary is fixed in advance, and all stops are well prepared and guided: “familiarity is at a maximum, novelty at a minimum” (Cohen, 1972). For the purposes of this paper, the focus will be on international mass tourism in the Third World.

Growth of the Tourism Industry

In just a forty-year period, the number of international arrivals has increased from 25.3 million in 1950 to 425 million in 1990 (Smith and Eadington, 1992). This dramatic increase can be accounted for by several key factors. Since World War II, the amount of leisure time has increased in the Western World, and especially the US. The hours in a workweek dropped from 60 to 40, paid vacation times have lengthened, and several national holidays are now celebrated on Mondays to further extend the weekend. People are retiring earlier, and living longer. The old Protestant ethic of hard work has diminished, and the "Generation X" desire for instant gratification has decreased saving and increased spending. Finally, advances in modern transportation coupled with affordable travel rates make even remote places accessible (Smith, 1989; Singh, Theuns, and Go, 1989). As a result, developing a tourism industry has been widely accepted as a major part in most countries' economic development plan. Even in a country as wealthy and diverse as the United States, tourism is the second largest industry, the largest tradable services export, one of the top three sources of revenue for 39 states, and employs approximately 6 million Americans (Richter, 1989).

According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the worldwide spending for domestic and international travel in 1986 was valued at US \$2 trillion dollars, or approximately US \$2.5 billion a day (Waters and Patterson, 1987). It comes as no surprise then, that tourism has crept up over the past

fifty years to emerge as the world's largest industry; almost all nations now promote tourism as a producer of profit (Lanfant and Graburn, 1992).

Mass Tourism

Perhaps the most prominent type of tourism in developing countries is "mass," "resort," or "package" tourism. Mass tourists seek a holiday vacation in an environment that provides all of the amenities they are used to at home, and improves upon the life-styles to which they are accustomed (de Kadt, 1979). Many tourist destinations come about as answers to "metropolitan touristic dreams" (Nash, 1989). Cancún, like many other resorts in Mexico and the Caribbean, is an answer to the dream of sun, sand, beautiful seascapes, and a carefree atmosphere.

Mass tourism is popular because it appeals to a wide audience, and is often more affordable than other types of specialized tourism. "Enclave development," the building of large-scale, isolated resorts are typical vacation spots for mass tourists (Smith and Eadington, 1992; de Kadt, 1979). Many enclave resorts are "all inclusive," which means the tourist pays one set price for airfare, hotel, food and drinks before he even leaves his home. The design is such that the tourists need not venture out of the self-contained environment; Club Med resorts are a good example. This type of scenario may make life easy for the tourist, but it is economically detrimental to the local community, as people will not spend money in other local restaurants or bars. Also, while it minimizes the social adjustment for the tourist, it increases the

difficulties of adaptation for the local people who work for them (de Kadt, 1979).

Evolution of a Tourist Destination

Often times, resort towns are not originally planned to be tourist destinations. Noronha (1976) suggests that tourism develops in three stages: 1) discovery, 2) local response and initiative, and 3) institutionalization. As the tourist destination changes and develops through time, types of tourists change as well (Christaller, 1963). Using the categories identified by Cohen (1972), a small local town may originally only attract drifters, but over time may develop to attract tourists of the most organized degree. Therefore, the actual numbers of tourists in the latter stages of development may not decrease for some time, but the market will reduce in size as the area is forced to compete with others that are more recently developed (Butler, 1980).

Butler has created a visual “tourism area cycle of evolution” using an asymptotic curve (Figure 4).

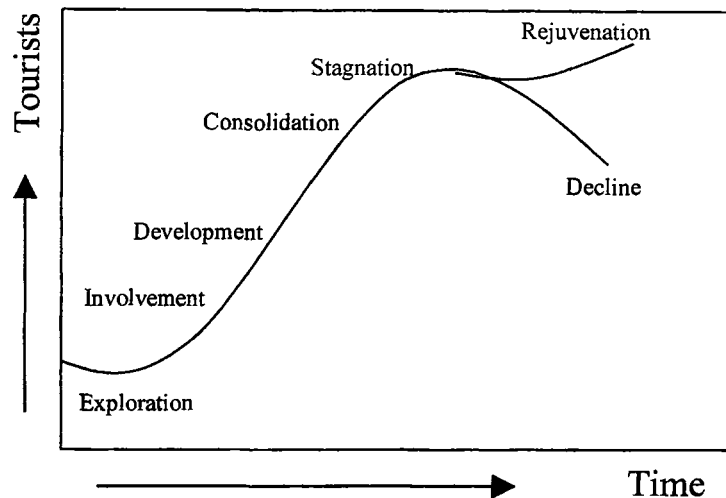


Figure 4. Butler's Tourism Area Cycle of Evolution

The early *exploration* stage is characterized by small numbers of tourists following irregular visitation patterns. The *involvement* phase incorporates sections of the local community that are willing to accommodate travelers by providing facilities. At this time, some pressure may be put on government and public agencies help provide infrastructure. Moving to the *development* stage reflects a well-defined market. Local involvement will decline rapidly, and larger, often external organizations will provide more current accommodations and facilities. The tourist population will likely exceed the resident population during high season. The type of tourist will have definitely changed, due to marketing and advertising that has been aimed towards a larger population of institutionalized tourists. The *consolidation* phase is characterized by a decrease in the increase *rate* of visitors, although the overall numbers of tourists may still be rising. Major

franchises and chains in the tourism industry will be represented, but few new additions will be made. At this point, there may be local discontent and opposition to the tourism industry. As the area enters the *stagnation* phase, capacity levels for many variables will have been reached or exceeded. The area will have a well established image, but it will no longer be fashionable. The type of tourist may change again, and consist mainly of Cohen's highly organized mass tourist.

Finally, according to Butler, one of two stages may occur in the cycle. The *decline* stage results when the area can not compete with newer attractions. It will no longer appeal to vacationers, but may be used for weekend trips if convenient. Property turn over will be high, and hotels may be turned into retirement homes. On the other hand, *rejuvenation* may occur, although Butler argues that this would not likely happen without a complete change in attraction.

A study done by Hovinen (1982) tested this model on Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. While it confirmed the existence of the first three phases, Hovinen combined the *consolidation* and *stagnation* phases into a *maturity* stage. This is because resort areas may experience rises and falls in business for a host of external and internal reasons, and may fluctuate between the two phases.

RELATING THE STUDY SITES TO THE BUTLER CYCLE

According to Butler's (1980) cycle, Isla Mujeres can be considered to be somewhere in between the *development* and *consolidation* phases as of the summer of 1998. For the most part, the designated downtown tourist section is fully developed, with little new growth. However, there are plans for more extravagant accommodations on the southern end of the island, such as "Escape to Beauty" which is rumored to be a posh retreat for those seeking plastic surgery and a quiet recovery (local conversation). The number of daily tourists during the high season may not exceed the local population of the island itself, but tourists certainly outnumber locals in the downtown and beach areas. However, one indication of the consolidation phase is expected discontent among residents regarding tourists and development, but according to the data analysis, this has yet to be seen in any significant way.

Puerto Morelos can still be considered in the *involvement* stage, and has just begun the tourism growth cycle. Tourist numbers are increasing and becoming more regular during the high season, but are still low overall. There is some level of organized travel arrangements, but for the most part there is little advertising and/or marketing of the area. Many tourist maps of Mexico do not even label Puerto Morelos. There is some pressure on local governments to promote tourism, and already the construction of "El Cid" is underway. El Cid has the potential for changing the tourist scene completely for Puerto Morelos. If it truly is slated to be a gigantic resort, then it will likely have the money to promote it. Once this happens, Puerto Morelos will likely be

launched into the development stage. One factor that may inhibit this, or at the very least stall it, is the existence of protected mangroves that surround most of the existing towns. According to one local, there cannot be much new development because plots of land are small and expensive, and one cannot destroy the surrounding mangroves to expand. However, the newly plowed road leading out of the edge of town to El Cid had shamelessly disregarded the mangroves, which illustrates the point that many environmental laws in Mexico exist only on paper.

MASS TOURISM IN CANCÚN, MEXICO

The city of Cancún, located on the tip of the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, draws over 2.5 million visitors a year, and has been called “the most popular coastal resort in the Western Hemisphere” (Padgett, 1996). In 1995, the total number of visitors to all of Mexico was roughly 6 million, making Cancún responsible for almost one-third of the country’s total number of tourists (Amigos de Sian Ka’an, 1995). In order to understand what the residents of Puerto Morelos and Isla Mujeres are reacting to, it is necessary to examine the character and qualities of Cancún, and follow the processes that created it.

The creation of Cancún can perhaps be traced back to the rise and fall of the Mexican West Coast resort town Acapulco. In 1928 the town of Acapulco was linked to Mexico City by a highway, and began to attract adventurers looking for an inexpensive tropical vacation. By the 1950’s and

60's, Acapulco was known as *the* West Coast resort, and by 1972, a million and a half visitors packed the 12,000 available hotel rooms (Bosselman, 1978). But the resort's success began to decline. By the late 1970's, the permanent population had reached 300,000, with a very high unemployment rate and very low standard of living. Slums covered the adjacent hills, and the bay was continually polluted as a result of the lack of plumbing and sanitation. There was no infrastructure available for local people because the entire resort had been developed in piecemeal fashion by private interests. As a result, Acapulco was experiencing Butler's final stage of *decline*, since it was unable to compete with more attractive resorts and was no longer appealing to many tourists.

Realizing the untapped potential of tourism in Mexico, and the pitfalls of private enterprise, the Mexican government created an all-encompassing tourism agency called "Fondo Nacional de Fomento al Turismo" or FONATUR (the National Fund for the Promotion of Tourism) (Sorensen, 1993).

FONATUR was created to take charge of the tourism situation in Mexico, and to act as a full development agency involved in all aspects of development including the planning, building, promoting, advertising, selling and leasing concessions of new projects.

FONATUR considered many sites for new development projects, including the islands of Isla Mujeres and Cozumel which already attracted tourists. Ultimately two sites were chosen: Isla Cancún (Cancún Island),

located on the tip of the Yucatán Peninsula, and Ixtapa, found 125 miles north of Acapulco on the West Coast (Bosselman, 1978).

It would be difficult to find a more perfect setting for a major mass-tourism resort center than Cancún. Isla Cancún (Cancún Island) consisted of 14 miles of prime beachfront real estate in the shape of a “7” located just 100 meters offshore the mainland. On one side of the island is the calm, turquoise water of the Nichupté Lagoon System, and the other side, open Caribbean Sea (Figure 5).

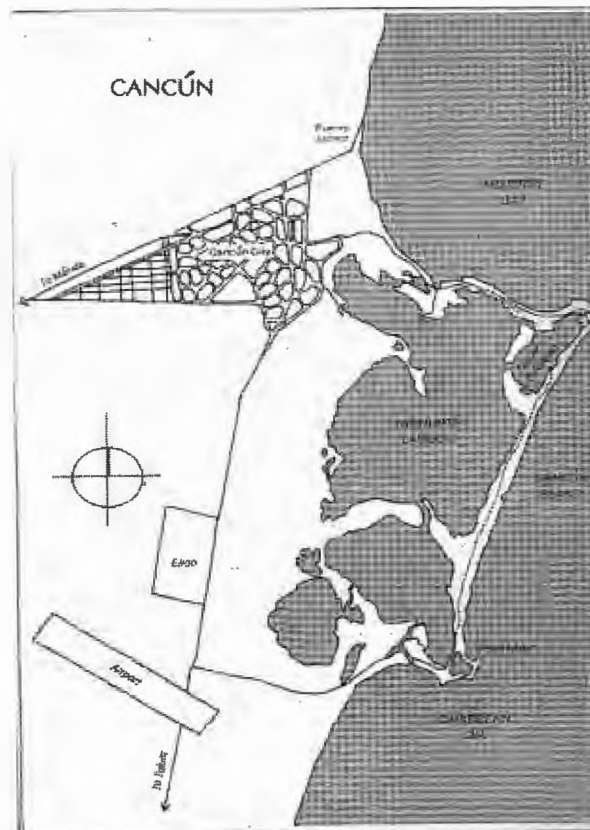


Figure 5. Cancún, Mexico

Cancún is one of the most “sun-drenched” spots in the Caribbean averaging 240 days of sunshine, a median annual temperature of 81.5° F, and boasts white beaches and turquoise water. The world’s second largest barrier reef lies just offshore Isla Cancún, and sport fishing in offshore waters includes blue fin tuna, white marlin, sailfish, mackerel and grouper (Sorensen, 1993). In addition, there are several exceptional Mayan archaeological sites within a short driving distance, providing interesting day trips for tourists.

One of the biggest advantages for Cancún is the proximity to the North American market. It takes less than four hours flying time to get to Cancún from many major US cities including NY, Boston, Washington DC, Chicago, and Denver, and less than two hours from Atlanta, Miami, and Houston. Within the four-hour radius of flying time, there are more than 200 million US residents (Sorensen, 1993).

Cancún’s Planned Development: In Mexico, Cancún is praised as a “planned unit development,” in comparison to the haphazard development and lack of infrastructure in Acapulco. Butler (1980) gives the example of Cancún as an exception to the “tourism area cycle of evolution,” because it skipped the exploration and involvement stages, and started in the development stage. In 1969, the Inter American Development Bank loaned FONATUR \$21,500,000 to acquire roughly 7,000 hectares of land and develop the Cancún site. Two thousand hectares (mostly wetlands and lagoon) were already owned by the Mexican government, and did not need to be purchased (Sorensen, 1993).

Isla Cancún was entirely privately owned, and was bought by the government along with 4,700 hectares on all sides of the lagoon system (Bosselman, 1978).

The first stage of development divided the area into hotel and residential zones as well as develop the infrastructure needed to support the resort area. Isla Cancún was to be developed for the tourism industry, and a “service city” called Cancún City was to be planned on the adjacent mainland for local people. Isla Cancún was connected to the mainland by bridges, and has since been referred to as simply the “Zona Hotelera” or “Hotel Zone.” This 14-mile stretch was zoned for 24 hotels, and by 1977, 12 of these sites were occupied (Bosselman, 1978). The total number of hotel rooms to be completed by the year 2000 was about 17,000, and the number of residential homes was to be about 2,000 (Sorensen, 1993).

In 1988, a new Master Plan increased the total number of rooms by doubling the 1971 plan for a total of 35,000 rooms. The number of residential homes began with 2,000 units in 1971, but was increased to almost 15,000, in response to the large numbers of people migrating for work (Sorensen, 1993). As of 1995, there were 125 hotels (Hotel Zone and Cancún City), 20,000 hotel rooms, and an additional 304 undeveloped hectares up for sale (Amigos de Sian Ka'an, 1995). Cancún may have started out as a planned development, but guidelines and capacities were stretched as more and more people needed to be accommodated.

Impacts: The construction of Cancún has had many serious impacts on the people living in the Yucatan region. The service city was originally slated to accommodate 70,000 people, complete with schools, clinics, roads, and utilities. However, the population grew much faster than expected, and the town grew to 40,000 in just four years (Schjetnan, 1977). In 1995, there were more than 300,000 people living year round in the Cancún area, and the growth rate is one of the highest in the country (Amigos de Sian Ka'an, 1995). If the actual average growth rate of approximately 12% continues, the city's population will reach a half a million by the year 2000 (Sorensen, 1993).

In addition to the Hotel Zone, Cancún City can be split into two parts: "Cancún" to the south and "Puerto Juárez" to the northeast. There are many attractive sections of Cancún, with good quality housing and infrastructure. However, Puerto Juárez developed out of necessity, accommodating a large influx of workers with little infrastructure and inadequate urban facilities such as schools and clinics (Sorensen, 1993). This type of scenario can be referred to as a "core-periphery" situation, as presented by numerous geographers studying tourism (Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Mitchell and Murphy, 1991). By 1975, just four years after construction began, there were as many as 30,000 squatters in Puerto Juárez (Bosselman, 1978). Locals joke that there are two parts to Cancún: The "Zona Hotelera" and the "Zona Atolera". Atolera is a "poor man's drink" made from corn, and the term is used to characterize the slum areas of Cancún (local conversation).

To its credit, the resort created over 15,000 jobs by 1981 (Sorensen, 1993). For example, in 1995 there were more taxi drivers in Cancún than there were fishermen (a regionally traditional occupation) in the entire state of Quintana Roo (Amigos de Sian Ka'an, 1995). However, experienced workers from other resorts like Acapulco came to Cancún for work, and often secured the better paying jobs. As a result, many locals either lived in squalor in Puerto Juárez, or left the area completely. Despite the city's wealth, most waiters and chambermaids still earn little more than the minimum wage (Bosselman, 1978).

One of the most obvious environmental impacts of development has been the pollution and eutrophication of the lagoon system. Non-point and point sources of pollution include street and gutter wash, golf course and landscaping fertilizers, and hotel and apartment effluence washing directly into the lagoons (Sorensen, 1993). In the early 1970's the lagoons were praised for their clear waters and alluring turquoise color. However, the heavy nutrient input has resulted in floating mats of algae, foul smells in the summer months, and the color has turned to a blue-gray. FONATUR operates several algae gathering barges in an attempt to ameliorate the problem (Sorensen, 1993).

Antonio Savignac, the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization in 1990 said, "if a destination deteriorates, so do the profits" (Smith and Eadington, 1992). This is evident in Cancún, as the lagoon became polluted, the native bird populations drastically decreased, and the beaches have been severely eroded. Once the physical environment initiates

a state of decline, it will lose its appeal to the more up-scale tourist. Cancún was once considered an exotic getaway for rich elite, but now attracts mostly middle class tourists and students on Spring Break.

Conclusions: Despite its shortcomings and negative impacts, Cancún is still successful in attracting tourists who seek a vacation filled with fun and sun. It is a mature, mass tourism resort, and although the clientele has changed through time, most of the people who stay in Cancún are not disappointed. Although the area probably never accommodated drifters, it did cater to explorers in the early years, then to conventional tourists, and finally to the organized mass tourists that visit today (local conversation). Cancún may be considered to be experiencing the *consolidation* phase of Butler's cycle (1980), as there is little local involvement and major international franchises dominate the market. However, it may also be on the cusp of the *stagnation* phase, because although the area is well established, its image has changed from a retreat for the elite to a haven for college students.

In 1984, Americans accounted for 83.9% of the total number of tourists in Cancún (Sorensen, 1993) and it is likely that the percentage has increased since then. Why is Cancún so popular with Americans? "Partly it's because this area of Mexico gives Americans what they really want: to get a tan in an exotic country without really leaving the United States" (Padgett, 1996). There are over a dozen American-style shopping malls, and all-inclusive hotels with everything from beach volleyball to disco clubs. American chains include:

McDonalds, Burger King, Denny's, Pizza Hut, Hard Rock Café, Planet Hollywood, Walmart, Sam's Discount Club and Blockbuster Video, not to mention the countless hotel chains such as the Hyatt, Marriott, Sheraton, and Holiday Inn (Mexico Travel Website, 1997). Visiting Cancún is often likened to vacationing in Miami Beach, Florida.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW OF TOURISM IMPACTS

In order to better plan for future tourism development, it is imperative to understand how communities respond to and live with tourism (Pearce, Moscardo, and Ross, 1996). Considering the very nature of tourism and the collision of cultural and economic values between the places of origin and destination, numerous impacts (both positive and negative) to the host country are inevitable. The overriding question is, do local people living in host countries believe that the positives outweigh the negatives? Many social scientists have studied this subject, and significant contributions have been made in several areas: economic, environmental and social.

Impacts of Tourism

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Today, tourism is regarded virtually worldwide as the primary tool for economic development (Smith and Eadington, 1992). Most developing countries cannot create acceptable living conditions for the majority of their people without economic development, and for many of them, tourism is one of the few viable routes for growth (Wilkinson, 1989). However, it is questionable whether or not the economic benefits truly outweigh the numerous social and environmental costs. The most obvious economic benefit, and the factor most cited by even locals themselves, is that of job

creation. De Kadt (1979) offers three types of tourism employment: (1) direct employment in businesses that sell goods and services such as hotels, restaurants; (2) indirect employment stimulated by tourist expenditures, such as manufacturing of goods, agriculture, transportation, and (3) investment related employment in construction and other capital industries.

If development is to take place gradually, people living locally will take most of the jobs created in the early days, such as construction. However, Peppelenbosch and Tempelman (1989) argue that construction requires large numbers of workers in its initial phases (about 2.7 workers per bed), but often leads to unemployment once construction is complete. Tourism development may also have distorted effects on already existing employment structures: the industry may attract young people away from jobs held in agriculture or the home. In essence, it may lead to unemployment in other sectors. Seasonal unemployment may become a problem, as most tourist destinations have a “high” and “low” season. Also most of the better paying jobs, such as management and supervisory positions, will invariably go to “outsiders” with more education and experience (de Kadt, 1979). Finally, there is the possibility of increased competition for even menial jobs, as outsiders hearing of the new development will apply for the same positions.

Another significant and positive economic impact is the influx of badly needed foreign currency. Some nations receive a considerable amount of foreign currency from tourism; Mexico’s foreign exchange earnings from tourism reached almost 45% of total receipts on account (Peppelenbosch and

Tempelman, 1989). However, considering the type of facilities demanded by Western standards, there must be significant investment, and this money usually comes from foreign backers. If development is dominated by foreign investments, a great part of the earnings will leak back to the investing countries in the form of salaries, profits, or interest on loans. Also, if construction is left to foreign contractors, it will likely lead to the import of food, beverages, building materials, and other supplies that will further the economic leakage out of the host country (Peppelenbosch and Tempelman, 1989; Roekaerts and Savat, 1989). Regardless, international tourism will continue to appear attractive to foreign governments for its economic benefits because it can create easy income in the form of visas, airport and hotel taxes, and other permits.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

“Tourism destroys tourism” (Boo, 1990) is one way to describe the impacts of tourism on the physical environment. Many authors argue that often times the sheer number of people and magnitude of structures built in an area have such a dramatic effect that they destroy what it is that people come to visit in the first place (Travis, 1982; Smith and Eadington, 1992; Mathieson and Wall, 1982). Major success in attracting tourists leads to “over-exploitation” of natural resources, and will degrade the tourist experience for both the tourists and locals (Smith and Eadington, 1992). Rapid high density development without cautious planning has led to more than one “tourism

disaster” – examples include Niagara Falls, Waikiki, and Spain’s Costa Brava. Environmental problems are the “effluence of affluence”(de Kadt 1992) and since overseas destinations must maintain Western standards for accommodations and entertainment, they are also left with the environmental aftermath. Air and water pollution, lack of sewage treatment and insufficient trash disposal are common problems.

However, some authors argue that there are instances where tourism becomes a catalyst for preservation of environmental resources. Some countries realize that saving a particular monument, archaeological ruin, or even section of rainforest will ensure more tourist dollars in the future (Peppelenbosch and Tempelman, 1989). If their main attraction is no longer in suitable shape, tourists will chose to spend their vacations (and money) elsewhere.

SOCIAL IMPACTS

Perhaps the most significant, if not the most written about and debated issue focuses on the multitude of social impacts created by tourism. In the early 1960’s, the World Bank began to sponsor research that would evaluate the economic impacts of tourism (Pizam, 1978). Over time, sociocultural impacts were included in an attempt to improve cost-benefit analyses by quantifying social factors. However, as social costs continue to emerge in different ways, it is evident that they cannot easily be quantified, nor simply negated by economic benefits.

“The very presence of foreigners in the exporting country is widely believed to generate significant social effects by demonstrating alien and, what is perhaps worse, unattainable life-styles and values” (de Kadt, 1979).

Tourism in developing countries often occurs where the standard of living of the tourist is *much* greater than that of the host, and as a result locals are exposed to new material goods and a different, more expensive way of life.

To add insult to injury, usual tourist consumption patterns are altered on vacation. Nettekoven (1976) argues that spending will *exceed* what is normal at home and further widen the economic gap. In an effort to “live it up” tourists will often spend, eat, drink and party much more than they would in their daily lives. Free from daily routine and responsibility, tourists may even demonstrate values and behavior that is unacceptable at home. This behavior accentuates and emphasizes the differences between locals and tourists.

Locals receive a false impression that all tourists are extravagantly rich and don’t need to work, despite the fact that many of them have worked all year for this short break. Bouhdiba (1979) writes, “Tourism injects the behavior of a wasteful society into the midst of a society of want and needs. What the average tourist may consume in a week on vacation could be the equivalent of what several locals consume in an entire year.”

The exposure of locals to tourist behavior can lead to “demonstration effects,” or changes in attitudes, values or behavior which result from merely observing tourists (de Kadt, 1979; Peppelenbosch and Templeman, 1989; Roeakarts and Savat, 1989). A variation on that same theme proposed by

Lea (1988) and Murphy (1985) is that tourists will contribute to local acculturation, whereby western ideas are assimilated into the host culture. The result is the same in that local patterns of consumption change to imitate those of the tourist. For example, tourism in Malta can be attributed to the recent popularity in sailing and dining out on special occasions (de Kadt, 1979).

Many authors argue that young people especially are highly susceptible to tourist behavior. Teenagers from all over the world are hypersensitive to fashion and image, and will make an effort to emulate tourists in the way of hairstyles, dress, and behavior. In a society of “want,” this will likely lead to petty crime and juvenile delinquency (de Kadt, 1979). It may also create a rift between local cultural generations, as older people might disapprove of young people rejecting the traditional way of life (Peppelenbosch and Tempelman, 1989).

However, it is questionable to what *degree* tourism has played in the “modernization” of the developing countries. Some argue that these changes would have happened regardless. Smith (1989) argues that although each site differs, tourism should *not* be considered the major element in cultural change in most societies. Cheap radios and cassette players have introduced world news and music, along with new local awareness and demand for roads, clean water, medicine, electricity and even entertainment. However, because tourists are real-life, walking examples of the seemingly happy-go-lucky modernized world, and it is difficult to downplay their impact.

Effects on Traditional Culture: International tourists are often under the false impression that through their journey, they are contributing to a better way of life for the locals of their destination. Many of these destinations offer traditional performances and rituals that the tourist can pay to attend. This seems like a benefit for all involved; the tourist can learn from a new culture and the locals can make money. However, many argue that this is usually not the case. The act of paying for a performance tends to commercialize the experience, and deteriorates the traditional meaning and depth. Many times performances are staged, and not-authentic (Peppelenbosch and Templeman, 1989; Lea, 1988; Murphy, 1985; Cohen, 1972). For instance in Bali, the people save their dead for the weekends when tourists will come and pay to see the traditional cremation rites (Roeakarts and Savat, 1989).

The same logic follows for tourists' insatiable demand for souvenirs. In many regions, large-scale manufacturing has replaced original, handmade crafts once sold. Also, crafts bought by tourists are often not used for their original purpose, for instance camel muzzles become handbags. Over time, craftsmen have altered the design of some traditional products to bring them more in line with what the tourists want, or what they think they want (de Kadt, 1979). As a result, cultural and artistic standards relax. Lanfant and Graburn (1992) have a term for this loss of traditional culture in exchange for economic gain: "the Dilemma of Tourism" - to reject tourism is death economically, while to accept it is death anthropologically.

On the other hand, some authors argue that tourism contributes to the preservation of traditional culture because local people now have a reason to perform and keep traditions alive (de Kadt, 1979; Matheison and Wall, 1982). Noronha (1979) argues that Bali in particular has enhanced its culture as a result of its popularity with the tourists. He maintains that the local population must maintain the distinction of performing for the tourist, while also performing for themselves, so as not to lose the significance of the performance. He believes locals are able to sustain this distinction, and as a result the tourism industry is successful, while the local culture is preserved.

Nash (1989) contends that the main problem with commercialization of culture is that tourists and locals tend to view each other as objects, which can lead to discrimination and prejudice. The two groups are separated by the facts of being strangers, the work-leisure distinction, and other cultural differences that may arise in different circumstances. Tourism often reinforces the inferiority complex of the locals, since tourists may take pictures without asking and stare at them in “zoo-like fashion” (Roeakarts and Savat, 1989). This is especially true in African and Asian countries, where local dress and appearance is much different than in the West, and language is an enormous barrier. Locals learn to ask for payment to be photographed, further degrading their culture. Also, common stereotypes are often implanted in the tourist’s head before they even leave the country. Travel literature often promotes an “innocent backwardness” of developing nations, with stereotypical language

describing locals as “happy-go-lucky, sexually virile, undisciplined, uncivilized, etc.” (Roekarts and Savat, 1992).

Tourist/Local Interaction: The level of tourist/local interaction can have a significant effect on local perception of tourism, and determines the degree of true cultural understanding between groups. De Kadt (1979) argues that these encounters occur in three main ways: the tourist buying goods or services, the tourist interacting with residents on a beach or restaurant, and where the two communicate and exchange information or ideas. The third type of encounter is what advocates propose when they tout the benefits of tourism as a form of “cultural exchange” and “promoting peace and understanding” (de Kadt, 1979; Roekaerts and Savat, 1992). However, the first two types of interaction are much more common, especially in the arena of mass tourism. And even when there is conversation between the groups, it may be repetitive and monotonous: the tourist may be asking new questions in his mind to a fishing guide, but the host may become bored as he has answered it many times over (Smith, 1989).

Nettekoven (1979) outlines several misconceptions with regard to intercultural interactions: a) foreign tourists have fewer and less intense encounters with locals than is assumed, b) in African and Asian countries, the interaction has little impact on society, since the number of tourists is small in comparison to total population, and c) tourists have less desire for intense interaction than is alleged. The third component is worth discussing. The

conventional tourist is on a pleasure-seeking vacation, with the goal of forgetting his cares and worries. Understanding and working through the issues of another country is difficult and often upsetting, and tourists have no real desire to cope with these problems. "The mass tourist really wants to be confirmed in his prejudices and to be left alone in a milieu as similar as possible to his own familiar background" (Bouhdiba, 1979). Butler (1992) writes, "mass tourists are prepared to give up genuine one-on-one authentic local culture contact and the harsh reality of a third world or old world existence in return for these conveniences (amenities), seen by them as benefits." So, it is not surprising that a mass tourist may return from a trip having not met any locals other than those staffing his accommodations: non-economic local encounters make up a very small portion of the tourist's entire experience (de Kadt, 1979).

Local Perception of Tourism: Many studies have been conducted in an attempt to evaluate resident perceptions and attitudes towards tourism (Ap, 1992; Pizam, 1978; Olsen, 1997; McWilliam, 1996; Lea, 1988; Smith, 1989; Liu and Var, 1986; de Kadt, 1979; Keogh, 1990; Mansfeld, 1992; Murphy, 1983; Perdue, Long and Allen, 1990; Belisle and Hoy, 1980). Although many researchers have set out to study this subject, few commonalties have been identified. However, one common element in many studies is that residents generally support tourism for its economic benefits. While there is a strong relationship between those who work for the tourism industry and support it

(Mansfeld, 1992; Pizam, 1978; Glasson, 1994), there is additional evidence that those who do not work in the industry also display positive attitudes toward tourism (Milman and Pizam, 1988; Keogh, 1990).

Numerous studies have determined that level of tourism development effects local perception of impacts, but the studies do not seem to agree on the relationship between the two. Smith (1980) argues that tourism is nearly always desirable to host communities in the beginning stages, as it promises to provide much-needed employment and other income-generating activities. However, host communities tend to become aggravated by accelerated growth, and the reduction in quality-of-life indicators. Doxey's Irridex Model (1975) compliments Smith by suggesting that host community perceptions of tourism will progressively become more negative, moving through four stages of increasing disillusionment: initial euphoria, apathy, increasing irritation, and finally outright antagonism. The notion that heavy tourism concentration on a destination area will lead to negative residential attitudes was supported by Pizam (1978).

However, other studies done by Dowling in Australia (1993) and King, Pizam and Milman in Fiji (1993) proved otherwise. Although resident to visitor ratios had increased dramatically due to tourism development, residents were still very supportive of tourism and its continued growth. Similarly, a study conducted in Hawaii by Liu and Var (1986) concluded that respondents strongly agree that tourism provides many economic and cultural benefits, and are reluctant to attribute social and environmental costs to tourism, despite the

high level of tourism development. Since the towns of Isla Mujeres and Puerto Morelos are experiencing different levels of tourism development, the findings of this study will be relevant to this discussion.

Another causation of differences in attitudes may be spatially related; how close one lives to the center of tourism activity may influence perceptions of impacts. Smith (1980) has developed a spatial-attitude link between community attitudes and tourism (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Smith's Diagram of a Tourist Region

If the "core" tourism zone can accommodate tourists needs, then there is no need for them to leave the core and penetrate adjacent neighborhoods, thus preserving privacy and separate lives of local residents. This is evident in

enclave resorts, and may be used as an argument *for* this type of segregated development because the neighboring zones may benefit economically through indirect earnings (multiplier effect), but may seldom come into contact with tourists. Smith argues that locals living in periphery communities would not perceive tourism as negatively as those living in day-to-day contact with outsiders would, and this finding was supported by Keogh (1990). However, other authors (Belisle and Hoy, 1980; Sheldon and Var, 1984; and Mansfeld, 1992) demonstrated the exact opposite: as distance from place of residence to the tourist area increased, residents were less positive about tourism.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introduction

One hundred-thirty six respondents completed the questionnaire in Isla Mujeres, and 139 completed it in Puerto Morelos for a total sample of 275. Compliance rates were very high. Of the total number of people approached in each town, 88% completed the questionnaire in Isla Mujeres, and 91% did so in Puerto Morelos. The remaining percentages include people who plainly refused to participate from the beginning, as well as surveys that were not returned at all, despite several attempts to pick them up. There were an additional six surveys that were not analyzed, because respondents either filled out only one side of the survey, or did not live in Puerto Morelos or Isla Mujeres. Therefore, only questionnaires completed by residents were analyzed.

The first 25 questions of the survey were tested to find demographic differences and/or similarities between the two sample populations. Demographic questions were either open-ended or multiple choice. The remaining 25 questions were phrased in statement form, and respondents were asked to use a Likert Scale to best express their feelings toward the statement. These questions were analyzed by comparing frequencies, and the categories of “Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” were collapsed into two categories of “Agree” and “Disagree.”

The Chi-Square Test was used to find differences between the Likert Scale responses of the two groups. A probability value (p) of less than .05 indicates that the difference between populations is statistically significant, with a 95% confidence level. However, the Chi-Square Test only determines if there are differences between the two groups, but does not indicate where the difference lies. For instance, even if more than 70% of both populations agree with a statement, there still may be significant differences in the test statistic. This means that there may differences between those that “*strongly agree*” or “*strongly disagree*.” To identify where these differences occur, the observed values are compared with the expected values, and the greatest differences indicate where the significance is found.

In addition, when differences were found using the Chi Square Test, a comparison of means and variances was used to support those differences. The *mean* is the average of all responses, and in this study will fall between 1 and 4: 1 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Strongly Disagree. The *variance* is the mean of the squared differences between the sample mean and each of the observations, or responses (West, 1996). The variance represents the spread of the responses around the mean; a small variance indicates that respondents were in strong agreement to a certain question. For example, if the variance is 0, then all respondents gave the same answer.

Demographics

Using an Independent Sample T Test, the demographic questions were tested to identify significant differences between the two groups. Ninety-seven percent of the people surveyed in both towns were Mexican. The remaining 3% consisted of a few Americans, Canadians, one Belizean, and one Dominican Republic. The samples were fairly even with regard to sex distribution: 45% of the respondents were male in Isla Mujeres, and 53% were male in Puerto Morelos. The sex distribution for the state of Quintana Roo is 51% male, 49% female (INEGI, 1995). The mean age of the respondent in Isla Mujeres was 33, and the mean age in Puerto Morelos was 34. The average number of children per household in Isla Mujeres was 2.3 and for Puerto Morelos it was 2.4. The average numbers of children are uncharacteristically low for a population of third world country inhabitants. This may be related to the fact that residents of the two towns are fairly well educated if compared with other developing countries. Fewer than 2% of both sample populations have had no schooling at all. In Isla Mujeres, 90% of the respondents have had some form of primary or secondary education, while 84% had reached the same level in Puerto Morelos. Ten percent in Isla Mujeres have continued on to the University level, and 14% have continued in Puerto Morelos.

From an outsider's perspective, it appears that Isla Mujeres as a *town* is more financially stable than is Puerto Morelos. There is more infrastructure, in terms of water supply, better-maintained and landscaped streets, and more

sophisticated buildings. On Isla Mujeres, the private company Aguakan provides water service and sewage treatment to the entire island population (Xix, 1998). All of Puerto Morelos uses septic tanks, and sections of the town must rely on rainwater as the only source of potable water (local conversation). The government building in Isla Mujeres is very modern, complete with air conditioning and new technologies such as fax machines. The only government building in Puerto Morelos is small and obscure, with no air conditioning. This may be because Isla Mujeres is a more mature tourist destination, and must cater to the expectations of tourists with better infrastructure and facilities. This is supported by the fact that 78% of the residents in Isla Mujeres agreed to the statement, "Public services are adequate for people living in town" while only 52% agreed in Puerto Morelos. The difference between the responses is statistically significant (.00).

There was a statistically significant difference found between the two groups with respect to income levels. However, this data may be slightly skewed, due to the fact that the questionnaire was altered mid-way through the project with respect to this question. It became apparent that the original survey scale was not appropriate for the respondents; some respondents balked at the smallest provided category of "0-2000 pesos/month", saying that most people earn much less than 2000 pesos. After the first 25 completed questionnaires, the categories were changed to include "0-1000 pesos/month" as the first option. However, the vast majority of people surveyed chose this option, which led the researchers to question whether or not it should be

broken down further. After 111 questionnaires were completed, the categories were changed once again to include “0-500 pesos/month” as the smallest option. This final version was used for the remainder of the questionnaires completed in Puerto Morelos and all of those completed in Isla Mujeres. As a result, it may appear that residents of Puerto Morelos earn more, since the majority of the respondents were not prompted with the “0-500 pesos/month” category. However, regardless of this change in scale, the distribution of income is fairly similar in both towns. To summarize the earnings of the region as a whole, 70% of the total sample population earns somewhere between 500 – 2000 pesos a month (US \$62 - \$250 in 1998) (Figure 7).

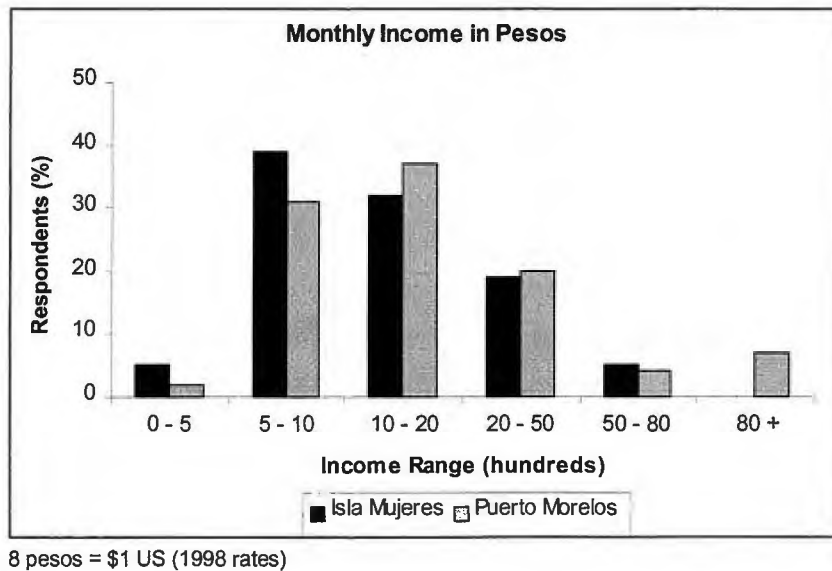


Figure 7. Monthly Income Distribution in Pesos

Mexico does not have just one nation-wide minimum wage. There are three different zones within the country, and employees of each zone earn a different minimum wage. The minimum wage for Zone A (which includes

Mexico City) is 27 pesos for an 8 hour day (US \$3.4), Zone B is 24.30 pesos a day (US \$3), and Zone C is 22.50 pesos a day (US \$2.8) (Uh, 1998). The state of Quintana Roo falls into Zone C, and so a person working a 40-hour week could earn 450 pesos a month (US \$56) on minimum wage. Therefore, it appears that 97% of the respondents are earning more than minimum wage. However, this may be misleading because more often than not, this is the only wage for an entire family. Eighteen percent of the respondents were housewives, and did not earn an income at all. In these instances, the respondent was asked to circle what her husband makes for the family. So although the majority of people are earning more than minimum wage, this one salary is supporting entire families. To support this finding, responses to the question "Does your salary cover your daily expenses?" were evenly split in each town: 50% Yes and 50% No.

Respondent occupations were very diverse, ranging from teachers, chambermaids, business owners, housewives, construction workers, mechanics, and administrators. All respondents were asked whether or not they worked in the tourism industry. Interestingly, those who answered "yes" were not just holding obvious tourist-related positions, but were also hairstylists, fishermen, gardeners, masons, and those in the medical profession. In each town, those who answered that they *did* work in the tourism industry nearly equaled those who said they did *not* (49% v. 51%). Therefore, although Isla Mujeres is a more mature tourism destination, residents of Puerto Morelos feel that they are working just as much for tourism

in their own town. It is also an indication that people feel that they are indirectly connected to the tourism industry, even if their job does not require them to work directly with tourists.

Two of the economic indicators used in the questionnaire were that of car ownership and house building material. Eighty-eight percent did not own a car in Isla Mujeres, while 74% did not in Puerto Morelos. This difference is statistically significant, but could be expected since the former is a small island and a car is unnecessary if one works and lives on the island. Building materials primarily consist of concrete and/or "palapa," a type of construction that consists of palm leaves and branches. Eighty-four percent of the respondents in Isla Mujeres lived in concrete homes, while only 64% did in Puerto Morelos, and this difference too is statistically significant. However, although concrete is a more expensive material, some of the palapa homes were expensively made to look tropical and beautiful, costing much more than concrete or tin siding. Similarly, there were numerous examples of concrete homes in both towns that were poorly maintained and in need of great repair. It seems that residents of Puerto Morelos owned more cars, but residents in Isla Mujeres used more concrete. It may be that the combination of both of these variables leads to the conclusion that the range of resident wealth in both towns is similar.

As discussed in the preceding chapters, the populations in Quintana Roo are relatively young. Roughly 70% of the entire Quintana Roo population is under the age of 30 (INEGI, 1995). However, since the average number of

children per household is only 2.3, this percentage reflects not a boom in childbirth, but a large number of new emigrants in the towns. Isla Mujeres is an established town with a history spanning 150 years (Madrid, 1998) and yet 30% of those surveyed have lived in town for less than 10 years. It is interesting to note that a full 64% of those surveyed in Puerto Morelos have lived in that town for less than 10 years, and only 3 out of 128 respondents have lived there for more than 30 years. Therefore, 98% of the town residents have emigrated to Puerto Morelos in the past 30 years. In addition, only 23% of those surveyed in Isla Mujeres were actually born on the island, and only 12% of those surveyed in Puerto Morelos were born in the state of Quintana Roo (but not necessarily Puerto Morelos). Town residents have come from all over Mexico, including states such as Sonora and Jalisco on the West Coast. Yet 74% of the residents of Isla Mujeres and 49% of the residents of Puerto Morelos came from the three states of the Yucatan Peninsula (Quintana Roo, Yucatan and Campeche). These figures support the fact that the populations of towns surrounding Cancún are growing at an alarming rate.

Testing the Hypotheses

The focus of this study is to determine if there are differences between the attitudes of residents of the two sample populations with respect to tourism. Despite the fact that Isla Mujeres is an island community with a much larger population, it has been shown that the two samples are demographically

very similar with respect to income, age, occupation, education, and nationality. Therefore, differences that are found will be attributed to one of two factors: the difference in distance between the two sites with respect to Cancún, and the difference in residential exposure to the respective local tourism industries. It is of interest to identify differences, and use this knowledge to perhaps better plan for future tourism development in Puerto Morelos, as well as other towns that may be modeled after Cancún.

HYPOTHESIS 1

H₁: Due to the varying degree of local exposure to tourism, it is hypothesized that there is a statistically significant difference between residential attitudes toward the impacts of tourism in the towns of Puerto Morelos and Isla Mujeres.

This hypothesis was tested with questions addressing economic, social and environmental impacts of the tourism industry. Questions used to test attitudes towards impacts were phrased in statement form, and were answered with a Likert Scale:

Economic Impacts

- Tourism is the most important industry in town.
- Tourism has created jobs for my family.
- Tourism has increased my standard of living.
- The town's infrastructure and streets have been improved because of tourism.

Social Impacts

- I like to meet tourists from other countries.

- Tourism has changed the traditional way of life in town.
- There is more crime in town due to tourism.
- Drug use has increased in town due to tourism.

Environmental Impacts

- Coastal waters have been contaminated due to tourism.
- There is more trash on the streets due to tourism.
- There is more trash on the beach due to tourism.

Perceived Economic Impacts: Although tourism is very important to the economy of both towns, there is a statistically significant difference in the responses to the first statement: “Tourism is the most important industry in town” (Table 1). Although more than 90% of both populations agreed, the difference lies in those who *strongly* agreed: 80% in Isla Mujeres, and 60% in Puerto Morelos. By examining the difference in means, it is clear that residents of Isla Mujeres were in close agreement with a small variance. Residents of Puerto Morelos did not agree as strongly, and responses were more scattered around the mean.

| | | (SA) 1 | (A) 2 | (D) 3 | (SD) 4 | Mean | Var |
|---|----------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|------|-----|
| <i>Tourism is the most important industry in town</i> | Isla Mujeres | 80% | 15% | 2% | 3% | 1.27 | .42 |
| | Puerto Morelos | 60% | 30% | 6% | 4% | 1.54 | .63 |

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree

Table 1. Tourism is the Most Important Industry in Town.

This difference in attitude supports the notion that the industry is more established in Isla Mujeres, and solidifies the fact that the two tourism industries are experiencing different stages of development. Also, it seems that residents of Isla Mujeres are confident (with a very small variance) that tourism is their economic mainstay.

It is interesting to note that despite the fact that over 90% of both towns agree that tourism is the number one industry, both towns (especially Puerto Morelos) are considered to be *fishing* towns, and are often described as such in tourism literature. An employee of a tourist shop in Puerto Morelos conceded, "Puerto Morelos was not supposed to be a tourist town when it was created. It was, and is, a small town of fishermen. Fishing is still the number one industry in town. But we want tourism to become number one." These comments reveal strong ties to the fishing industry, and show that people still identify with this lifestyle.

There were no statistically significant differences in the responses regarding job creation and increased standard of living. Eighty percent of each population agreed that tourism has created jobs for their family. Also, 73% of residents in Isla Mujeres and 74% of residents in Puerto Morelos agreed that their standard of living has increased as a result of tourism. Therefore, despite the fact that one tourism industry is much smaller and less developed than the other, just as many residents believe it has improved their economic status (Table 2).

| | | (SA) 1 | (A) 2 | (D) 3 | (SD) 4 | Mean | Var |
|--|----------------|------------|----------|------------|-----------|------|------|
| <i>Tourism has created jobs for my family.</i> p = .16 df = 3 | Isla Mujeres | 65% 81% | 16% | 7% 19% | 12% | 1.65 | 1.07 |
| | Puerto Morelos | 58% 80% | 22% | 3% 20% | 17% | 1.79 | 1.27 |
| <i>Tourism has increased my standard of living.</i> p = .23 df = 3 | Isla Mujeres | 51% 73% | 22% | 11% 27% | 16% | 1.92 | 1.26 |
| | Puerto Morelos | 41% 74% | 33% | 9% 26% | 17% | 2.01 | 1.18 |

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree

Table 2. Tourism has Created Jobs and Increased Standard of Living

Although 74% of the total sample population agreed that tourism has increased their standard of living, almost half (43%) of that same population reported that their job is unrelated to tourism. Therefore, even those with jobs not directly related to tourism believe that tourism is improving their way of life. This finding supports previous studies done by Milman and Pizam (1988) and Keogh (1990) that determined that the majority of residents are positive about tourism, even if they do not directly benefit from it.

There is no statistically significant difference in the perception that town infrastructure has improved because of tourism. Both samples agreed that this was true: 70% in Isla Mujeres and 68% in Puerto Morelos. This perception is probably true in fact, considering tourists do not like unsanitary conditions, will not tolerate lack of clean water, and demand efficient roads and means of transportation. It is likely that these factors have a significant effect on urging

town government to improve facilities. But it is interesting to recall that there was a significant difference in the question regarding the adequacy of public services for people in town. Fewer people agreed that public services were adequate for town residents in Puerto Morelos (52%) than in Isla Mujeres (78%). Therefore, even though one town has inadequate public amenities and infrastructure, both towns perceive that the tourism industry spurs better town development (Table 3).

| | | (SA) 1 | (A) 2 | (D) 3 | (SD) 4 | Mean | Var |
|--|----------------|-----------|------------|----------|------------|------|------|
| <i>Public Services are Adequate for Town Residents</i> p = .00 df=3 | Isla Mujeres | 48% | 30% 78% | 5% | 17% 22% | 1.91 | 1.21 |
| | Puerto Morelos | 27% | 25% 52% | 20% | 28% 48% | 2.49 | 1.36 |
| <i>Town Infrastructure has been Improved due to Tourism</i> p = .37 df=3 | Isla Mujeres | 48% | 22% 70% | 13% | 17% 30% | 1.97 | 1.21 |
| | Puerto Morelos | 41% | 27% 68% | 17% | 15% 32% | 2.05 | 1.17 |

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree

Table 3. Tourism Spurs Better Development

These findings show that despite the difference in level of tourism development, both towns are in agreement that tourism has had positive economic impacts on their town with no statistically significant differences found between the two populations. This notion supports the general idea that

tourism in developing countries creates employment opportunities and promotes economic development (Lea, 1988; Pearce, 1981; Ryan, 1991; Matheison and Wall, 1982).

Perceived Social Impacts: While roughly 97% of both populations agreed that they liked to meet tourists from other countries, there was a large difference in the percent of respondents who *strongly* agreed. Eighty-six percent strongly agreed in Isla Mujeres with a very small variance, while 79% strongly agreed in Puerto Morelos (Table 4).

| | | (SA) 1 | (A) 2 | (D) 3 | (SD) 4 | Mean | Var |
|---|----------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|------|-----|
| <i>I like to Meet Tourists from other Countries</i> | Isla Mujeres | 86% | 12% | 2% | 0% | 1.16 | .18 |
| | | 98% | | | 2% | | |
| | Puerto Morelos | 79% | 17% | 1% | 3% | 1.28 | .40 |
| | | 96% | | | 4% | | |

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree

Table 4. I Like to Meet Tourists from Other Countries.

Therefore, residents of Isla Mujeres have greater daily contact with the tourism industry, and yet are also more positive about meeting tourists. This supports the findings of several other studies that indicate that an increase in tourism contact leads to an increase in positive feelings towards that industry. Rothman's (1978) project in Delaware found that more contact between residents and tourists facilitated more positive attitudes towards tourism, and

Sheldon and Var (1984) found that the higher the density of tourism development, the more positive locals were towards tourism and tourists. However, other studies determined the opposite; the more contact residents have with tourists, the more negative feeling and attitudes will develop (Smith, 1980; Doxey, 1975; Pizam, 1978).

There was no statistically significant difference in the perception that tourism has changed the traditional way of life. Seventy-six percent agreed in Isla Mujeres, and 77% agreed in Puerto Morelos. Comments from respondents of both towns support the notion that tourism has indeed changed the way of life in town, but respondents did not display negative feelings about this change. The Municipal President of Isla Mujeres commented, "Yes, the traditional way of life has changed because nothing is static, and without change, everything dies. We must change, but we want to maintain our identity." One Isla Mujeres respondent commented that "the traditional life has definitely changed here on the island completely in the 25 years since Cancún was created. Most of the people who visit Cancún take a day trip to Isla, so Isla Mujeres is now very Americanized. There are things like hamburger stands, things that would not be here if it were not for American tourists. This is not bad, just different."

Tourism is not thought to contribute much to crime in either town: only 26% agreed in Isla Mujeres and 25% agreed in Puerto Morelos. The Mayor of Puerto Morelos conveyed that there is virtually no crime in town, due to the presence of a sizeable police force. Similarly, 99% of the residents of both

towns agreed that they liked to live in their respective towns because it is peaceful. "Peacefulness" was repeatedly cited in local conversation in both towns as the reason why people have moved to that town, or why they wished to stay there. This finding is interesting, because numerous studies have found that an increase in tourism is correlated to a *perceived increase* in crime, especially those crimes that are economically driven such as robbery or larceny (Pizam, 1978; Rothman, 1978; McPheters and Stronge, 1974). However, even though Isla Mujeres is a more mature destination than Puerto Morelos, the perceived crime rate is not higher (Table 5).

| | | (SA) 1 | (A) 2 | (D) 3 | (SD) 4 | Mean | Var |
|---|----------------|-----------|------------|----------|------------|------|------|
| <i>Crime has Increased in Town due to Tourism</i> p = .84 df = 3 | Isla Mujeres | 11% | 15% 26% | 18% | 55% 74% | 3.17 | 1.12 |
| | Puerto Morelos | 8% | 17% 25% | 19% | 56% 75% | 3.23 | 1.00 |
| <i>Drug Use has Increased in Town due to Tourism</i> p = .02 df = 3 | Isla Mujeres | 26% | 19% 45% | 22% | 33% 55% | 2.61 | 1.41 |
| | Puerto Morelos | 15% | 15% 30% | 19% | 51% 70% | 3.05 | 1.27 |

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree

Table 5. Residential Perception of Crime and Drug Use

Although both towns disagreed that there is more crime due to tourism, there was a statistically significant difference between the perceptions of increased drug use due to tourism. Forty-five percent agreed in Isla Mujeres,

while only 30% agreed in Puerto Morelos. It is likely that this difference may be attributed to the proximity of Isla Mujeres to Cancún. Cancún, just like any other major city, has its share of drug problems. Also, consider the location of the Yucatan Peninsula with respect to shipping lanes from Central and South American to Miami; Cancún is a convenient spot for drug transport stopovers. With readily available ferry transportation to and from Cancún, it would be easy for tourists in Isla Mujeres to obtain drugs. In addition, the typical overnight tourist in Isla Mujeres may not be the partying “Spring Breaker,” but there are plenty of them who stop over just for the day via ferry. For these reasons, it is clear that there would be more perceived drug use in Isla Mujeres than in Puerto Morelos. Fortunately, increased drug use in this case may simply be a symptom of geographic location with respect to Cancún, and not a symptom of a growing tourism industry. It can not be assumed at this point that drug use would increase in Puerto Morelos as the tourism industry expands.

Overall, the only question that evoked a statistically significant difference was that of increased drug use due to tourism. Other than that, residents of both towns were very positive toward the social impacts of tourism, and residents of Isla Mujeres were even more positive about meeting foreign tourists. Level of tourism development and contact with tourists may account for the difference in attitudes towards foreign tourists, but proximity to Cancún is probably the reason for the difference in perceived drug use.

Perceived Environmental Impacts: There were statistically significant differences in the questions regarding trash on the streets and on the beach due to tourism, although overall, respondents were averse to the idea of attributing trash to tourism (Table 6).

| | | (SA) 1 | (A) 2 | (D) 3 | (SD) 4 | Mean | Var |
|---|----------------|-----------|------------|----------|------------|------|------|
| <i>There is more Trash on the Streets due to Tourism</i> p = .04 df = 3 | Isla Mujeres | 21% | 12% 33% | 19% | 48% 67% | 2.94 | 1.44 |
| | Puerto Morelos | 9% | 15% 24% | 21% | 55% 76% | 3.22 | 1.00 |
| <i>There is more Trash on the Beach due to tourism</i> p = .02 df = 3 | Isla Mujeres | 24% | 18% 42% | 20% | 38% 58% | 2.72 | 1.45 |
| | Puerto Morelos | 11% | 24% 35% | 16% | 49% 65% | 3.02 | 1.19 |

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree

Table 6. Residential Perception of Trash due to Tourism

In both cases, residents of Puerto Morelos were less likely to attribute trash to tourism than were residents of Isla Mujeres, and showed stronger agreement with smaller variances. This perceived difference might be due to the difference in interaction level between tourists and residents. Since there are fewer tourists in Puerto Morelos, there is less opportunity to witness tourists leaving trash in undesirable places, while the very presence of large numbers of tourists in Isla Mujeres may cause residents to blame them for

trash problems. However, more than 50% of both town populations did not agree that tourism was responsible for trash.

In addition, both populations disagreed that coastal waters have been contaminated as a result of tourism. Sixty-five percent disagreed in Isla Mujeres, and 69% disagreed in Puerto Morelos, with no statistically significant difference. Conversation with residents of both towns revealed that residents feel that *locals*, rather than tourists, are more responsible for strewn trash and water pollution. One respondent in Isla Mujeres commented, "If anyone contaminates the waters it is the Mexicans who live here, or the Mexican tourists. The foreigners are very good about picking up their trash. There needs to be more education and awareness of this for Mexicans." This sentiment was echoed in many residents of both towns.

Therefore, despite the differences found with respect to trash, the majority of both populations did not attribute negative environmental costs to tourism. This reluctance to attribute negative impacts to tourism is supported by the findings of several other studies (Liu and Var, 1986; Perdue, Long and Allen, 1990). However, small percentages of Isla Mujeres residents were more inclined to attribute some negative costs to tourism such as trash and increased drug use, yet those same residents were also very positive about tourism benefits. A study done by Liu, Sheldon and Var (1987) supports this finding with the determination that residents of places with a longer history of tourism are more aware of both positive *and* negative impacts of tourism. Similarly, Long, Perdue, and Allen (1990) determined that as tourism

development increases, so do perceptions of both positive and negative impacts.

HYPOTHESIS 2

H₂: It is hypothesized that there is a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of residents in Puerto Morelos and Isla Mujeres towards Cancún due to the differential geographical proximity of the two towns with respect to Cancún.

This hypothesis was tested with questions that measured resident's feelings about Cancún. Questions used to test attitudes towards impacts were phrased in statement form, and were answered with a Likert Scale:

- Cancún is overcrowded.
- I like to visit Cancún City.
- I would prefer to work in Cancún.
- I would prefer to live in Cancún.
- I like to live this close to Cancún.
- The tourism industry is vital to the economy in town.

The overwhelming majority of residents of both towns agree that Cancún is overcrowded, and the test statistic is not significant. Ninety percent agree in Isla Mujeres, and 94% agree in Puerto Morelos, and the levels of agreement were roughly the same. Most people surveyed had a strong disdain for Cancún, for a whole host of reasons, and sentiments did not differ between towns. Acrimonious words included: "Cancún is a monster," "Only thieves can live in Cancún" and "People run around with guns and knives in Cancún."

Others cited general crime as a problem, along with increased traffic and noise. Many people said “Cancún grew too quickly” and it does not have “good quality of life.” One man in Puerto Morelos who used to live in Cancún called it a “conquered city – there are too many people, and it has lost its tranquility.” A Canadian woman said that when she goes to Cancún she feels like she should be in a big working city, but in reality it is just as inefficient as Puerto Morelos.

However, results indicate that residents of both towns do like to *visit* Cancún. Sixty-five percent agreed in Isla Mujeres, and 71% did so in Puerto Morelos with no statistically significant differences. This is probably because there are better places to shop and more entertainment options for those with money to spend. Interestingly, residents of Puerto Morelos had stronger opinions on this question: 43% strongly agreed, while only 30% strongly agreed in Isla Mujeres. This may be due to the distance between Puerto Morelos and Cancún. Residents of Puerto Morelos may be less effected by the negative aspects of Cancún, such as high crime, drugs, and congestion, and consequently perceive Cancún in a more positive light.

There was a statistically significant difference in the views of the two groups regarding whether or not they would prefer to work in Cancún. Twenty-eight percent agreed in Puerto Morelos, while only 11% agreed in Isla Mujeres. Also, a full 76% strongly disagreed with this statement in Isla Mujeres, and 61% strongly disagreed in Puerto Morelos. There was also a

statistically significant difference in whether or not residents would prefer to live in Cancún, though the vast majority said they would not (Table 7).

| | | (SA) 1 | (A) 2 | (D) 3 | (SD) 4 | Mean | Var |
|---|----------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|------|------|
| <i>I Would Prefer to Work in Cancún</i> | Isla Mujeres | 7% | 4% | 13% | 76% | 3.58 | .74 |
| | | 11% | | 89% | | | |
| $p = .00$ $df = 3$ | Puerto Morelos | 18% | 10% | 11% | 61% | 3.14 | 1.40 |
| | | 29% | | 72% | | | |
| <i>I Would Prefer to Live in Cancún</i> | Isla Mujeres | 2% | 4% | 13% | 80% | 3.70 | .43 |
| | | 7% | | 93% | | | |
| $p = .04$ $df = 3$ | Puerto Morelos | 9% | 9% | 10% | 72% | 3.46 | .95 |
| | | 18% | | 83% | | | |

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree

Table 7. Residential Attitudes toward Living and Working in Cancún

Again, the differences can be attributed to the geographic location of the two towns with respect to Cancún. Residents of Isla Mujeres may have greater sensitivity to the negative aspects of living in Cancún, because of the close proximity. However, residents of Puerto Morelos who may not be as familiar, could be enticed by the economic incentives of moving to a big city: the possibility of new jobs and better wages. According to the Mayor of Puerto Morelos, 15% of the people who live in town work in Cancún. The commute is expensive and time consuming, and the idea of living in Cancún to escape these expenses may be alluring. However, it is clear that the overwhelming

majority of respondents from both towns would not prefer to live or work in Cancún.

There was no statistically significant difference in views on whether or not residents like to live in close proximity to Cancún, although it is interesting to note that the percentage of those who agreed in Isla Mujeres (64%) was less than those who agreed in Puerto Morelos (72%). Although the tourism industries in Cancún and Isla Mujeres are closely linked, and the location of Cancún attracts more daily visitors to Isla Mujeres, 36% admit that they do not like to be closely situated. For some residents, the social costs of being situated so close to Cancún (such as large numbers of daytrippers and increased drug problems) may outweigh the city's benefits. These social costs are not as prevalent in Puerto Morelos, apparently due to the greater distance between the two industries.

There was also no statistically significant difference in the responses on whether or not the tourism industry in Cancún is considered vital to the economy of the town. Sixty-three percent agreed in Isla Mujeres, and 69% agreed in Puerto Morelos: the majority of both towns agree that Cancún is necessary for their own economic gain. From the perspective of the tourism industry, it would be desirable and more successful to promote a tourist destination close to a major city that touts a fully functioning international airport, and major infrastructure such as roads, electricity and large stores for supplies (Table 8).

| | | (SA) 1 | (A) 2 | (D) 3 | (SD) 4 | Mean | Var |
|---|----------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|------|------|
| <i>I Like to Live this Close to Cancún</i> p = .12 df = 3 | Isla Mujeres | 46% | 18% | 13% | 23% | 2.13 | 1.50 |
| | | 64% | | 36% | | | |
| | Puerto Morelos | 60% | 12% | 9% | 19% | 1.86 | 1.43 |
| | | 72% | | 28% | | | |
| <i>Tourism in Cancún is Vital to the Economy in Town</i> p = .32 df = 3 | Isla Mujeres | 43% | 18% | 13% | 24% | 2.17 | 1.48 |
| | | 63% | | 37% | | | |
| | Puerto Morelos | 42% | 27% | 7% | 24% | 2.13 | 1.47 |
| | | 69% | | 31% | | | |

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree

Table 8. Residential Perceptions of Dependency on Cancún

There have been some studies that examined links between distance from a tourism center and attitudes towards tourism (Belisle and Hoy, 1980; Sheldon and Var, 1984; Mansfeld, 1992) but all of these focused on populations within a localized area, based on the core-periphery concept. The studies determined that as distance from the core tourist zone increases, tourism impacts are perceived less positively. However, since Isla Mujeres and Puerto Morelos are two distinct and separated towns with respect to Cancún, it is unlikely that the findings of the above studies are applicable. A comparable study would be to examine resident perceptions of those who live in Cancún City to those who live in the adjacent, yet peripheral community of Puerto Juarez.

It appears that there are some differences in the way the residents of the two towns perceive Cancún as a result of the differential distance between the locations. Residents of Isla Mujeres were consistently less enthusiastic about living, visiting, and working in Cancún.

HYPOTHESIS 3

H₃: It is hypothesized that there is no statistically significant difference in the attitudes of residents in Puerto Morelos and Isla Mujeres towards tourism growth and development since tourism is considered a viable means of economic gain.

This hypothesis was tested with questions that measured resident's attitudes toward future tourism development in their towns.

- I would like to see big hotels built in town (like the ones in Cancún).
- I would like to see this town develop as Cancún has with respect to tourism.
- I would like the number of tourists to: increase, decrease, or remain the same.
- Tourists like this town because it is peaceful and quiet.
- I like this town because it is peaceful and quiet.

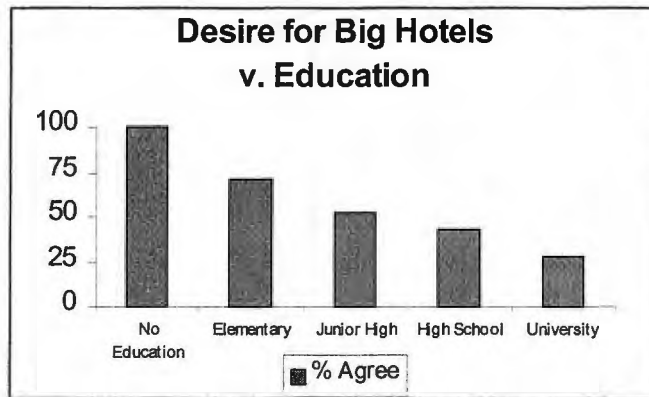
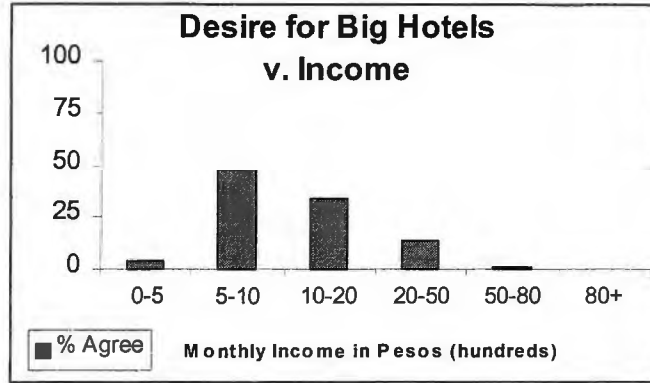
Residents were divided on whether or not they wanted to see big hotels built in town, like those in Cancún. In general, responses were split across the board, with high percentages strongly agreeing and strongly disagreeing. The difference was not significant, however, as the distribution of responses was fairly equal between towns (Table 9).

| | | (SA) 1 | (A) 2 | (D) 3 | (SD) 4 | Mean | Var |
|--|----------------|-----------|------------|----------|------------|------|------|
| <i>I Would Like to See Big Hotels Built in Town (like those in Cancún).</i> p = .30 df = 3 | Isla Mujeres | 32% | 13% 45% | 10% | 45% 55% | 2.67 | 1.75 |
| | Puerto Morelos | 40% | 16% 56% | 10% | 34% 44% | 2.37 | 1.72 |
| <i>I Would Like to See this Town Develop as Cancún has with Respect to Tourism.</i> p = .23 df = 3 | Isla Mujeres | 51% | 21% 72% | 8% | 20% 28% | 1.97 | 1.40 |
| | Puerto Morelos | 45% | 16% 61% | 9% | 30% 39% | 2.23 | 1.70 |

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree

Table 9. Residential Attitudes toward Future Tourism Growth

Why and how is there such a great range of responses to the prospect of building large hotels? This question was cross tabulated with regard to sex and did not find any significant differences. However, when compared with education level and income (combined for both towns), the results indicate that the more educated and wealthy the respondent, the less desire there is for large hotels to be built in town (Figures 8 and 9).



Figures 8 and 9. Residential Desire for Big Hotels v. Income and Education

The majority of residents agreed that they would like to see their town develop as Cancún has with respect to tourism. Seventy two percent agreed in Isla Mujeres, 61% agreed in Puerto Morelos, and the difference between the two is not significant. This is surprising due to the negative feelings Cancún had evoked in the vast majority of residents, as well as the fact that many people did not want to see large hotels built in town. Why would almost half of both populations *not* want to see large hotels built, but the majorities *would* want to see their town develop “like Cancún?” The disparity may be

interpreted in that residents do in fact want to be as *successful* as Cancún with respect to tourism, but want to develop a different kind of tourism. The Mayor of Puerto Morelos commented, “Cancún is good because it is one of the biggest sources of money for Mexico. Tourism there is good, but we want another kind here.” Another resident of Puerto Morelos said, “More tourism would be good for the town economy, but I think we should have more ecotourism, that would be more expensive, and more environmentally friendly. People would pay for that, and it would be different than Cancún.”

Similarly, the majority of both towns want to see more tourists. Eighty-four percent in Isla Mujeres and 81% in Puerto Morelos wanted to see an increase (Table 10). Not one person surveyed in Isla Mujeres wanted to see a decrease. This finding further supports the notion that tourism is an important part of the town economies, and residents want to see the industry developed.

| | | Increase | Decrease | Remain the Same | Mean | Var |
|--|----------------|----------|----------|-----------------|------|-----|
| <i>I Would Like the Number of Tourists in Town To:</i> | Isla Mujeres | 84% | 0% | 16% | 1.32 | .54 |
| | Puerto Morelos | 81% | 4% | 15% | 1.33 | .52 |

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree

Table 10. Residential Desire for More or Less Tourists.

However, a conflict arises because although residents want to attract more tourists to their towns, they also value the “peacefulness” of where they live, and recognize that this is what tourists come to their towns to enjoy. One

hundred percent of the total sample population of both towns agreed that tourists like to visit their town because it is peaceful and quiet (Table 11). The same could not be said about Cancún, which is notorious for its discotechs, parties and bikini contests. In fact, high percentages of respondents who had previously lived in Cancún cited “peacefulness” as the reason why they moved to their new location (66% in Isla and 56% in Puerto Morelos). In addition, 99% of the small percentage of those surveyed who worked in Cancún *strongly agreed* that they liked to live in their town because it was peaceful.

| | | (SA) 1 | (A) 2 | (D) 3 | (SD) 4 | Mean | Var |
|--|----------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|------|-----|
| <i>Tourists Like this Town because it is Peaceful and Quiet</i> p = .78 df = 3 | Isla Mujeres | 92% | 8% | | 0 | 1.08 | - |
| | Puerto Morelos | 93% | 7% | | 0 | 1.07 | - |
| <i>I Like this Town because it is Peaceful and Quiet.</i> p = .38 df = 3 | Isla Mujeres | 95% | 4% | 1% | 0 | 1.05 | - |
| | Puerto Morelos | 90% | 9% | 1% | 0 | 1.12 | - |

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree

Table 11. Residential Attitudes toward their Towns

The Mayor of Puerto Morelos commented, “The type of tourist that comes to Puerto Morelos is older, between 35-70 years old and comes to the town for relaxation – not to party. This is the type of tourists we want to attract here. We want to receive more tourists, but with some order. We want to sell

nature, we want sustainable development.” The Director of Tourism in Isla Mujeres stated, “We want to keep the small streets, with a small hotel feeling.” According to one local in Isla Mujeres, “We do not want to compete with Cancún for tourists. We want to keep our own identity and promote *that* for tourism. Tourists coming here would come to know a different living style - Caribbean style - but if they go to Cancún, they are really just in the USA.”

It is clear from the analysis that both towns do in fact want to see the tourism industry grow and develop locally. It would appear that the economic incentives provided by tourism are perceived to outweigh the negative social and environmental costs, even to a destination that is already well established and experiencing those costs first hand. However, although there is a desire for more development, residents of both towns also greatly value the tranquility of their town - not only for themselves, but also for the tourists that visit.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to the economic success of Cancún, tourism development along the Yucatan Peninsula coast is growing at a rapid pace. Cancún is considered a success story by many in Mexico, and a similar type of tourism development is likely to be emulated in other nearby towns. Investing in tourism may seem like an obvious means of economic gain for developing countries, but environmental and social costs are often times unaccounted for. In order to mitigate unwanted impacts and guide tourism development in smaller towns, it is necessary to identify how residents feel about tourism as well as how they feel about Cancún.

The town of Puerto Morelos is located roughly 22 miles south of Cancún, and is experiencing the beginning stages of tourism development. Isla Mujeres, located just 5 miles offshore from Cancún, has long been an established tourist destination but has not yet reached full development potential. Both local populations demonstrated similar demographic characteristics, and as a result, any differences found between the two populations can be attributed to the differential geographical differences between the towns and Cancún, or the differential exposure levels to tourism.

Conclusions: Hypothesis 1

PERCEIVED ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The fact that the two towns are experiencing difference stages of tourism development does not appear to evoke differences in attitudes toward the economic impacts of tourism. Since the town of Puerto Morelos has not benefited as much from tourism development (in terms of infrastructure and services) as Isla Mujeres has, it was hypothesized that there would be a difference in support of tourism. Yet it is clear that the vast majority of all residents surveyed had positive attitudes towards the economic benefits gained from tourism, even those who did not directly benefit by working in the tourism industry. The findings of many other tourism studies support the notion that in general, all residents are very positive about the economic benefits of tourism (Liu, Sheldon and Var, 1987; Keogh, 1990; Liu and Var, 1986; Dowling, 1993; Milman and Pizam, 1988). Both populations were in agreement that the local tourism industry has improved their standard of living, created jobs for their families, and positively influenced town development and infrastructure.

PERCEIVED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The majority of both populations did not attribute trash problems to the tourism industry. However, there were differences between the two populations, and residents of Isla Mujeres were more likely to blame tourists for leaving trash on the streets and beaches than were residents of Puerto

Morelos. These differences may be due to the differential exposure to tourism each town experiences. It is possible that the very presence of tourists on a day to day basis cause residents to be more aware of both positive and negative impacts (Long, Perdue, and Allen, 1990; Liu, Sheldon and Var, 1987). It may be true that tourists do in fact properly dispose of trash, but an increase in numbers of tourists may lead to an increase in the local *perception* that tourists litter, even if they do not.

There were no differences in the perception that tourists do not contaminate coastal waters, and it is unclear why questions regarding trash evoked differences, but a question about water pollution did not. Regardless, it was stated quite often in local conversation that it was the *residents* who litter and contaminate the water. Evidently, not only do residents *not* want to blame tourists for a negative impact, they are also willing to point the finger at themselves. For example, two offshore reef areas of Isla Mujeres that were famous tourist attractions for years have been temporarily closed due to severe deterioration. Locals did not blame the tourists, but blame the *boats* that transported the tourists for polluting the water and damaging the reefs (local conversation). This reluctance to blame tourists is a strong indication of support for the tourism industry, and also provides an opportunity for public education on pollution, sanitation, and the local environment.

PERCEIVED SOCIAL IMPACTS

The only major disparity between the two towns with respect to social impacts is that residents of Isla Mujeres perceived a greater increase in drug use due to tourism. There could be several reasons for this: a) a more developed tourist destination may bring about increased drug use, b) the type of tourist that visits Isla Mujeres for day trips (usually Spring Breakers) is more likely to use drugs than are visitors of Puerto Morelos, c) the close proximity of Isla Mujeres to Cancún facilitates drug use, since drugs are readily found in a large city. It is likely that a perceived increase in drug use is a result of some combination of all three, but primarily because of the spatial relationship to Cancún. Since Puerto Morelos is geographically distant from Cancún and attracts a more mature crowd, it should not be assumed at this point that drug use will increase in Puerto Morelos as the tourism industry expands. However, it is extremely important for the local government to be aware that there is a perceived increase in drug use in Isla Mujeres, and take all precautionary measures to prevent drug problems in their own town.

Residents of both towns agreed that tourism had changed the traditional way of life in town, and yet many people did not think this was necessarily a negative thing. Most people replied with a “what can you do about it?” shrug. Although Puerto Morelos is not nearly as developed as Isla Mujeres, the level of agreement was relatively the same. This is noteworthy because it reveals that even a small tourist industry impacts traditional mores; apparently *as much* as an established tourist destination. It may be that once

tourism begins, it may be impossible to return to traditional lifestyles. However, the results may also be an indication of a lack of “a traditional way of life” in these towns. Recall that 98% of the town residents have migrated to Puerto Morelos in the past 30 years. The two study sites are migratory towns with relatively young histories, and as a result, there may not be a well-defined traditional way of life.

Overall, the majority of both towns were extremely positive about the social impacts of tourism, and besides attitudes toward drug use there were no other statistically significant differences.

Conclusions: Hypothesis 2

ATTITUDES TOWARD CANCÚN

Despite the fact that Cancún is considered a success story by many in Mexico, the vast majority of all residents displayed negative feelings about the prospect of living and working in Cancún. In addition, residents of Isla Mujeres showed even greater negative feelings on all questions, which leads to the conclusion that the variation in geographical proximity does impact feelings toward Cancún. This is very likely due to the fact that residents of Isla Mujeres are more exposed to the negative aspects of Cancún, such as drug use and crime. Also, with its posh hotels and resorts, Cancún earns an enormous sum of money each year. Yet despite the close proximity and ferry links, residents of Isla Mujeres probably do not benefit much financially from Cancún’s tourism industry. This may also be another source of contention.

The majority of people from both towns said that they do enjoy visiting Cancún and like to be closely situated to Cancún. But again, more people agreed in Puerto Morelos on both accounts, likely for the same reasons stated above. While it may be beneficial to be closely situated to Cancún for access to the airport and other city amenities, some residents of Isla Mujeres feel that the costs outweigh the negatives. Apparently the old adage applies to Cancún: "It's a nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there." It would be of interest to conduct a similar survey of residents that live and work in Cancún to identify satisfaction levels there.

These attitudes are important to bear in mind with respect to the rapidly expanding regional tourism industry. Fortunately, because Isla Mujeres is an island, there is only so much tourist development that can take place. Puerto Morelos on the other hand, is just beginning its tourism cycle. Although it does not seem possible that small Puerto Morelos could turn into a "mini-Cancún," the potential is there. Take for example the town of Playa del Carmen, located 25 miles south of Puerto Morelos. Just 10 years ago, Playa was considered a quiet alternative to the grand scale of Cancún, with palapa bungalows and small hotels sporadically situated on an expansive beach. But over time it has grown rapidly, and this author saw a marked visual increase in hotel development in less than two years. Today, the development plan for Playa calls for accommodating a local population of 300,000 – a population almost as large as Cancún (local conversation).

Conclusions: Hypothesis 3

ATTITUDES TOWARD GROWTH

Coupled with the fact that all residents view economic benefits favorably, there was no statistically significant difference in the attitudes of residents in Puerto Morelos and Isla Mujeres toward future tourism growth. It appears that differential levels of exposure to tourism did not elicit differences in opinion; the majority of residents of both towns want to see more tourists. Roughly 16% of the total population wanted to see the number of tourists remain the same, but virtually no one wanted to see the number decrease. It can be assumed that all residents want to expand tourism for the economic potential, and that they agree that the benefits of tourism outweigh the costs. However, a dichotomy arises because although residents want to expand the tourism industry, they also fully recognize that tourists like to visit their towns for the tranquil atmosphere. To further support this dichotomy, there was some disagreement in both towns on what size hotels should be built – roughly 50% wanted large hotels, “like those in Cancún.” However, when compared with education levels, it was found that the more educated the respondent, the less desire for large hotels. It seems that there is a need for public education regarding the environmental and social impacts of large-scale development on small towns. If people come to understand that large hotels bring about a social climate that will disrupt and change the peaceful way of life, they may think twice before inviting that type of development. Therefore, it can be assumed that with some education, residents would still want the

tourism industry to grow, but in a manner that would protect the peaceful qualities of their town.

Summary of Findings

Although significant differences were detected on certain questions, residents of both towns were in general agreement on the following issues: a) they want to see tourism develop and grow locally, b) they believe the positive economic benefits of tourism outweigh the negative social and environmental costs, c) they do not like the idea of living or working in Cancún and therefore would not want to see their town develop as such.

Despite the fact that Isla Mujeres is much more developed than Puerto Morelos, residents are more positive towards all aspects of tourism. One theory to explain this finding is that residents of Isla Mujeres feel that they are *in control* of their tourism industry and its future. Tourism in Isla Mujeres can be characterized by the following terms: small-scale, compact, Caribbean, inviting, locally-run, contained, Mexican, and unique. The reason why Cancún is so despised by residents of this study is because it is perceived as an “out of control” city. Tourism growth there has gone unchecked and has resulted in a monstrous conglomeration of American chains and sky rise hotels. Consequently, local people cannot relate to the end product; it feels unsafe, noisy, crowded, foreign and dangerous. This feeling of local control is important in tourism development as it appears to foster positive attitudes toward existing tourism as well as future tourism growth.

It is clear that the tourism industries will continue to grow in each town. According to Butler's model of tourist destination evolution, all areas are likely to go through the phases of development and often end in decline. The trick is to extend growth as long as possible while keeping a high level of resident satisfaction. If a destination is the same as all other mass tourism resorts with nothing unique to differentiate it from the competition, the curve will drop quickly. If a destination can maintain a distinctive character, then it may continue to attract tourists other than the organized mass tourist. The organized mass tourist has little loyalty to one resort over another. As long as certain requirements are met, in terms of quality of service, food, accommodations, and weather, it really does not matter where the vacation is. This mentality is what contributes to competition and leads to the easy decline of destinations that cater to this population.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Incorporate Fishing into the Tourism Mission*

Since both towns are historically fishing villages, and the fact that numerous species of sport fish abound offshore, it is recommended that the tourism and fishing industries work together in both towns. Fishermen can fish for lobster and other lucrative species during the summer (which happens to be lobster season as well as the tourist off-season) and take tourists out on fishing trips in the winter. This practice has recently been used to some extent in both towns, but should become a formal part of the fishing cooperatives and

procure support from the local governments. Local conversation with fishermen indicates that they are open to this idea and realize the economic potential. As one fisherman put it, “you may catch a fish that is too small to sell, and you may have to keep it for bait. But if you take out an American, they will pay you \$300 to catch that same fish.” The cooperatives could work on a rotating basis, so that all fishermen have the opportunity to take out tourists, and all could benefit steadily from the profits. The incorporation of tourism into the fishing cooperatives could be especially beneficial for the image of Puerto Morelos, making it a distinctive tourist destination with an identity.

- *Increase Public Education of Tourism and Environmental Issues*

It is clear that both towns want to maintain the tranquil atmosphere, but do not understand that development (especially large-scale) can change that. It is important for local leaders and concerned groups to hold town workshops and meetings in order to educate and involve all segments of the population. As seen with the passage of the Puerto Morelos Reef National Park, public participation in town issues has proved to be effective. In addition, increased public participation will lead to a greater feeling of control over town development, and in turn evoke higher levels of tourism satisfaction. If there had been greater public involvement and understanding of the El Cid project from its inception, it may not be an issue in town today.

Also, it was surprising to learn that a few of those surveyed in Puerto Morelos did not know what a reef *was*, let alone impacts that could affect it. It is recommended that the local extension of the University of Mexico (UNAM), which is a biological field station in Puerto Morelos, create a “Puerto Morelos Reef Day” in town that would be similar to the annual fishing tournament. Perhaps the local dive shops could take children out snorkeling on the reef for the day for free, and the biologists from UNAM could set up tanks with reef samples so people could get a closer look at the organisms. The reef is a prominent part of Puerto Morelos, and local people should feel pride in having such a feature associated with their town. A better understanding of the reef will also benefit those who will become tour guides or environmental advocates for the community.

- *Support and Design New Development Projects to Benefit Local People*

One major problem with new development is that outsiders will be brought in for most (if not all) of the good-paying jobs, and still others will migrate to the town looking for work and compete with locals for jobs. Therefore, although local people may welcome new development, it is unlikely that they will truly benefit.

To avoid this, local officials and the developer/owner must agree to a contract that obligates the owner to hire a certain percentage of local help. Coupled with a contract to hire local help, the developer/owner should be required to build and support a new school in town that would educate local

people and prepare them for working in such an establishment. By comparing the cost of living to what hotels charge for food and accommodations, it is clear that hotels in this region make an exorbitant amount of money. It seems reasonable that the local people who are sharing their land with tourists should equally benefit from the profits. Local officials are often so eager to attract new development that they often do not realize the bargaining power they hold.

Secondly, it is important to develop an industry that local people can understand, relate to and work with. One solution has been proposed by the local NGO Lu'um Ka'anab. Lu'um Ka'anab is working with Mayans in the Puerto Morelos area to develop a Mayan handicraft market. The purpose of this endeavor is to maintain some of the traditional culture in the area, and to keep the family unit together so the mother can work at home with the children. The group has already bought nine sewing machines for women to sew traditional Mayan designs and patterns to sell to tourists. This is an activity that Puerto Morelos should continue to pursue, as it differentiates itself from other towns that do not have such cultural crafts. This idea would also greatly benefit the residents of Isla Mujeres by creating a new handicraft market for daytrippers who cannot find the same items in Cancún.

- *Avoid All-Inclusive Hotels and other Large-Scale Development*

All-inclusive hotel complexes should not be permitted in the future in either Puerto Morelos or Isla Mujeres. All-inclusive hotels benefit only the hotels themselves, while outside businesses that depend on tourism lose out. This is a problem that has occurred in many tourism destinations, and is an issue even now in Cancún (local conversation). In addition, large-scale hotels are not in character with either town, and do not promote the serene, small-town atmosphere that residents have come to cherish. However, it is not clear just how large is “large-scale”. The town should define the maximum number of hotel rooms per establishment based on existing desirable hotels, and not allow development that exceeds this standard. If permitted, it is likely that this type of development would ruin the charm of the existing town character and local people would likely feel a loss of control over tourism development.

Fortunately, the Municipal President of Isla Mujeres seems to understand this concept. He said, “I’m sorry, but there will be no McDonalds, no Sam’s Clubs, no nothing like that on Isla Mujeres. These things will change the identity of the island. I only want to see Caribbean-style development here. People like it here because of that, and we are working towards keeping it that way.” He is trying to push back the tendency to develop the island, and promote development of the mainland part of Isla Mujeres on a section called Punta Sam, located just north of the Cancún area. According to the Tourism Director on the island, there is a large “ecotourism” project underway in that location. It would be beneficial for the municipality of Isla Mujeres to

encourage future development of Punta Sam, and focus on maintaining the high quality of life and satisfaction with tourism on the island itself with very little new development.

Puerto Morelos has reached a critical stage in its tourism development, and will likely change its character completely over the next few years. The construction of El Cid has shown that there is little weight to the laws protecting mangroves, and that local officials are eager to bring new development to town. However, major disruption of daily life is inevitable with such a large project, and it will be interesting to see how satisfied people will be with it upon completion. No new development should be approved until it is possible to assess the impacts of El Cid after at least one tourist season. The residents in town may decide that one El Cid is more than they can handle.

In the mean time, existing small hotels should be improved and supported to maintain the small-town identity Puerto Morelos already has established. The flavor and feel of the tourism industry in Puerto Morelos is very similar to that in Isla Mujeres but on a much smaller scale. A marketing executive in Puerto Morelos relayed, "We must develop carefully, and keep this place attractive. We want more tourists, yes, but only a certain kind of tourist. We only want conscientious people, people who will pay more if they know they are protecting the environment. People who come here don't want package tours. They come here because they feel free."

APPENDIX A.

Questionnaire for Residents of Puerto Morelos

CUESTIONARIO

Por favor, conteste con honestidad, y no escriba su nombre.

1. Vive usted en Puerto Morelos? Si ___ No ___
2. Vive usted (encierre en un círculo por favor): en la Colonia o en el Pueblo
3. Nacionalidad? _____ Sexo: Masculino o femenino
4. Lugar de nacimiento – en qué Estado? _____
5. Cuantos años tiene usted? _____
6. Cuantos años de educación formal tiene usted (encierre en un círculo por favor):
Primaria Secundaria Preparatoria o Universitaria
7. Cuantos años ha vivido usted en Puerto Morelos? _____
8. Es usted casado? Si ___ No ___
9. Cuantos hijos tiene usted? _____
10. Cuantos personas viven en su casa? _____
11. Por qué vino usted a vivir a Puerto Morelos? Trabajo, familia, o otra
razón _____
12. Han trabajado sus padres o abuelos en la pesca en Puerto Morelos? Si ___ No ___
13. Ha vivido alguna vez en Cancún? Si ___ No ___
14. Si ha vivido en Cancún, por que ahora vive en Puerto Morelos?

15. Empleo(s) actual _____
16. Tiene su empleo alguna relación con el turismo en Puerto Morelos? Si ___ No ___
17. Trabaja usted en Cancún? Si ___ No ___
18. Su salario mensual asciende a (encierre en un círculo por favor): 0-500, 500-1000,
1000-2000,
2000-5000, 5000-8000, 8000 or más
19. Gana usted suficiente para sus gastos diarios? Si ___ No ___
20. Tiene usted un carro? Si ___ No ___
21. La casa en que usted vive es de concreto o es una palapa? _____

22. Le gusta su trabajo? Si _____ No _____

Si la respuesta es no,
porque? _____

23. Preferiría que el número de turistas en Puerto Morelos (encierre en un círculo por favor):

aumente, disminuya, o se mantenga igual.

24. Que empresa se beneficia más debido al turismo en Puerto Morelos: (encierre en un círculo por favor): restaurantes, hoteles, la pesca, mercados, o tiendas de turismo.

25. Que ecosistemas cree usted que han sido destruidos por el turismo en Puerto Morelos: (encierre en un círculo por favor) manglar, selva, arrecife, la playa, o nada.

Parte 1: Actitudes sobre el turismo

Respuestas para las oraciones:

| Estoy de acuerdo | Estoy parcialmente de acuerdo | Estoy parcialmente en desacuerdo | Estoy en desacuerdo |
|------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

26. El turismo es la industria más importante en Puerto Morelos.

27. El turismo ha creado trabajos para mi familia.

28. Mi nivel de vida (económico) ha aumentado con el desarrollo del turismo en Puerto Morelos.

29. El turismo ha cambiado la vida tradicional de Puerto Morelos.

30. Los servicios públicos son adecuados para la gente que vive en Puerto Morelos (e.g. mercado, transporte, agua potable).

31. Me gusta conocer a turistas de otros países.

32. Hay más delitos debido al turismo en Puerto Morelos.

33. El uso de drogas ha aumentado debido al turismo en Puerto Morelos.

34. La infraestructura del pueblo y sus caminos han mejorado debido al turismo.

35. Las aguas de la costa se han contaminando por el turismo.

36. Hay más basura en las calles por el turismo.

37. Hay más basura en la playa por los turistas que visitan Puerto Morelos.

38. Un incremento en el turismo aumentará la destrucción de el arrefice.
39. A los turistas les gusta Puerto Morelos porque es muy tranquilo.
40. Me gusta vivir en Puerto Morelos porque es muy tranquilo.
41. Hay demasiada gente en Cancún.
42. Me gusta ir a Cancún.
43. Me gusta ir a la zona hotelera de Cancún.
44. Preferiría trabajar en Cancún.
45. Preferiría vivir en Cancún.
46. Me gusta vivir cerca de Cancún.
47. El turismo en Cancún es vital para la economía de Puerto Morelos.
48. Me gustaría ver grandes hoteles construidos en Puerto Morelos (como los que hay en Cancún).
49. Me gustaría ver Puerto Morelos tan desarrollado como Cancún con respecto al turismo.
50. Preferiría ver hoteles de ecoturismo en Puerto Morelos que grandes hoteles, como los de Cancún

APPENDIX B.

Questionnaire for Residents of Isla Mujeres

CUESTIONARIO

Por favor, conteste con honestidad, y no escriba su nombre.

15. Vive usted en Isla Mujeres? Si___ No___
16. Sexo: Masculino o femenino
17. Nacionalidad? _____
18. Lugar de nacimiento – en qué Estado? _____
19. Cuantos años tiene usted? _____
20. Cuantos años de educación formal tiene usted (encierre en un círculo por favor):
Primaria Secundaria Preparatoria o Universitaria
21. Cuantos años ha vivido usted en Isla Mujeres? _____
22. Es usted casado? Si___ No___
23. Cuantos hijos tiene usted? _____
24. Cuantos personas viven en su casa? _____
25. Por qué vino usted a vivir a Isla Mujeres? Trabajo, familia, o otra
razón _____
26. Han trabajado sus padres o abuelos en la pesca en Isla Mujeres? Si___ No___
27. Ha vivido alguna vez en Cancún? Si___ No___
28. Si ha vivido en Cancún, por que ahora vive en Isla Mujeres?
-
15. Empleo(s) actual _____
22. Tiene su empleo alguna relación con el turismo en Isla Mujeres? Si___ No___
23. Trabaja usted en Cancún? Si___ No___
24. Su salario mensual asciende a (encierre en un círculo por favor): 0-500, 500-1000,
1000-2000,
2000-5000, 5000-8000, 8000 or más
25. Gana usted suficiente para sus gastos diarios? Si___ No___
26. Tiene usted un carro? Si___ No___
27. La casa en que usted vive es de concreto o es una palapa? _____
22. Le gusta su trabajo? Si___ No___
- Si la respuesta es no,
porque? _____

23. Preferiría que el número de turistas en Isla Mujeres (encierre en un círculo por favor):
 aumente, disminuya, o se mantenga igual.
24. Que empresa se beneficia más debido al turismo en Isla Mujeres: (encierre en un círculo por favor): restaurantes, hoteles, la pesca, mercados, o tiendas de turismo.
25. Que ecosistemas cree usted que han sido destruidos por el turismo en Isla Mujeres: (encierre en un círculo por favor) la pesca, la laguna makax, los manchones, el garrafon, la playa, o nada.

Parte 1: Actitudes sobre el turismo

Respuestas para las oraciones:

| Estoy de acuerdo | Estoy parcialmente de acuerdo | Estoy parcialmente en desacuerdo | Estoy en desacuerdo |
|------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

51. El turismo es la industria más importante en Isla Mujeres.
52. El turismo ha creado trabajos para mi familia.
53. Mi nivel de vida (económico) ha aumentado con el desarrollo del turismo en Isla Mujeres.
54. El turismo ha cambiado la vida tradicional de Isla Mujeres.
55. Los servicios públicos son adecuados para la gente que vive en Isla Mujeres (e.g. mercado, transporte, agua potable).
56. Me gusta conocer a turistas de otros países.
57. Hay más delitos debido al turismo en Isla Mujeres.
58. El uso de drogas ha aumentado debido al turismo en Isla Mujeres.
59. La infraestructura del pueblo y sus caminos han mejorado debido al turismo.
60. Las aguas de la costa se han contaminando por el turismo.
61. Hay más basura en las calles por el turismo.
62. Hay más basura en la playa por los turistas que visitan Isla Mujeres.
63. Un incremento en el turismo aumentará la destrucción de el arrefice, como el garrafon.
64. A los turistas les gusta Isla Mujeres porque es muy tranquilo.

65. Me gusta vivir en Isla Mujeres porque es muy tranquilo.
66. Hay demasiada gente en Cancún.
67. Me gusta ir a Cancún.
68. Me gusta ir a la zona hotelera de Cancún.
69. Preferiría trabajar en Cancún.
70. Preferiría vivir en Cancún.
71. Me gusta vivir cerca de Cancún.
72. El turismo en Cancún es vital para la economía de Isla Mujeres.
73. Me gustaría ver grandes hoteles construidos en Isla Mujeres (como los que hay en Cancún).
74. Me gustaría ver Isla Mujeres tan desarrollado como Cancún con respecto al turismo.
75. Preferiría ver hoteles de ecoturismo en Isla Mujeres que grandes hoteles, como los de Cancún

Para las dos últimas preguntas, por favor encierre en un círculo su respuesta:

76. Que tipo de transporte preferiría que usaran los turistas? carros de golf, taxis, motocicletas, bicicletas o caminando.
77. Me gustaría ver menos: carros de golf, taxis, motocicletas, bicicletas o carros.

APPENDIX C.

Questionnaire for English-speaking Residents

Questionnaire

Please answer honestly and do not write your name. Thank you.

1. Do you live in Puerto Morelos? Yes___ No___
2. Do you live in the Colonia or in town?_____
3. Nationality_____ Male or Female
4. Place of Birth_____
5. How old are you?_____
6. How many years of formal education have you completed? Primary High School
University
7. How many years have you lived in Puerto Morelos?_____
8. Are you married? Yes___ No___
9. How many children do you have?_____
10. How many people live in your house?_____
11. Why did you come to Puerto Morelos? Work, Family or other
reason_____
12. Have your parents or grandparents worked in the fishing industry in Puerto
Morelos? Yes ___ No___
13. Have you ever lived in Cancún? Yes___ No___
14. If you have lived in Cancún, why did you leave to come to Puerto
Morelos?_____
15. Occupation_____
16. Does your job have something to do with tourism in Puerto Morelos? Yes___
No___
17. Do you work in Cancún? Yes___ No___
18. Your monthly salary (in pesos) 0-1000, 1000-2000, 2000-5000, 5000-8000,
8000 or more
19. Do you earn enough for your daily expenses? Yes___ No___
20. Do you have a car? Yes___ No___
21. Is your house made of concrete or palapa?_____
22. Do you like your job? Yes___ No___
If the answer is no, why?_____

23. Would you like the number of tourists in Puerto Morelos to: increase, decrease or remain the same? _____
24. Which business do you think benefits the most from tourism in Puerto Morelos: restaurants, hotels, fishermen, markets, handicraft shops
25. Which ecosystems do you think have been degraded due to tourism in Puerto Morelos: mangroves, jungle, reef, the beach, or nothing.

Section 1 - Attitudes towards tourism

Possible Responses:

| | | | |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| strongly agree | agree | disagree | strongly disagree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

26. Tourism is the most important industry to Puerto Morelos.
27. Tourism has created jobs for my family.
28. My standard of living has increased due to the development of tourism in Puerto Morelos.
29. Tourism has changed the traditional way of life in Puerto Morelos.
30. The public services are adequate for the people living in Puerto Morelos (e.g.: market, transportation, potable water)
31. I like to meet tourists from other countries.
32. There is more crime in Puerto Morelos due to tourism.
33. Drug use has increased in Puerto Morelos due to tourism.
34. The town's infrastructure and streets have been improved because of tourism.
35. The coastal waters have been contaminated due to tourism.
36. There is more trash in the streets due to tourism.
37. There is more trash on the beach due to tourism.
38. An increase in tourism will lead to destruction of the reef.
39. Tourists like Puerto Morelos because it is peaceful and quiet.
40. I like living in Puerto Morelos because it is peaceful and quiet.
41. Cancún is overcrowded.
42. I like to go to Cancún City.
43. I like to go to the hotel zone in Cancún.

44. I would prefer to work in Cancún.
45. I would prefer to live in Cancún.
46. I like to live this close to Cancún.
47. The tourism in Cancún is vital to the economy in Puerto Morelos.
48. I would like to see big hotels built in Puerto Morelos (like the ones in Cancún).
49. I would like to see Puerto Morelos develop as Cancún has with respect to tourism.
50. I would rather see small ecotourism hotels built in Puerto Morelos, as opposed to big hotels like those in Cancún.

APPENDIX D.

Consent Form Signed by all Key Respondents

CARTA DE CONSENTIMIENTO

_____ Q. Roo, a _____ de _____ de 1998

A quien corresponda,

Estoy de acuerdo en participar en éste estudio, sabiendo que éste involucra preguntas y respuestas acerca del turismo en Puerto Morelos.

Entiendo que todo lo que yo diga acerca del turismo en Puerto Morelos puede ser utilizado en ésta investigación.

Si tengo alguna duda o queja acerca de este estudio, contactaré Alison Macrae o al Dr. Gerald Krausse, de la Universidad de Rhode Island, al telefono: 401-874-2596, USA.

Cargo del Firmante: _____

Nombre y Firma: _____

Comentarios:

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