

JCU ePrints

This file is part of the following reference:

Walker, Kaye B. (2007) *The role of interpretation in sustainable tourism: a qualitative approach to understanding passenger experiences on expedition cruises*. PhD thesis, James Cook University.

Access to this file is available from:

<http://eprints.jcu.edu.au/2098>

**The role of interpretation in
sustainable tourism:
a qualitative approach to understanding
passenger experiences on
Expedition Cruises**

Thesis submitted by

Kaye Buist WALKER

BSc (MarBiol/Zool), GradDipResMeth(Tourism), JCU

in September, 2007

**for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Tourism Program
School of Business
James Cook University**

STATEMENT OF ACCESS

I, the undersigned, author of this work, understand that James Cook University will make this thesis available for use within the University Library and, via the Australian Digital Theses network, for use elsewhere.

I understand that, as an unpublished work, a thesis has significant protection under the Copyright Act and;

I do not wish to place any further restriction on access to this work.

Signature

Date

ELECTRONIC COPY

I, the undersigned, the author of this work, declare that the electronic copy of this thesis provided to the James Cook University Library, is an accurate copy of the print thesis submitted, within the limits of the technology available.

Signature

Date

STATEMENT OF SOURCES

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

Signature

Date

STATEMENT ON CONTRIBUTION OF OTHERS

I recognise the contribution of James Cook University for providing a PhD scholarship which covered all tertiary fees and provided a stipend throughout the PhD program. The university also made provisions for grants to attend workshops to aid in the progress of the PhD program and provided a further supplementation to aid in the final stages of writing.

I recognised the contribution of the School of Business for their financial support towards academic and research requirements during the PhD program, including support to attend and present at international conferences.

I recognise the contribution of the Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre for providing a supplementary stipend and other financial supplementation and support to attend regular STCRC PhD workshops and to attend and present at national and international conferences.

I recognise the contribution of my supervisor Assoc. Prof. Gianna Moscardo and my second supervisor Prof. Philip Pearce (Head of Tourism Program) for their support in facilitating a thesis.

I recognise the contribution of the Expedition Cruise company with regard to the conduct of my research, and I recognise the contribution of hundreds of their passengers who assisted my research by answering the questionnaires.

I recognise the contribution of the JCU Ethics Committee with regard to ensuring that all research procedures reported in this thesis met ethical standards and received their approval (a declaration of this follows).

Signature

Date

DECLARATION ON ETHICS

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted within the guidelines for research ethics outlined in the *National Statement on Ethics Conduct in Research Involving Human* (1999), the *Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (1997), the *James Cook University Policy on Experimentation Ethics, Standard Practices and Guidelines* (2001), and the *James Cook University Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (2001). The proposed research methodology received clearance from the James Cook University Experimentation Ethics Review Committee.

Signature

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Professor Helene Marsh (Dean of Postgraduate Studies and Professor of Tropical Environmental Studies and Geography) for her support when I initially suggested that I would like to return to JCU at the age of 35 to conduct a PhD in the role of interpretation in environmental management and conservation. The Graduate Diploma in which she encouraged me to enrol was designed for people like me who had a sound academic background in one discipline but wished to move into another to enhance and further their career, expertise and interest in an extended field.

I did not however, anticipate I would be directed to the School of Business and to Associate Professor Gianna Moscardo, but I give even greater thanks to Helene for that direction and introduction. I could not have wished for a better supervisor. Gianna has been a wonderful mentor for all the long five and a half years since this mad idea of mine was initiated. Her equanimity, encouragement and expertise has not only seen me through major incidents in the conduct of this research, my work and health, but also facilitated a confidence in my own capabilities that is perhaps the ultimate gift of any supervisor. Thank you Gianna, I look forward to continuing our collaboration.

Professor Philip Pearce shared his vast experience and support to further my career prospects and provide a constructive critical eye to this body of work, for which his valuable time and consideration I am grateful. Also, my deep felt thanks to Robyn Yesberg for all her administrative assistance and continual support during some very personally challenging times when I was not someone I wished to interact with, and I'm sure others did not wish to either. Anne Sharp will appear in the acknowledgements of many PhD theses I'm sure for she has been there from the inception of the Tourism Program and was ever ready to lend a hand with any problems, happy retirement Anne.

To all my colleagues onboard the Expedition ships who were supportive of my research and great to work with, particularly Little John, thank you. Also, I appreciate the thoughts of many passengers who not only filled in the questionnaires but provided input in all sorts of academic ways. And to Michael, the man who I met just as I started this journey and still wants to marry me, there is no expression for how much your support means to me.

ABSTRACT

The challenge of any research in sustainable tourism is not only how to measure or assess the achievement of sustainability, but also how to implement such. A current trend in both practice and research is to consider the conduct of ecotourism as a means to achieve the concepts of sustainable tourism and the principles of sustainability. This thesis proposes that one of the avenues that ecotourism may contribute to the principles of sustainability is through the interpretation delivered as an integral component of this type of tourism. An inductive qualitative methodological approach is presented and a model of effective interpretation has been developed. This model is called The Value Model of Effective Interpretation 1. The model identifies interpretive activity features, outcomes and the pathways that will most likely lead to value based responses. A new theoretical interpretive approach has been developed in conjunction with the model and is referred to as the “Personal Insight Interpretive Approach”. The premise of the model and the approach is that specific interpretive features and outcomes are facilitated via a ladder of abstraction and means-end analysis techniques. These techniques facilitate and identify the participants’ cognitive placement of thematic messages and experience with personally significant values which link to environmentally or culturally responsible “Intentional Behaviours”. The model has been placed into a Research and Applied Framework in order to incorporate community orientated values and goals into the sustainable tourism process. This is achieved via a multidimensional ecotourism operation with a multicentric interpretive approach, known as Expedition Cruising. The thesis was guided by the hypothesis that it is only when newly acquired or enhanced knowledge and experience takes on personal psychological significance in the form of values or beliefs that interpretation can be considered to be effective. (Walker, 2006)

Chapter 1 presents the overall Research Aims and the findings of a literature review that established the relationships between the research components of sustainability, sustainable tourism, ecotourism, interpretation and community and identified the contexts in which interpretation could contribute to achieving the principles of sustainable tourism. In doing so, a number of gaps in the research became evident which included the identification of comparative evaluative components of effective interpretation, methods of assessment and evaluation with respect to achieving the principles of sustainability, and a

framework incorporating and connecting the tourist and the community through interpretation.

Chapter 2 draws together the key findings of the literature review with the development of a framework to guide the proposed research and justifies the methodological approach used to conduct the research. This is an inductive qualitative approach utilising the Means-end Analysis technique for Expedition Cruise passenger responses to their interpretive experience. Three case studies were conducted, consisting initially of multiple expedition cruises and then progressively more specific locations during certain cruises. The data collection methods include open-ended written questionnaires, in-depth interviews and participant observation. The broad research aims presented in Chapter 1 are translated into three Parts with associated Key Research Questions, and the use of Expedition Cruising as the platform for this investigation is described.

Chapter 3 presents Study 1 which investigates the Environmental Values and Interpretation components of the Research Framework, and addresses the Key Research Questions of Part 1, Environmental Sustainability. It is based upon research conducted during four Expedition Cruises in Alaska and the data is compared to the interpretive objectives of the environmental management agency for that region. The findings resulted in the development of The Value Model of Interpretation which was the initial model used for comparison and re-evaluation of findings throughout the research. This model depicted the interpretive attributes and benefits which passengers perceived to be most important, with the most significant representation of “Environmental awareness”.

Chapter 4 presents Study 2 which initialises investigation of the Community Values component of the Research Framework and is based upon a cultural Expedition Cruise experience on Stanley Is, Great Barrier Reef, Australia. Traditional Owner guides conducted the interpretation and the community's interpretive aims were compared to the passengers' value based responses. There were correlations as well as interesting findings regarding a “sense of place” interpretive approach linking to the facilitation of a “care of place” represented by the participants' major identification of the personal value of “Cultural/environmental concern”.

Chapter 5 presents Study 3 which finalises the investigation of the Community Values and Model development components of the Research Framework, and addresses the Key Research Questions for Parts 2 and 3, Community Sustainability and The Value Model of Interpretation. This study was conducted during and after an Expedition Cruise visit to Easter Island, Chile. The findings identified a substantial representation of the beneficial outcome of “Cultural tourism awareness” and the greatest representation in the research of the value “Self appreciation” which refers to the identification of personal insights. An overall analysis of the data suggested the development of personal insights created linkages to post-experience intentional behaviours. The Value Model of Effective Interpretation 1 was developed as well as an interpretive theory called the “Personal Insight Approach” which allies strongly with the “Mindfulness” approach.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by addressing the original Research Aims, suggesting future research and commenting on its contribution to theory and application in the fields of study. Major contributions included the development of: a new model of effective interpretation; an operation framework for incorporating this model and community orientated values into the sustainable tourism process; an evaluative and investigative research methodology; effective interpretation and sustainability indicators; a new theory in interpretive research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	vi
Abstract	vii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION, RESEARCH CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Research Context	2
1.2.1 The Research Questions	2
1.2.2 Research Aims	2
1.3 Literature Review Aims	3
1.4 Sustainability, Sustainable Development, Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism – Definitions and Relationships	5
1.5 Interpretation	9
1.5.1 Definition of Interpretation	10
1.5.2 Principles of Effective Interpretation	13
1.6 The Role of Interpretation in Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism	25
1.6.1 Evaluation of Interpretation’s Role in Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism	31
1.7 Community and Sustainable Tourism	39
1.8 Communities, Sustainable Tourism and Interpretation	42
1.9 Definitions of Community, Culture and Values	44

1.10	Summary of Key Findings	47
1.10.1	Sustainable Tourism Principles	49
1.10.2	Ecotourism	49
1.10.3	Interpretation	50
1.10.4	Role of Interpretation	51
1.10.5	Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Interpretation	52
1.10.6	Relationship between Community Values, Ecotourism and Interpretation	52
1.11	Thesis Flowchart	52
1.12	Case Study Approach	53
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY		56
2.1	Introduction	56
2.2	Research Aims and Questions	58
2.2.1	Overall Aims	58
2.2.2	Key Research Questions	59
2.3	The Research Framework	60
2.3.1	Research Framework Development	60
2.3.2	Research Framework: Linking the Community to the Tourist	62
2.4	Expedition Cruising	64
2.4.1	Interpretation Onboard Expedition Cruise Vessels	67
2.5	Analytical Approach and Techniques	68
2.5.1	Qualitative Research Approach	69
2.5.2	Means-end Analysis Technique	73
2.6	Overall Setting	75
2.6.1	Expedition Cruises	75
2.6.2	Interpretive Activities	77
2.7	Overall Data Collection Methods	78
2.7.1	Questionnaires	78
2.7.2	Participant Observation, Interviews and Content Analysis	79
2.8	Data Coding and Analysis Methods	80

2.9	Overview of Parts 1, 2 and 3, Research Questions and Results Format	82
	CHAPTER 3: STUDY 1 (Alaska) - ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND MODEL DEVELOPMENT	83
3.1	Research Objectives	83
3.2	Setting: Southeast Alaska Expedition Cruises	83
3.3	Methods	84
3.4	Results	87
	3.4.1 Objective 1	87
	3.4.2 Objective 2	93
	3.4.3 Objective 3	104
	3.4.4 Objective 4	114
	3.4.5 Objective 5	134
	3.4.6 Objective 6	143
	3.4.7 Objective 7	153
3.5	Summary of Study 1 Results	158
	3.5.1 Objective 1	158
	3.5.2 Objective 2	159
	3.5.3 Objective 3	159
	3.5.4 Objective 4	160
	3.5.5 Objective 5	161
	3.5.6 Objective 6	162
	3.5.7 Objective 7	163
3.6	Discussion	164
	3.6.1 Part 1 → Environmental Sustainability Questions	164
	1.1 <i>In what contexts does interpretation contribute to achieving the goals of ecotourism?</i>	164
	1.2 Can value based interpretive outcomes of ecotourism operations be evaluated?	168
	CHAPTER 4: STUDY 2 (Stanley Island) - COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY AND VALUE IDENTIFICATION	170

4.1	Research Objectives	171
4.2	Setting: Stanley Island (Flinders Island Group, Great Barrier Reef, Australia) Expedition Visit	171
4.3	Methods	173
4.4	Results	175
4.4.1	Objective 1	175
4.4.2	Objective 2	179
4.4.3	Objective 3	186
4.4.4	Objective 4	198
4.4.5	Objective 5	206
4.4.6	Objective 6	213
4.4.7	Objective 7	218
4.5	Summary of Study 2 Results	225
4.4.1	Objective 1	225
4.4.2	Objective 2	225
4.4.3	Objective 3	226
4.4.4	Objective 4	228
4.4.5	Objective 5	228
4.4.6	Objective 6	229
4.4.7	Objective 7	230
CHAPTER 5: STUDY 3 (Easter Island) - COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY AND VALUE IDENTIFICATION		232
5.1	Research Objectives	233
5.2	Setting: Easter Island (Chile) Expedition Visit	233
5.3	Methods	235
5.4	Results	238
5.4.1	Objective 1	238
5.4.2	Objective 2	246
5.4.3	Objective 3	252
5.4.4	Objective 4	263
5.4.5	Objective 5	271
5.4.6	Objective 6	277
5.4.7	Objective 7	283

5.5	Summary of Study 3 Results	291
5.5.1	Objective 1	291
5.5.2	Objective 2	292
5.5.3	Objective 3	293
5.5.4	Objective 4	294
5.5.5	Objective 5	295
5.5.6	Objective 6	297
5.5.7	Objective 7	298
5.6	Discussion	300
5.6.1	Part 2 → Community Sustainability Questions	300
2.1	<i>What role does interpretation have in facilitating visitor recognition of local community values?</i>	300
2.2	<i>In what contexts does interpretation contribute to achieving sustainable tourism principles?</i>	306
5.6.2	Part 3 → The Value Model of Interpretation Questions	310
3.1	<i>Can a model of effective interpretation be developed for a multi-dimensional ecotourism operation?</i>	310
3.2	<i>How does the potential application of the model achieve the integration and evaluation of environmental and community values into the sustainable tourism process?</i>	319
CHAPTER 6: FINAL CONCLUSIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONTRIBUTIONS		326
6.1	Final Conclusions	326
6.1.1	Research Aims	327
6.2	Future Research	328
6.2.1	The Research and Applied Framework	328
6.2.2	Data Collection and Analysis Methodology	329
6.2.3	The Value Model of Effective Interpretation	329
6.2.4	Expedition Cruising	330
6.2.5	Post-experience Behaviour	331

6.3	Contributions: Theory and Applied – Interpretation, Ecotourism, Expedition Cruising, Environmental Management, Sustainable Tourism, Community and Sustainability	331
6.3.1	Theory	331
6.3.2	Application	333
6.4	Theoretical Context and Operational Agenda	334
6.4.1	Comparing theoretical approaches in current application	335
6.4.2	Operational Agenda	337
6.5	Concluding Comments	341
	REFERENCES	343

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION, RESEARCH CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Table 1.1:	Different conceptual definitions of interpretation	12
Table 1.2:	Comparison of Interpretive Principles	14

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

Table 2.1:	Eight characteristics of Qualitative Research Design (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994)	70
------------	--	----

CHAPTER 3: STUDY 1 (Alaska) - ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND MODEL DEVELOPMENT

Table 3.1:	Comparison of Values between Questions 8, 9 and 10	88
Table 3.2:	Passenger Value Definitions and Examples	89
Table 3.3:	Responses to Question 11, Part A Regarding Inspiration to Act Differently	94
Table 3.4:	Frequencies of Behavioural Intent Categories for Question 11	95
Table 3.5:	Examples of Question 11 Responses Regarding Behavioural Intentions	97
Table 3.6:	Cross-tabulation of Behavioural Intent Categories for Question 11 and Value Based Responses for Questions 9 and 10	100
Table 3.7:	Comparison of Passenger Values and Interpretive Objectives	105
Table 3.8:	Part A: Interpretive Objectives - SE and TNF	106

Table 3.9:	Passenger Value Percentage Responses versus Agency Value Based Interpretive Objective Percentage	108
Table 3.10:	“Self appreciation” Responses in Either Categories A or C, and Corresponding Question 11 Responses	112
Table 3.11:	“Best” Interpretive Category Definition and Frequency	116
Table 3.12:	Total Percentage Appearance of Interpretive Activities in all Passenger Responses and Interpretive Categories	117
Table 3.13:	Comparison of Interpretive Category and Interpretive Activity Value Facilitation	119
Table 3.14:	Comparison of Passenger Value Responses between Interpretive Categories and Sets	129
Table 3.15:	Comparison of Benefits between Categories A, B and C	135
Table 3.16:	Definitions and Examples of Benefits	137
Table 3.17:	Cumulative Attribute Responses for Category A	141
Table 3.18:	Definitions and Examples of Attributes	142
Table 3.19:	Impact upon Perception or Image	153
Table 3.20:	The Elements that Impacted upon Participants’ Perceptions	155
Table 3.21:	Examples of Categories in Table 3.20	156

**CHAPTER 4: STUDY 2 (Stanley Island) -
COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY AND
VALUE IDENTIFICATION**

Table 4.1:	Impact upon Perception or Image	175
Table 4.2:	Perception or Image Classes	176
Table 4.3:	Interpretive Activities. (Note: TO = Traditional Owners)	180
Table 4.4:	Interpretive Activity Combinations	182
Table 4.5:	Interpretive Category Frequency in Interpretive Activity Combinations	182
Table 4.6:	Comparison of Values between Cumulative Interpretive Activities (Questions 6 and 7) and the Experience Overall (Question 8)	187

Table 4.7:	Comparison of Interpretive Category Value Facilitation	187
Table 4.8:	Comparison of Value Data for Study 2 (Questions 7 and 8) and Study 1 (Questions 8 and 10)	190
Table 4.9:	Comparison of Value Data for Study 2 (Question 7) and Study 1 (Question 9)	195
Table 4.10:	Comparison of Benefits between the Cumulative Interpretive Activities (Questions 6 and 7) and the Experience Overall (Question 8)	199
Table 4.11:	Comparison of Benefit Data between Study 2 (Questions 6 and 7, and 8) and Study 1 (Questions 8 and 10)	201
Table 4.12:	Comparison of Benefit Data between Study 2 (Questions 6 and 7) and Study 1 (Question 9)	202
Table 4.13:	Examples of Benefit Responses in Study 2	204
Table 4.14:	Sub-category Comparison of the Benefit “cultural/environmental awareness”	212
Table 4.15:	Comparison of Attributes between Study 1 and Study 2	214
Table 4.16:	Examples of Attribute Responses in Study 2	215
 CHAPTER 5: STUDY 3 (Easter Island) - COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY AND VALUE IDENTIFICATION		
Table 5.1:	Perception Alteration Data	239
Table 5.2:	Perception Creation or Alteration Data for Question 4	240
Table 5.3:	Passengers’ Perception of Tourism Impacts in Question 5	242
Table 5.4:	Examples of Tourism Impact Perception Categories	244
Table 5.5:	Interpretive activity responses for Question 6 (61 cases)	247
Table 5.6:	Co-occurrence of possible combinations of Categories 1*, 3, 4 and 8 within combinations identified by respondents	250

Table 5.7:	Comparison of Values between Cumulative Interpretive Activities (Questions 7 and 8) and the Experience Overall (Question 9) for Study 3	253
Table 5.8:	Comparison of Value Facilitation by different Interpretive activity combinations	257
Table 5.9:	Comparison of Value Data for Study 1 and Study 3	260
Table 5.10:	Comparison of Study 3 Main Interpretive Activity Category with the Main Interpretive Activity Categories of Study 1	262
Table 5.11:	Comparison of Benefits between the Cumulative Interpretive Activities (Questions 7 and 8) and the Experience Overall (Question 9)	264
Table 5.12:	Comparison of Benefit Data between Study 3 and Study 1	269
Table 5.13:	Comparison of Attributes between Studies 1 (Southeast Alaska), 2 (Stanley Island) and 3 (Easter Island)	278
Table 5.14:	Examples of Attribute Responses in Study 2	280
Table 5.15:	Addition of Indicator Features to Table 1.2 (Comparison of Interpretive Principles)	315

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION, RESEARCH CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Figure 1.1:	Mindfulness Model for Communicating with Visitors (Moscardo, 1999)	23
Figure 1.2:	Thesis Flowchart	53

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

Figure 2.1:	Research Framework: Linking the Community to the Tourist	63
Figure 2.2:	Characteristics of the qualitative research study. (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994)	71
Figure 2.3:	Adapting Means-end Chains to Assess Interpretation (Walker and Moscardo, 2006)	73
Figure 2.4:	Overview of Parts 1, 2 and 3 Key Research Questions and Studies 1, 2 and 3 Methods and Results.	82

CHAPTER 3: STUDY 1 (Alaska) - ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND MODEL DEVELOPMENT

Figure 3.1:	Comparing the Agency Interpretive Objective Percentages to the Passenger Value Percentage Responses for Categories A, B and C	109
Figure 3.2:	HVM for Cumulative Interpretive Activity (2/3 Rule)	145
Figure 3.3:	Key to the HVM Components	146
Figure 3.4:	HVM for Cumulative Interpretive Activity (50% Rule)	148

Figure 3.5:	HVMs for “zodiacs with expedition staff” and “zodiacs with expedition staff and lectures/demonstrations”	150
Figure 3.6:	The Value Model of Interpretation (50% Rule)	152
CHAPTER 4: STUDY 2 (Stanley Island) - COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY AND VALUE IDENTIFICATION		
Figure 4.1:	Comparison of Value and Perception Results	197
Figure 4.2:	HVM for Cumulative Interpretive Activities in Study 2 (50% Rule)	220
Figure 4.3:	HVM for Cumulative Interpretive Activities in Study 1 (50% Rule)	221
Figure 4.4:	Comparison of the Value Model of Interpretation (50% Rule) with the Attribute to Benefit Interpretive Pathways of the Cumulative Interpretive Activities HVM for Study 2 (50% Rule)	222
CHAPTER 5: STUDY 3 (Easter Island) - COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY AND VALUE IDENTIFICATION		
Figure 5.1:	Comparison of Benefit Data with Perception Data	267
Figure 5.2:	HVM for Cumulative Interpretive Activities in Study 3 (50% Rule)	284
Figure 5.3:	HVM for Cumulative Interpretive Activities in Study 2 (50% Rule)	285
Figure 5.4:	HVM for Cumulative Interpretive Activities in Study 1 (50% Rule)	286
Figure 5.5:	Comparison of the Value Model of Interpretation with the Attribute to Benefit Pathways from the Cumulative Interpretive Activities HVM for Study 3	290
Figure 5.6:	The Value Model of Effective Interpretation 1	318
Figure 5.7:	Research Framework: Linking the Community to the Tourist	320