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Tourism Interaction on Islands:

The Community and Visitor Social Exchange

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to explore the cultural interaction between communities and visitors to islands using social exchange theory to enhance the understanding of the island experience.

Method/Approach

The method consisted of thirty in-depth interviews with community and tourism stakeholders, and formed part of a multi-phase study that used social exchange theory as the lens to illuminate a range of perspectives of island interaction. This paper presents a comparative case study of Bruny Island in Tasmania, and Magnetic Island in Queensland, Australia.

Findings

Findings revealed that local community members have a wide range of motivations for entering into social exchanges with visitors, ranging from solely economic, to a genuine desire to provide quality experiences. Additionally, findings showed the nature of island cultural interaction can vary immensely, from welcoming and meaningful exchanges through to superficial and even hostile contact.

Research Limitations/Implications

As this research was undertaken on two islands in Australia, within a particular timeframe, the results may not be representative of island communities generally. Nonetheless, the results

are indicative of locals' perceptions of their interactions with visitors. Additionally, the research can be replicated in other contexts.

Practical Implications

The findings have a range of practical implications for the management of local and visitor interaction on islands. A key implication for island communities is the importance of developing programs that educate and inform locals about the potential benefits of interaction. Additionally, this research illustrates how islands can use cultural interaction to differentiate their tourism product and market island experiences.

Originality/Value of Paper

The paper's contribution is its use of social exchange theory at a micro-level to illuminate a range of local community members' perspectives of their tourism exchanges, in order to enhance understanding of the complex process of interaction between locals and visitors to islands.

Keywords

Social Exchange Theory, Interaction, Tourists, Residents, Bruny and Magnetic Island

Paper Type

Research Paper

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Tourism Interaction on Islands:

The Community-Visitor Social Exchange

1. Introduction

There are over 100,000 islands scattered across the globe, containing in excess of 400 million inhabitants (Lilley, 2006). Islands are integral to the earth's biodiversity, with their distinct environmental conditions offering a haven for a variety of threatened species of plants and wildlife (Mueller-Dombois & Fosberg, 1998). Tourism is often the vehicle for economic development and job creation for the locals who inhabit these inherently fragile destinations (Croes, 2006; Keane, Brophy & Cuddy, 1992; Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008). However, inappropriate tourism development can lead to adverse environmental and social impacts on islands, including exposing locals to behavior that may clash with the island culture or traditional community values (MacDonald & Jolliffe, 2003). Friction within island communities can cause locals to resent tourism and adopt coping mechanisms to avoid contact, creating an uncomfortable atmosphere for visitors (Bunce, 2008).

As cultural interaction is often central to the visitor experience on islands, resentment of tourism by locals can dilute the tourism experience and form an obstacle to harnessing host-guest interaction as a point of market differentiation. Consequently, the sustainable management of island tourism is particularly complex with the need to be responsive to the diverse and often conflicting opinions of locals (Lilka, 2001). Integrating tourism into communities can be especially problematic for islands, as visitors and locals are temporally and spatially confined, and must find a way to coexist harmoniously (Albuquerque & McElroy, 1992). As a result, understanding interaction between visitors and locals is crucial for the management of tourism to

small islands. This paper explores locals' perceptions of interaction between communities and visitors to islands using social exchange theory. Through further advancing the understanding of local and visitor interaction, this paper contributes to the management of tourism on islands by helping to identify strategies that ensure tourism is sustainable and suits the lifestyle of island locals, whilst optimizing the visitor experience.

2. Literature Review

Much of the tourism knowledge base on islands is from the extensive focus on a variety of Pacific and Greek islands (Camhis & Coccossis, 1983; Hall, 1994; King, McVey & Simmons, 2000; Black & King, 2002; Hass, 2002; Marinos, 1983; Peak, 2007; Webster & Timothy, 2006). Previous studies on islands have focused on a broad range of issues, including economic development (McElroy, 2006), community perceptions of impacts (Ko & Stewart, 2002), environmental resource management (Walker, 1991), and industry and government partnerships (Rao, 2002). In an Australian context a range of studies have been undertaken on islands, from the provision of facilities and services on Kangaroo Island (Thomson & Thomson, 1994), to the backpacker experience on Fraser Island (Cooper, 2001). Nonetheless, the actual holistic process of interaction between visitors and locals on islands has remained largely unexplored. This conceptual gap will be addressed to help further understand how locals and visitors can experience meaningful and mutually beneficial interactions in island settings.

Interaction between various groups or actors is examined extensively in the disciplines of sociology, social psychology, anthropology and economics (Goodwin, 1981; Goffman, 1961; Manski, 2000; McGrath & Kelly, 1986). Teichman and Foa (1975) argued that the concept of interaction is based on an interconnected system in which two or more actors connect, evoking a two way exchange of resources leading to a range of outcomes. Several human or personal

interaction-based theoretical frameworks have been developed and implemented in sociology in particular. These frameworks include, though are not limited to, symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1979), interaction process analysis (Bales, 1950), human ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1969), resource dependence theory (Boyd, 1990), transaction cost theory (Galbraith, 1973), economic rational choice theory (Becker, 1978), expectations confirmation theory (Oliver, 1977), and various forms of resource exchange theories (Homans, 1961).

Since the introduction of various theories of human and personal interaction into sociology and social psychology, a number were applied to tourism and leisure (Auld, 1997). Kelly (1994) used the theory of symbolic interaction to explore the meaning of leisure behaviour in social contexts. Woodside, Caldwell and Spur (2005) used ecological systems theory to examine the contextual facilitators and constraints to the thoughts and actions of individuals regarding work, leisure and travel alternatives. Pearce (1995) explored the concepts of interaction and exchange between different cultures to help inform the ecologically sustainable socio-cultural development of destinations. Nash (1989) used a transactional approach to explore the economic relationship in host-guest interactions in developing destinations. Not surprisingly, intercultural interaction has been the focus of a number of research projects in tourism (Frakowski-Braganza, 1983; Santos & Proffitt, 2004).

Perhaps the best-known interaction-based theory in tourism is social exchange theory (Ap, 1992; Deccio & Baloglu, 2002; Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004; McGehee & Andereck, 2004). Based on key concepts found within transactional theory, social exchange theory is sociology and social psychology derived (Alexander, 1990). Psychological researchers Emerson (1962) and Homans (1961), together with an economic researcher Blau (1964), were largely responsible for developing social exchange theory in sociology.

Social exchange theory conceptualizes the exchange of resources between individuals and groups in an interaction situation (Brinberg & Castell, 1982), and thus provides a framework for understanding tourism relationships, interactions and transactions. The theory was first introduced into tourism by Long, Perdue and Allen (1987) as having the potential to explain residents' differing perceptions towards impacts. Ap (1992) later adapted a model of social exchange theory, consistent with previous models developed in sociology and economics, and applied it to the visitor-host interaction in tourism. The basic premise of social exchange theory, in a tourism context, is that in order to sustain interaction there must be at least a two-way flow of material, social and or psychological resources between individual actors or groups of individuals (Ap, 1992). Social exchange theory is principally a behaviorally based theory, focusing on the process of exchange during the two-way flow of resources between actors (Beeton, 2006). As outlined by Ap (1992), there are four key stages: the initiation of an exchange, the exchange formation, the exchange transaction evaluation, and the evaluation of exchange consequences.

The first stage of the exchange process, the initiation of an exchange, occurs during the pre-exchange period (Gaechter & Fehr, 1999). Social exchange theory posits that it is during this period that satisfaction of an actor's needs motivates an exchange relationship; without a need to satisfy there is no reason to seek interaction (Ap, 1992). The initiation of an exchange by an actor begins the process of interaction.

The second stage, the exchange formation, encompasses three interconnected components: antecedents, the exchange relation, and the form of the exchange relation (Ap, 1992). The antecedents are the preceding conditions of interaction, and represent opportunities or situations perceived by at least one actor before the exchange relation forms. At this stage an actor predicts

if an exchange with another will result in rewards or benefits, and attempts to maximize the possible rewards and benefits or at least ensure that the resources to be exchanged are roughly equivalent (Gui, 2000). If the antecedents are perceived as inequitable, either actor involved in the exchange has the option to withdraw before the actual exchange of resources. If the antecedents are viewed as favorable, the exchange relation is formed.

Within the exchange relation component, a series of temporally inter-dispersed exchanges of material, social and or psychological resources transpires, which determines the nature of the exchange (Ap, 1992). It is important to note that exchanges, though often financial in nature, do not necessarily involve economic or physical resources. Finally, the form of the exchange relation component refers to the power and dependency relationship between actors, which manifests because of either a balanced or unbalanced exchange of resources during the exchange relation (Yamagishi & Cook, 1993).

The final two stages of the exchange process, the exchange transaction evaluation and the evaluation of exchange consequences, occur post-exchange (Ap, 1992). During post-exchange, based on the form of exchange relation, each actor evaluates the transactions of resources and identifies the consequences of the exchange (Cook, Emerson, Gillmore & Yamagishi, 1983). The evaluation also includes the ability of an actor to identify whether the exchange was positive or negative for the other actor involved in the process (Ap, 1992). If an actor perceives the consequences of the exchange as negative, meaning the exchange relation is unbalanced and the transactions of resources are not gratifying, this actor has the option to withdraw from future exchanges (Emerson, 1976). A negative evaluation does not mean the actor will necessarily withdraw from the social exchange, as an actor may perceive the exchange as negative, but continue the exchange because of necessity (Lindberg, Andersson & Dellaert, 2001). Rather, a

negative evaluation provides the prompt to withdraw, and is where power or dependence on the other actor may influence the decision to continue exchanging. Nonetheless, if both actors perceive the consequences of the exchange as positive and further exchanges are in both actors' best interests, continuation of the exchange behavior will generally transpire (Goldberg, 1980).

Previous studies using social exchange theory in a tourism context have addressed two stages within Ap's (1992) model. Foremost, studies using social exchange theory have focused on community perceptions of the consequences of the exchange, the final stage of the exchange process. The consequences of the exchange refer to the range of economic, environmental and socio-cultural impacts that occur for communities because of tourism (Hernandez, Cohen & Garcia, 1996). Previous studies have also explored the first stage, the initiation of an exchange, assessing community support for further tourism development through the identification of particular needs communities desire to satisfy (Kayat, 2002; Sirakaya, Teye & Sonmez, 2001). These foci, extensively applied in tourism, have been predominantly operationalized at the collective rather than individual level.

The tourism literature that uses social exchange theory has focused on macro-level applications to tourism and communities (Chhabra, 2008; Sirakaya, Teye & Sonmez, 2001), and the interactions between collective entities, tourism and communities (Hernandez, Cohen & Garcia, 1996; Lee & Back, 2003). Such macro-level applications may be limiting, given that the notion of tourism exchange is ultimately grounded in the complex involvement of people as individuals.

The focus on collective actors suggests an opportunity to undertake a more micro-level application of social exchange to the interactions that occur between the subgroups and even the individuals who comprise these larger entities. This paper follows the previous studies lead in

employing social exchange theory as its theoretical lens, to explore the in-depth and dynamic process of interaction between locals and visitors to islands. In summary, the paper's contribution is its use of social exchange theory at a micro-level to illuminate a range of local community members' perspectives of their tourism exchanges, in order to enhance understanding of the complex process of interaction between locals and visitors to islands.

3. Island Selection

This research uses the two islands of Bruny Island, Tasmania and Magnetic Island, Queensland, Australia. Bruny Island is actually two islands connected by a narrow isthmus, and contains Bruny Island National Park on the southern island. Bruny Island has a local population of around 620 (Bruny Island Tourism, 2008). Magnetic Island is part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, which is a World Heritage listed area. Magnetic Island has a local population of around 2,500 (Townsville Enterprise, 2008). Selecting two islands that have commonalities and differences formed the basis of the comparative case study and enhances the generalisability of the results to islands with similar traits (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). On Bruny and Magnetic Islands, tourism is important to the local economy, the communities are small and identifiable, residents are impacted by tourism, and locals live in close proximity to protected areas that are used by tourists visiting the islands.

4. Method

A comparative study of locals' tourism exchanges with visitors on Bruny Island and Magnetic Island was investigated using fifteen in-depth interviews from each island community^[1]. To gain a variety of perspectives, the sample of locals included a variety of community and tourism stakeholders, including people from community groups, associations and clubs, accommodation providers, tour operators, local business owners, local government and council, and parks and

wildlife agencies. The one-hour semi-structured interviews were undertaken on-site in 2008 at the convenience of the participants. Each interview purposefully took each interviewee through the process of interaction conceptualized by social exchange theory.

The interviews were analyzed using Huberman and Miles' (2002) three step approach of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification to enhance the reliability and validity of the results. The data reduction phase involved coding the interview transcripts. The codes reflected emergent patterns and expected theoretical themes from the data (Van Dijk & Kirk, 2007). In the data display phase the tabulated data made it more accessible and easier to interpret. The conclusion drawing/verification stage ensured all authors independently checked the initial themes and some refinement followed. Finally, two additional independent coders, with no previous involvement in the study, re-coded the data and an inter-coder reliability test was completed. The finally attained inter-coder reliability score was over 90 percent, which is above the recommended reliability level (Huberman and Miles, 2002).

5. Results

The results are presented using the four-stage framework of social exchange theory: the initiation of an exchange; the exchange formation; the exchange transaction evaluation; and the evaluation of exchange consequences (Ap, 1992).

Interviews revealed that, during the initiation of an exchange stage, locals have a diverse range of reasons for interacting with visitors, which vary throughout the community. Across both islands, the most common motivation locals had to interact with visitors was the desire to satisfy financial or economic needs, with a business owner on Bruny Island commenting:

“People who are providing services interact with tourists because they need an income, but still resent the people being here and say ‘thank god the tourist season is over’.”

Such evidence indicates that some locals see the tourists only in terms of the financial resources that they bring to the exchange. Whilst the desire to interact with visitors for financial reasons was strongly evident on both islands, locals who were not economically dependent on tourism often expressed a genuine desire to interact in order to provide quality and meaningful experiences. These locals described giving visitors a meaningful experience as rewarding, and sought to fulfill the desire or need to help others. A member of a local community group on Magnetic Island described certain locals within the community who ...

“... desire interaction with tourists and just want to do something good for the people who are visiting here, nothing else.”

Thus, the desire to provide a meaningful experience motivates locals to interact with tourists to the island. The desire to share information and knowledge with visitors was also evident on both islands, particularly among locals who had lived on the island for long periods, who described interaction as a process of storytelling. For many island locals, the motivation to interact was for the opportunity to share information and knowledge with visitors, either during an economic transaction, or just socially.

On Bruny Island, many locals had lived on the island for long periods, and in some cases families had inhabited the island for generations. Consequently, a key desire expressed by many Bruny Island locals was to share information of the islands’ history, the culture and the environment. This observation by a retired Bruny Island local shows the pride in the heritage of the island. “All of Bruny Island residents living here are proud of its attributes, proud of family

contributions to the island. Some families have been here for generations. We have a wealth of knowledge on the culture and history of the island, and more recently with forestry on the island; the environment has become a hot topic of discussion. I think these stories are what the community wants to share with tourists.”On Magnetic Island, although many locals had also resided on the island for long periods, the information locals desired to share with visitors was different. Community pride was still evident, focused on concepts of lifestyle and community, as illustrated in this response from a retired Magnetic Island resident:

“I often connect with tourists about the day to day life of locals on the Island. I recall a particular encounter with a tourist from Bristol and comparing my daily routine with his daily routine back home. The conversation ended with him going to the real estate office to look for a house to buy! That’s the beauty of Magnetic Island: the community is extremely welcoming and the lifestyle is enticing. Many tourists want that deeper, authentic meaning from someone in the community who was not making any money off them.”

All the same, often interviewees expressed the view that unless there was an economic incentive involved, locals would usually not interact with visitors, and tourists would need to drive any interaction.

“It is not something they seek, unless they need visitors to make money. This interaction has to be driven from the tourists.”

The comment above is a clear example of the complex nature of the exchange between locals and visitors, with the desire to attain financial resources central to determining how, when, where and very often why locals choose to initiate an interaction with visitors.

Interviews showed that during the second stage of exchange formation, before the actual transaction of resources with visitors, locals have the opportunity to assess the antecedents or preceding conditions of a potential interaction. Interviews revealed a number of facilitating conditions to interaction for locals on Bruny and Magnetic Islands, specifically conditions where locals felt rewards and benefits could be attained from the roughly equivalent, fair and just exchange of resources. Facilitating conditions included community events, markets and attractions, initiatives by tour operators, accommodation providers, community clubs and societies, and, on Magnetic Island in particular, the opportunities for socializing presented by local shops, restaurants and pubs on the island. For example, a member of a local community group and business owner on Magnetic Island described an annual jazz festival as ...

“... a great opportunity where we can choose to interact with tourists, we are not forced, it is all authentic, heaps turn out from the community and we all intermingle. Plenty of new friendships and even relationships have developed during the festivals on the island.”

Opportunities such as festivals, events, and markets came out in the interviews as forming favorable conditions, where locals could choose to interact with visitors, with a time limit, and without any major perceived threat to locals' lifestyle.

Although there was a range of favorable antecedents, there were also a number of barriers or unfavorable preceding conditions that made locals view interaction with visitors as unfavorable and undesirable. On Magnetic Island, a particularly strong barrier emerged because of the perceived negative impacts of tourism on the island. Interviewees were upset with the recent re-development of Nelly Bay, which many considered aesthetically unappealing, and with apartments close to sea level, an environmental disaster waiting to happen. Due to Nelly Bay,

many locals on Magnetic Island perceived they had lost control over tourism, often translating into unwillingness to interact with visitors' altogether.

“We're all still really annoyed about what they did to Nelly Bay; before I talk to a visitor I think of that bloody development and tend to avoid them as a form of silent protest.”

This remark by a tour operator on Magnetic Island shows how deeply a loss of perceived control over development on the island can affect the community, even those dependent on tourism.

Interviews on Magnetic Island also revealed different clusters of locals who were unwilling to interact with visitors because of perceived negative impacts of visitors on their lifestyle, as illustrated by these words of a local artist:

“Most locals aren't involved in the tourism industry and are apathetic to tourism on the island; it's a lifestyle thing really. They don't want to be connected to tourism because it has a number of negative impacts on their lives.”

The lifestyle of islanders thus serves as a simultaneous attractor to tourists and barrier to interaction of those who moved to the islands for a more relaxed and private lifestyle. Many locals consequently regard visitors as compromising their new way of life, especially during peak periods.

On Bruny Island a number of other barriers formed unfavorable conditions for interaction with visitors. In particular, locals commented on the lack of public infrastructure and transport on

the island, and consequently could or would not interact with visitors. One local community group member exemplified this, commenting...

“... community members are not used to the influx of tourism; they think tourists are tearing up our roads and using all our facilities and tend to avoid contact with visitors. In fact we had a tourist who attempted to talk to a local up one end of the island and was given the one fingered salute, so they weren't welcomed at all.”

In other words, some locals blame visitors for the deterioration of the island's infrastructure, and were then unwilling to interact because of the negative impacts.

If the antecedent conditions are positive during the exchange formation then the exchange relation forms. Interviewees identified a variety of transacted resources between locals and visitors during the exchange relation. On both islands, the resources transacted were both tangible and intangible, and could be categorized into the six resource exchange dimensions money, goods, services, knowledge, status and love (Rettig, 1985), with one minor modification. Reflecting the interviews, hospitality substituted the resource exchange dimension of love to fit more appropriately to the tourism context. Hospitality refers broadly to the host-guest relationship, and is a common term used in the tourism field (Levy & Hassay, 2005). All six resource dimensions were present on the islands, and were transacted in a series planned and unplanned temporally and spatially dispersed exchanges with visitors. Money was a common resource transacted in local-visitor exchanges. Nonetheless, the following observation of an accommodation provider on Magnetic Island serves as an example of a local giving information in exchange for recognition of their role as experience providers outside of economic transactions:

“There are many quirky island characters that love to be larger than life and end up in Facebook photos.... They act like they know it all and give visitors all sorts of information”

Evidently, a diversity of exchanges take place between locals and visitors to islands, with interactions taking place on multiple levels, from structured and purposeful interactions governed largely through economic transactions, to serendipitous and unplanned transactions around the island.

With regard to the form of exchange relation, or the balance-of-power between locals and visitors, responses differed throughout the community. Interviewees with an economic dependence on tourism felt both locals and visitors received mutual benefits:

“I think tourism is a win-win situation, residents receive economic benefits and improvements to infrastructure and key services.”

This tour operator on Magnetic Island exemplifies the views of many island locals with a financial interest in tourism. However, those without a direct economic attachment to tourism, usually retired locals or those working on the mainland, generally felt visitors were in a position of power, with locals often personally disadvantaged:

“We are too often powerless in the attempt to gather funds for badly needed infrastructure to support tourism, there are just so many and it’s getting worse.”

This observation by a member of a local community group on Bruny Island reflects the angst among many locals who have seen an increase in visitors to each island, yet feel the tangible benefits of tourism are lacking.

During the transaction evaluation, locals assess the transfer of resources and identify a variety of consequences of their exchange with individual visitors and with tourism as a collective entity. On Bruny and Magnetic Islands, the perceived consequences of the exchange varied immensely, with interviewees experiencing meaningful and welcoming encounters, through to superficial and even hostile contact. When referring to tourism as a collective, locals tended to focus on the range of socio-cultural impacts of tourism:

“It’s the congestion on roads and ferry. Residents have no priority and many people have to adjust social and work habits over summer; it takes them three hours to get home off the mainland.”

This comment from an accommodation provider on Bruny Island demonstrates the immense strain on resources during peak periods of visitation. The tourism impacts uncovered through the interviews reflected those in the tourism literature, with many impacts such as noise disturbance and littering on the forefront of many locals’ minds. However, when locals reflected on personal examples of how an interaction with an individual visitor made them feel, the responses were immensely different.

“Hard to say. Fair percentage who don’t want the tourist, don’t like the tourist and think the tourist is scum, especially the backpackers and wouldn’t interact with them in the first place, but I on the other hand enjoy interacting with visitors as a way of making friends and enriching my social life.”

This comment demonstrates that, at the individual level, locals have an immense range of feelings and emotions because of an interaction with a visitor. Interviewees described a variety

of positive and negative interactions with visitors, revealing feelings of economic dependence through to friendships and relationships, from annoyance to euphoria.

6. Contributions and Implications

This study took place on two islands in Australia within a particular timeframe, thus the results may not represent island communities generally. Nonetheless, the results indicate of the perceptions of locals' interactions with visitors; moreover, the study can be replicated in other contexts. This paper contributes to the theoretical understanding of complex social interaction in a tourism context. The primary theoretical contribution is the use of social exchange theory to frame the understanding of local-tourist-tourism interaction. In particular, this research has advanced knowledge on the individual complexities and multiple levels of interaction, including the range of different motivations, facilitating factors, barriers, resources and consequences of interaction for the locals that inhabit small island communities.

This exploratory research has also uncovered a number of challenges to the successful management of the interaction between local communities and visitors on small islands. A key challenge for islands is the need to understand and manage local attitudes towards tourism. Many locals were unhappy with the level of tourism and development on the island and see visitors as an intrusion or potential threat to their lifestyle. As a result, certain segments of locals were unwilling to interact with visitors, often implementing coping mechanisms to avoid interaction altogether. Given the desire of many visitors to enrich their experience through engaging with host communities, and the fact that the island people and their lifestyle are arguably key to the destination's attraction, an unmitigated approach is incompatible with the long-term sustainability of tourism on these islands. To address this issue, islands might consider developing programs that educate and inform island locals and visitors on the importance of

interaction and the potential benefits and affects it can have on the community. Connected to this is the need for island communities to further manage and mitigate the negative impacts of tourism and associated development on the lifestyle of locals. Islands and islanders can achieve this by exploring ways of using local interaction to inform visitors to make decisions about their own behavior and the activities they engage in on islands. Those responsible for islands tourism development might also consider the training of tourism professionals to play the role of mediator within the community, to encourage both locals and visitors to connect in a meaningful way.

By recognizing the role locals' play in visitors' experiences, the opportunities to use community-based interaction programs to achieve a variety of objectives is immense. The education of island communities could help locals appreciate the distinct opportunity they have to foster a quality experience for visitors, which at the same time enhances the island's appeal as a place to live. Additionally, enhancing local understanding of the importance of interaction will help island communities in particular prepare for, and adapt to, a shifting global landscape where visitors in the future will have more interest in more holistically experiencing each destination. In turn, enhancing locals' understanding will assist efforts to reduce negative impacts on island communities.

7. Conclusion and Future Research

This paper has shown that tourism interaction between locals and visitors to islands is dynamic and complex. Using social exchange theory to examine interaction, this study consisted of thirty semi-structured interviews with local community members on Bruny and Magnetic Islands, Australia. This research revealed that locals have an immense range of motivations for interaction, from solely economic reward seeking through to a genuine desire to provide

meaningful experiences. Events, markets, community clubs and groups facilitate island interaction. All the same, a number of barriers to interaction exist including resistance by many members of local communities, and a lack of infrastructure and resources to support interactions. The nature of interaction on islands also varies immensely from welcoming and meaningful exchanges through to superficial and even hostile contacts.

Future research on the interaction between locals and visitors to small islands needs to include the visitors' perspective. Communities can develop programs to cater for and manage the local-visitor experience once they understand visitor demand for interaction, through social exchange theory. Importantly, the interaction programs, tailored to the lifestyle preferences of locals, enhance visitors' awareness and knowledge of the island environment, and modify behaviors that locals consider inappropriate. Interaction programs enable islands and islanders to seek out and initiate exchanges that are balanced and beneficial to visitors and locals, which provide quality island tourism experiences while preserving the quality of life and lifestyle of local islanders.

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¹ Interviews with visitors to both islands are planned as a follow-up stage in this study, as a basis for further insight.