



Innovative Ecotourism Projects

# Impact on Environmental Attitudes in Introductory Hospitality Courses

Nancy Swanger & Chris Paxson  
Washington State University, Pullman, WA  
Lisa S. Aherin  
Green Mountain College, Poultney, VT  
USA

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# Environmental Interest Growing in the United States

- Ecotourism up 10% - 30% per year
- Hospitality industry becoming “green”
- Environmental friendly practices save money
- Guests prefer “green” companies

# Literature Review

- Birth of the uptick: the early 1990s (Worchester, 1994)
- New forms of eco-centric management & leadership needed (Schrivasta, 1994)
- Environmental education overlooked by US hospitality schools
- Classroom intervention can enhance pro-environmental behavior (Zelezny, 1999)

# Theory

Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) links environmental concern to environmentally responsible behavior.

Hypothesis: If hospitality students learn about ecotourism, their level of environmental concern will increase.

# Method

- Subjects: 310 students enrolled in an intro hospitality course
- Instrument: New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) scale

15 questions, Likert-type

## Sample items:

“We are approaching the limit of the number of people the earth can support.

Plants and animals have as much right as humans to exist.”

# Method (cont.)

Research design: Pretest/posttest

1. Measurement (NEP)
2. Ecotourism research project
3. Measurement (NEP)

# Results

- Students reported above average level of environmental concern
- No statistically significant differences in pretest and posttest NEP scores overall
- Trends:
  1. Less certainty about the effects of development on the environment
  2. Women's views changed more than men's
  3. More faith in businesses to "do right by" the environment

# Discussion & Conclusions

- Promotional information convinced students that businesses were eco-responsible
- Marketing information one-sided, unbalanced
- Students must be coached to judge eco-focus critically
- Curriculum needed

# Future Directions

- Develop and implement an ecotourism curriculum for introductory hospitality courses
  - Include instruction about ecotourism and critical thinking
- Measure eco-centric behavior as well as attitudes

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