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## Looking At Residents' Attitudes towards Spring Break Tourism in Texas through the Lens of Community Attachment

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## **Abstract**

The growth of spring break tourism in many destinations has become problematic, predominantly due to the excessive behaviour of college students. This paper examines residents' attitudes toward spring break tourism in South Padre Island (located in Texas, USA) through the lens of community attachment. By understanding the attitudes of residents of the host communities, tourism planners and policy-makers can create policies to shape the character of tourism according to the residents' needs. The findings suggest that, at this point in time, community residents perceive that the benefits of spring break tourism exceed its' costs. Also, the short and intense season of spring break tourism allows residents to better deal with social costs.

## **Keywords**

Spring Break, Community Attachment, Place Attachment, Resident Attitudes to Tourism, Costs/Benefits to Host Community

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The growth of spring break tourism in many destinations has become problematic, predominantly due to the excessive behaviour of college students. This paper examines residents' attitudes toward spring break tourism in South Padre Island (located in Texas, USA) through the lens of community attachment. By understanding the attitudes of residents of the host communities, tourism planners and policy-makers can create policies to shape the character of tourism according to the residents' needs. The findings suggest that, at this point in time, community residents perceive that the benefits of spring break tourism benefits exceed its' costs. Also, the short and intense season of spring break tourism allows residents to better deal with social costs.

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### **Introduction**

Tourism has the power to affect a community in countless ways, many of which may impact resident's income as well as their quality of life. Researchers highlight that residents of a community generally experience significant changes in livelihood as a tourism destination expands (Wall & Mathieson, 2006). The tourism sector provides employment opportunities and trade ventures that pave the way for investments toward infrastructure improvement. Tourism also transforms local economies, as businesses strive to meet the tourist demand for goods and services, rather than prioritizing the needs of local residents. Tourism may also increase the rates of crime, prostitution, alcohol and drug consumption, if not properly regulated. These potential tourism benefits and costs have been analysed from the perspective of the hosting communities through the investigation of residents' attitudes toward perceived changes (Harrill, 2004).

Spring Break (SB) is one of the major vacation periods in the college calendar that typically occurs between late February and early April each year. It is understood to be a ritual that engages thousands of North American college students migrating to spring break 'enclaves' (Smeaton, Josiam & Dietrich, 1998). The influx of thousands of students boosts economic activity in the destination and brings in millions of dollars to hotels, restaurants, bar owners, and shopkeepers. These economic benefits often times accrue to a small section of the community yet leave many residents at the destination facing huge crowds, traffic jams, rowdy behaviours, and pollution (Josiam, Hobson, Dietrich & Smeaton, 1998).

The growth of spring break tourism in many destinations has become problematic, predominantly due to the behaviour of college students. The research about the 'college spring break phenomenon' in United States has recognized that the

excessive behaviour of students involves enormous consumption of alcohol, drugs, increased sexual activity, and other hedonic conduct (Josiam, et al, 1998; Sönmez et al., 2006). Research has found that young tourists tend to adopt a range of negative behaviours while visiting various destinations (Carr, 2002). Such cases include both young British travelling to Greek resorts (Andriotis, 2010) as well as spring breakers to USA, Mexican and Caribbean destinations (Josiam, et al., 1998). As a result, Fort Lauderdale, where the spring break phenomenon emerged, is no longer a preferred SB destination due to the social and environmental implications of the tourist activity (Josiam et al., 1998). This situation has gone so far as to enter the local political scene in some destinations leading to the further debate on the issue.

This paper examines residents' attitudes toward spring break tourism (SBT) in South Padre Island (located in Texas, USA) through the lens of community attachment. It complements the existing research concerned with residential attitudes towards tourism by focusing specifically on spring break travel activities. Also, this research represents an extension of scholarly work exploring the subject of spring break tourism (e.g Josiam et al., 1998; Monterrubio & Equihua, 2011). The problem is relevant because it is fundamental for tourism policy makers to understand the experiences of the local population in order to build a solid foundation for tourism related activities. The collaboration between developers of tourism and policy makers can benefit all stakeholders as it reduces potential costs associated with the growth of the tourism industry (e.g. Eccles & Costa, 1996; Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004). As suggested by scholars, the analysis of resident's perceptions toward spring break tourism and the influence of tourism policies at both the local and regional levels may better support growth that protects the quality of life enjoyed by residents (Lankford, 1994; Andereck & Vogt, 2000). A better understanding of residents and their attachments to the community could facilitate an open dialogue amongst residents concerning issues that they regard as the most impactful in the development process.

### **Location**

South Padre Island (SPI) is the longest of five barrier islands occurring along the Texas Gulf Coast. It is 55km long and has an area of about 16,200 ha (Lonard et al, 1999). This small resort town reached a population of 2,896 residents in 2012 ([www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com)). The Mansfield Channel separates South Padre Island from the northern two-thirds of the island (Jude et al, 2008).

Over the years South Padre Island has become one of the most popular Spring Break destinations. Over 100,000 students arrive annually during the SB season to party. In just the first week of March in 2014 the local tourism information center recorded 5,620 walk-ins (Personal communication with MySPI.org). The following quote epitomizes the atmosphere in one of the more popular towns for SB celebrations:

“While it is relatively quiet during most of the year, it becomes a mecca of entertainment during the spring break season. As for recreation, South Padre Island is home to limitless beach activities, such as jet skiing, kiteboarding, dolphin watching, beachside horseback riding, and ecological tours.”(<http://www.southpadreisland.com/>).

## **Literature**

Because of growing concerns about the negative impacts of tourism, scholars have extensively studied these issues (Saarinen, 2006). As the potential benefits and costs of tourism are understood, destination planners can take steps to optimize the benefits to the community, while minimizing negative impacts. This process needs to start with monitoring changes in locals' perceptions and attitudes by identifying the development path that is supported by the residents (Gursoy et al., 2010).

### ***Residents Attitudes***

Attitudes may be defined as lasting predispositions toward elements of one's environment (Getz, 1994). Attitudes reflect individual views and influence peoples' behaviours toward these objects (Monterrubio & Andriotis, 2014). Scholars have found that favorable perceptions of tourism translate into higher support for more tourism (Ap, 1990, 1992; Gursoy *et al*, 2002). Dietrich and García-Buades (2008) showed that when the industry's potential benefits are considered, residents tend to be more positive towards tourism. However, they highlighted that attitudes began to change when a threshold is met, at which stage the costs related to tourism are more evident. Likewise, Dyer *et al.* (2006) found that in a well-developed tourist destination, locals still express a positive attitude towards tourism development (especially for the concerns of cultural and economic benefits). More specifically, Ryan *et al* (1998) proposed that altruistic attitudes toward tourism based upon the desire and understanding for community economic benefits will start to diminish if the irritation with tourists increases. This situation calls attention to the early concept of the Irridex discussion, where resistance to tourism grows in relation to the increasing numbers of tourists, negatively influencing the quality of life among residents (Doxey, 1975).

Research suggests that different forms of tourism might generate varying levels of resistance among residents (McGehee & Andereck, 2004). Ap (1990, 1992) notes that tourism would be accepted as long as the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. A number of scholars have explored how the personal benefits of tourism or tourism dependence relate to the attitudes towards tourism development (Perdue *et al*, 1990; Liu & Var 1986; Lankford & Howard 1994; Abdollahzadeh & Sharifzadeh, 2014). In support of social exchange theory, many studies have shown that residents who are dependent on the industry, or perceive a greater level of economic gain or personal benefit, tend to have more positive views of tourism impacts as compared to those who are not involved in tourism activities (Brunt & Courtney, 1999; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Jurowski *et al.*, 1997; Sirakaya *et al* 2002; McGehee & Andereck 2004).

A key factor in perceived tourism impacts was the frequency of contacts with tourists (Thomason, Crompton & Kamp, 1979; Harrill & Potts, 2003; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Andereck, *et al.*, 2005; Andereck & McGehee, 2008). Likewise, occupation (employment in tourism industry), proximity to the main tourist zones, age, gender, ethnicity, value systems and sub-segments of population were found to be good predictors of residents' attitudes (Jurowski *et al.*, 1997; Carmichael, 2006; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Long *et al.*, 1990; Ryan & Cooper, 2004; Waitt, 2003). Many scholars also recognized that host-residents attitudes might be affected by the strength of their community attachment (Pearce, 1980; Sheldon & Var, 1984; Lankford

& Howard, 1994; McGehee & Andereck, 2004).

### ***Community Attachment***

Interest in understanding the attachments that people form with places and relationships to other people can be found in a variety of disciplines. Sociology, for example, emphasizes how the symbolic meanings of settings and environments influence the social context of human interactions (Grieder & Garkovich 1994). Anthropology seeks to understand the cultural significance of places in day-to-day life (Gupta & Ferguson 1997). Human geography has explored the concept of “sense of place” (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977; Buttner & Seamon, 1980), which is similar to the notion of “place attachment” developed in environmental psychology (Altman & Low, 1992). When viewed from this latter discipline, attachment represents a positive connection or bond between a person and a particular place (Williams & Patterson 1999). In this article, we adopt the term ‘community attachment,’ which covers two dimensions characterizing an attachment bond: 1) attachment to a place and 2) attachment to people in that place.

One of the first successful efforts to methodically analyze community attachment appeared in the late 1980s (Williams & Roggenbuck, 1989). Since then, the notion of attachment has been more recognized and influential in tourism marketing, though its role in a localized context has been overlooked in the tourism academic literature. The concepts of place attachment have been extensively applied to studies of repeated visitation, with emphasis on establishing long-lasting relationships with tourists (Tsai, 2012). Such appeals to the extension of the experiential marketing can be defined as emotional branding (Tsai, 2012). Because of the broad applications of the community attachment concept, its specific definitions vary. Community attachment can be understood as the bonding that occurs between individuals and their meaningful environment.

Scholars propose that the concept of attachment helps explain attitudes toward tourism in terms of personal value systems (Lankford & Howard 1994; Ryan, Scotland & Montgomery, 1998; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; McGehee & Andereck 2004). Choy and Murray (2010) found a positive relationship between community attachment and the perceived positive impacts of tourism. They also found negative relationships between community attachment and the perceived negative impact of tourism. In general, however, studies are inconclusive about the association between community attachment and the perceived impacts of tourism (Lankford & Howard, 1994; McCool & Martin, 1994; Jurowski et al., 1997; Deccio & Baloglu, 2002; Gursoy et al., 2002; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Gursoy, Chi, & Dryer, 2010;). As suggested by McGehee and Andereck (2004) the contradictions in the findings can be attributed to attachment being measured in different ways, such as length of stay, sentiment about the community, or involvement in the community. Gursoy & Rutherford (2004) suggested that further examination of the relationship in various contexts may be required.

## Research Methods

This study has employed a quantitative instrument to examine residents' attitudes towards spring break tourism in South Padre Island. Researchers developed a questionnaire that measured Personal Costs/Benefits, Community Costs/Benefits, Community Attachment, and demographic information to enrich the findings. The initial items for each construct were derived from previous studies on attitudes toward tourism. These items were discussed among experts to eliminate duplicates. The items considered to be relevant were selected for the final version of the questionnaire. This study utilized two ways of measuring a resident's bond with a place: The Community Attachment Scale developed through extensive literature review and the Length of Stay as a complementary measure as indicated by McGhee and Andereck (2004).

A 14-item 5-point multidimensional scale regarding perceived personal costs/benefits was utilized to assess the perceived personal impacts of tourism (e.g. My economic situation is better because of SBT; I have more opportunities to interact with other residents during SB). Perceived community impacts were measured with an 11-item 5-point multidimensional scale (e.g. There are more jobs in the community because of SBT; The community is more active and vibrant during the SB season). Community attachment was measured with a 10-item 5-point Likert multidimensional scale (e.g. This place means a lot to me; I have many family members who live here; My community has many long standing traditions). Researchers incorporated an additional measure of community attachment as the number of years lived in the Padre Island area.

Research has shown that respondents tend to answer negatively worded items in a different manner than the positively worded items, which might undermine the reliability of measurement scales (Herche & Engelland, 1996). Hence, all items were worded positively.

The questionnaire was distributed to the populations of South Padre Island in Texas during the summer of 2013. Due to time and financial constraints, it was impossible to administer the survey in all the towns around South Padre Island that were initially selected as desirable data collection sites. Consequently, the questionnaires were self-administered and the responses were immediately collected from residents at a local area mall. A total of 216 hand-delivered questionnaires were completed. This purposive sampling procedure collected a sufficient number of responses to draw conclusions about perceived SB tourism costs/benefits in South Padre Island area. The survey analysis was designed to meet the following objectives:

- I. To determine respondents' level of Community Attachment
- II. To determine perceived Personal/Community Costs/Benefits of SBT
- III. To determine the relation between Community Attachment and perceived Personal/Community Costs/Benefits of SBT
- IV. To investigate differences in attitudes towards SBT based on demographic characteristics of the respondents:
  - Age
  - Ethnicity,

- Marital status
  - Employment status
- VI. To identify significant predictors of residents' attitudes to SBT.
- Community attachment (People and Place)
  - Length of stay
  - Frequency of contact with SB Tourists
  - Personal and Family Employment in tourism

## **Findings**

### ***Sample characteristics***

A total of 216 usable surveys were collected. Survey respondents were primarily female, single, and employed with a college degree or higher. The majority being Hispanic/Latino and lastly having a family income less than \$50,000 (Table 1). The demographics of the sample (Table 1) differ from the demographics of the United States as a whole and therefore these findings are limited to the South Padre Island area.

**(Table 1 about here)**

The majority of respondents reported that they lived fewer than ten city blocks away from the areas of spring break tourism activity (N=130) and had lived there for more than 10 years (N=131) (Table 2).

**(Table 2 about here)**

### ***Scales***

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted in order to assess the core factors that comprise the multidimensional constructs in the study. The results from the PCA confirm the reliability of the scales used to measure attitudes to SBT in South Padre Island.

#### ***Community Attachment***

The Community Attachment items were modeled after published research and adopted definition. The two-dimensional scale was found to be a reliable measure of Community Attachment (Alpha=.833). The PCA method distinguished two reliable dimensions of Community Attachment: Place (Alpha = .869) and People (Alpha = .821).

**(Table 3 about here)**

#### ***Perceived Personal and Community Costs/Benefits***

The measurement of residents' attitude towards spring break tourism was modeled after previous studies. The individual level attitudinal scale measured perceived Personal Benefits and Costs (Alpha= .833). The PCA analysis reduced the scale to two reliable components: Personal Benefits (Alpha= .910), and Personal Costs (Alpha=.828) (Table 4). The Personal Benefits component encompasses the positive impacts perceived of spring break tourism and is linked to positive attitudes. On the other hand the Personal Costs items are associated with perceived negative impacts of spring break tourism in South Padre Island.

**(Table 4 about here)**

The PCA of community level attitudes distinguished three components of which two show high reliability (Table 5): Community Costs (Alpha = .936) and Community Benefits (Alpha = .912). The final component included only two items, referred to as perceived 'Exclusion from Benefits', resulting in low reliability (Alpha = .668).

**(Table 5 about here)**

A reliable factor defined as Community View of Future SB Tourism was identified (PCA) and isolated from Community Costs. This factor consists of items referring to residents' attitude towards the future of SBT in South Padre Island (Table 6).

**(Table 6 about here)**

***Correlation between Community Attachment and perceived SB Tourism Personal/Community Benefits/Costs and Community View of Future SB Tourism***

Two-tailed bivariate correlation is reported to show the relationship between the components of Community Attachment and the components of residents' attitudes (Table 7, Table 8). Regression analysis was applied to identify the relationship between the variables.

The study found significant positive correlations between Community Attachment/Place and Personal Benefits ( $r = .420$ ;  $p = .000$ ), Community Attachment/Place and Community Benefits ( $r = .471$ ;  $p = .000$ ), as well as a significant positive correlation between Community Attachment/Place and Community View of Future SB Tourism ( $r = .216$ ;  $p = .001$ ) (Table 7). No significant correlation was found between Community Attitudes (Place) and the Costs of SB Tourism.

**(Table 7 about here)**

Likewise, the results show moderate and positive correlations between Community Attachment/People and Personal Benefits ( $r = .290$ ;  $p = .000$ ), Community Benefits ( $r = .351$ ;  $p = .000$ ), and the Community View of Future SB Tourism ( $r = .208$ ;  $p = .003$ ) (Table 8).

**(Table 8 about here)**

The results of regression analysis support a positive relationship between Community Attachment/Place and Community Benefits (Table 9). Community Attachment/Place was found to be a significant predictor of perceived Community Benefits from SB Tourism ( $B = .401$ ;  $p < .000$ ) (Table 9).

**(Table 9 about here)**

The results of regression analysis confirm a positive association between Community Attachment/Place and Personal Benefits (Adj.  $R^2 = .177$ ), Community Benefits (Adj.  $R^2 = .226$ ). Community Attachment/Place was found to be a significant predictor of perceived Personal Benefits of SBT ( $B = .461$ ;  $p = .000$ ) (Table 10).

**(Table 10 about here)**

The results of regression analysis did not support a link between Community Attachment and the Community Views of Future SB Tourism.

**(Table 11 about here)**

#### *Years lived in community*

Results suggest moderately positive correlations between the Number of Years Lived in the Community and Community Attachment/People ( $r = .382$ ;  $p = .000$ ). Regression supported the association between two variables (Adj.  $R^2 = .141$ ;  $p = .000$ ). However, there is no significant correlation between the Years Lived in the Community and Community Attachments/Place ( $p > .01$ ). The study did not find correlations between Years of Stay, Personal/Community Benefits/Costs, or even the Years Lived in the View of Future SB Tourism.

#### ***Correlation between Contact Frequency, Household Annual Income, Distance from Spring Break Tourism and Costs***

The study found positive correlations between Contact Frequency with SB tourists and the perceived Community Attachment/Place, Personal Benefits, Community Benefits, and Community View of Future SB Tourism (Table 12.), while a negative relationship has been found between Contact Frequency and perceived Personal Costs of SBT ( $r = -.138$ ). This simply shows that the more frequent contact with SB tourists is associated with more positive views of tourism impacts.

On the other hand, the distance from the spring break tourism destination is negatively correlated with Community Attachment/Place. This means that the increase in distance from the destination is correlated with weakening resident's attachment to the place. Also, there is a negative correlation between Household Annual Income and Personal Benefits of SB Tourism ( $r = -.166$ ) with no link between Household Annual Income or any other component of attitudes towards SB Tourism.

**(Table 12 about here)**

#### ***Difference in attitudes towards SBT***

The researchers examined differences in perceived SBT impacts between groups of respondents (one-way ANOVA).

*Differences by Ethnicity, Marital Status, Employment Status*

The results show that the Latino/Hispanic group score significantly higher than other groups in terms of perceived Community Benefits. On the other hand, Marital Status is an important factor for perception of Personal Benefits, with Singles rating the highest, and those Married/Partner with Children the lowest. ANOVA results showed no significant difference between these groups in terms of other components of attitudes towards SBT.

**(Table 13 about here)**

*Differences of by source of Employment/Income*

ANOVA results show that residents who reported employment within the tourism industry at the time of the study have a significantly more positive views of Personal Benefits compared to those who at the time of data collection were employed outside tourism industry. Similarly, respondents who reported that their family or friends were employed in tourism industry at the time of the study rate significantly higher on Personal Benefits than others. They also rated significantly higher on perceived Community Benefits than those whose friends or family were not employed in tourism, as well as View of Community Future of SB Tourism (Table 14).

On the other hand respondents, who reported that their family or friends were employed in the industry reported lower perceived Community Costs from SBT, than respondents whose friends or family were employed outside of the industry.

**(Table 14 about here)**

*Differences by source of income*

ANOVA results show that residents who reported that the majority of their overall income during the months of March and April came from SB tourism reported significantly higher scores on Personal Benefits, than those whose majority of income came from other sources. Similarly, respondents who earn the majority of their income during the months of March and April from SB tourism rated Community Benefits from SBT significantly higher, than those who earned the majority of their income from other sources.

Those who reported that the majority of their overall income during March/April comes from SB tourism demonstrated significantly more positive attitudes towards future SB tourism than those whose majority of income comes from other sources. No significant differences were found between these groups of respondents in terms of perceived Personal Costs, Community Costs, or perceived Exclusion from Benefits (Table 15).

Residents whose family/friends majority of income during the months of March and April came from SBT rate significantly higher Personal Benefits than those whose family/friends income comes from other sources. Similarly, the first group rates the Community Benefits of SB to be significantly higher, than the other group of respondents (Table 15). The analysis didn't show any significant difference in terms of Personal Costs, Community Costs, and Exclusion from Benefits or Community View of Future SB Tourism between the two groups of respondents.

**(Table 15 about here)**

## Discussion

Dyer et al. (2006) reported evidence of a positive community attitude towards conventional forms of tourism, while later Choi and Murray (2010) showed evidence that tourism supporters are more likely to support the future development of the sector. In this study of SBT, respondents from the South Padre Island area indeed held an overall positive attitude towards both current and future spring break tourism. Moreover, they believed that spring break tourism activity benefits them and their community (Table 16). The findings of this study appear to contradict many studies that have found an increase in negative perceptions of tourism resulting from increasing levels of tourism (Allen et al. 1988; Butler 1980; Long, Perdue, & Allen 1990).

**(Table 16 about here)**

This apparent contradiction does not question the findings of previous studies. The researchers propose that, *at this point*, the negative effects of the spring break tourism in SPI do not *yet* outweigh the positive impacts in the view of residents (Ap, 1990; 1992). Specifically, residents are willing to accept sporadic and insignificant personal and community costs in exchange for benefits. This plausible scenario can be argued because spring break tourism is highly seasonal. Precisely, the seasonal occurrence of spring break tourism (very short and intensive season) is a factor that distinguishes it from other types of conventional tourism activity. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, residents can enjoy the benefits due to its concentration in certain spots at certain times each year. High predictability of spring break activities allows residents to mitigate its negative social impacts by simply avoiding these areas. These unique conditions of SB tourism in South Padre Island support suggestions made within social exchange theory proposing that locals are likely to participate in tourism exchange if they believe that they will receive benefits without experiencing unacceptable cost (Allen, Hafer, Long & Perdue 1993). As a result residents continue to participate in the SBT exchange. The presented findings illustrate that different forms of tourism (e.g. SBT) generate different attitudes towards tourism development.

### *Community Attachment*

This study examined community attitudes through the lens of community attachment defined as a positive connection between a person and a place (Williams & Patterson, 1999). The study explored two dimensions of the construct: 1) place, and 2) people. Levels of both dimensions of community attachment (place/people) reported by respondents were relatively high (Table 17). Interestingly, respondents reported higher levels of attachment to a place rather than to people. This is possibly a result of the short distance between residential areas (N=130) and SBT spots with a fluctuating population coupled with many years of residency (N=133, more than 10 years).

**(Table 17 about here)**

Evidence remains inconclusive for research focused on the relationship between Community Attachment and Attitudes Towards Tourism (Um & Crompton, 1987; McCool & Martin, 1994; Jurowski et al., 1997; Gursoy et al., 2002; Latkova & Vogt, 2011). In extending previous research, the study looked specifically on linking community attachment and residents attitudes towards spring break tourism. It found that stronger attachment (place/people) is linked to more positive attitudes, while the level of community attachment and perceived personal/community are not significantly related. The findings of this study again appear to contradict previous research demonstrating that residents with higher levels of community attachments are likely to view the socio-economic impacts of tourism more negatively compared to other residents. However, Gursoy, Chi, & Dryer (2010) reported that attitudes to tourism development vary with each form of development and is likely to be formed based on perceptions of different factors.

Most likely, this is not the case because the majority of the respondents reported they lived in their community longer than 10 years. Alternatively, Andereck et al (2005) proposed that residents who are attached to their community are more concerned with their future in their community and they feel that tourism can play a role in its wellbeing. Again, this is a plausible scenario given the short and intensive SB season and may be viewed as a positive feature of SBT.

As we examined the relationship between the number of years lived in the community and community attachment, we found that there is a significant positive relationship between the number of years lived in the community and the reported place attachment. This could mean that residents who spent more time in their community, find the presence of other people unimportant in their overall bond with their living environment. Likewise, the number of years in the community or the length of residency is not associated with the perceived costs or benefits of spring break tourism. These findings support other studies looking at the number of residents and the perceived costs and benefits of tourism (Harrill & Potts, 2003; Broughman & Butler, 1981). On the contrary Davis, Allen and Cosenza (1988) found that long time residents were more positive about tourism than newcomers to the community.

#### *Tourism Dependence*

Scholars have suggested that residents whose economic wellbeing depends on the tourism sector tend to have more positive views of the tourism impacts as compared to the residents who are not involved in tourism activities (Liu et al., 1987; Perdue et al, 1990; Liu and Var, 1986; Lankford & Howard, 1994; Jurowski et al 1997; Brunt & Courtney 1999; Sirakaya et al, 2002; Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003; Abdollahzadeh & Sharifzadeh, 2014). The findings of this study are aligned with previous research. Our findings also agree with the results reported by Madrigal (1993) and Andereck et al, 2005 that personal economic reliance (defined as dependence of respondent's income on the tourism industry) is significantly related to positive perceptions of tourism. The current study measured two aspects of tourism dependence. First, we asked the respondents to indicate their source of employment (tourism sector vs. non-tourism sector) for them as well as their family and friends. Second, we asked them about their major source of income as well as the major source of income of their family and

friends. In the case of spring break tourism, the employment in tourism sector is indeed associated with higher perceptions of benefits from spring break tourism, while no significant difference was found in terms of how respondents viewed its costs.

Perhaps, at this stage of tourism development and with the short spring break season, the costs are not a major concern of the general public. Also, it is worth noting that only 64 respondents reported the tourism sector as their major source income, and only 58 indicated that tourism is a major source of income for their family and friends. A similar argument could be made to explain the negative association between household annual income and the perceived personal benefits (Table 12). Tourism planners must recognize that a part of local community experiences no direct benefits of spring break tourism, while at the same time they do share the cost of tourism development.

### **Conclusions**

Interest in tourism as a tool for economic development has grown considerably in recent years. Politicians are convinced about the positive aspects of tourism such as employment opportunities, tax revenues, and the diversification of local economy. However, tourism activities affect the lives of communities in both positive and negative ways (Jurowski, Uysal & Williams, 1997). These impacts generate conflicting attitudes that fluctuate over time (Pizam, 1978; King, Pizam & Milman, 1993).

Monitoring residents' perceptions of spring break tourism could help detect these changes. This is a crucial step towards improving the interaction between this type of visitors and a local community. By knowing the local attitudes and the factors that shape these attitudes, tourism planners and policy-makers can influence community views of spring break tourism by creating policies to shape the character of tourism according to the residents' needs and the local vision of SPI. This study found that frequent interaction with tourists during the spring break season is associated with an increase in positive perceptions of spring break tourism benefits. These benefits encourage a majority of residents to accept spring break tourists in SPI given the short duration of their presence there.

In summary, spring break tourism is viewed as a beneficial activity in the South Padre Island area rather than simply a negative aspect of the local socio-economic process. A short and intense season of SBT allows local communities to better deal with the spring break tourism social costs. This also helps the community to enjoy the off-season with the economic benefits from SB.

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## Tables

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of the sample

Descriptive		N	%
Gender (N=196)	Female	11	59.2
	Male	6	40.8
Marital Status (N=215)		80	
	Single	10	47.9
	Married or Partnership without children	3	17.2
	Married or Partnership with children	37	34.9
Employment status (N= 211)		75	
	Employed	16	79.7
	Unemployed	9	19.8
Ethnicity (N= 212)		42	
	Hispanic/Latino American	13	
	Others	6	
Family Income in US\$ (N= 205)		76	
	50, 000 or less	90	43.9
	50, 000 to 75, 000	54	26.3
	75, 000 to 100, 000	24	11.7
	100, 000 to 125, 000	13	6.3
	125, 000 to 150, 000	11	5.4
Education (N=211)	150, 000 and more	13	6.3
	High School	47	22.3
	Some College	88	41.7
	Associate Degree	22	10.4
	Bachelors Degree	33	15.6
	Some Grad School	5	2.4
	Master's Degree	14	6.6
Doctorate	2	.9	

Note: Differences are due to number of valid responses.

**Table 2.** Other descriptive information

Descriptive		N	%
Distance from Spring Break tourism areas	Fewer than ten city blocks away	130	52.6
	Far away	59	28.0
	Very far away	20	9.5
Frequency of contact with Spring Break tourists		26	12.3
	No contact	34	16.0
	Almost no contact	87	41.0
	Occasional contact	34	16.0
	Frequent contact	31	14.6
Years lived in the community	Very frequent contact	32	30.4
	5 years or less	51	20.9
	more than 10 to 20 years	82	48.8
	more than 20 years		

**Table 3.** Factor Analysis of Community Attachment

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Items Loading on Factor</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>Explained Variance (%)</b>	<b>Alpha</b>
Place Attachment	1. Like natural landscape	.852	36.984	.869 <sup>1</sup>
	2. Places like to visit	.795		
	3. Unique Community Atmosphere	.713		
	4. Means a lot to me	.698		
	5. Like Living here	.656		
	6. Rather live here	.612		
People Attachment	7. Family lives here	.846	28.540	.821 <sup>2</sup>
	8. Friends live here	.787		
	9. Community has many traditions	.696		
	10. I value community traditions	.618		

**Table 4.** Personal Benefits/Costs of Spring Break Tourism

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Items Loading on Factor</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>Explained Variance (%)</b>	<b>Alpha</b>
Personal Benefits	1. SB tourism provides more opportunities for resident interaction	.860	38.274	.910
	2. SB helps me meet people	.830		
	3. SB gives opportunities to work with other residents	.824		
	4. SB helps me meet spring breakers	.823		
	5. More friends due to SB	.782		
	6. I have more opportunities for recreation because of SB tourism	.770		
	7. My economic situation is better due to SB	.757		
	8. I earn additional income from SB	.674		
	9. I like living in a popular SB destination	.542		
Personal Cost	SB tourists are a burden reducing services	.876	21.146	.828
	SB noise is disturbing to me	.873		
	SB makes place too crowded for me	.741		
	SB behaviors (DSP) bother me	.697		
	SB tourism is driving me elsewhere	.639		

**Table 5.** Factor Analysis of Community Attitudes to Spring Break Tourism

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Items Loading on Factor</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>Explained Variance (%)</b>	<b>Alpha</b>
Community Costs	1. Disrupts daily life	.827	32.466	.936
	2. Increases within community conflict	.815		
	3. Makes locals suffer	.810		
	4. Disrupts peace and quiet	.815		
	5. Tourists create bad image of area	.784		
	6. Bad example for local youth	.756		
	7. Leads to community/ tourist friction	.763		
	8. Leads to negative environmental impact	.759		
	9. Leads to increased crime	.739		
	10. Spring breakers crowded out residents	.712		
	11. Community should resist more SB tourism	.688		
	12. SB leads to overcrowding	.685		
	13. SB leads to over development	.567		
Community Benefits	1. Recreational Facilities	.848	21.363	.912
	2. Parks	.838		
	3. Cultural Activities	.790		
	4. Improved Quality of Life	.788		
	5. Active Community	.770		
	6. Community Fair/festivals	.743		
	7. Economic dependence on SB tourism	.641		
	8. Roads Infrastructure	.641		
	9. Influx of Money	.599		
	10. Jobs	.550		
	11. Community Pride	.549		
Exclusion from Benefits	1. Benefit out-of-staters	.767	5.222	.668
	2. Benefits minority	.772		

Two items in costs: 'increases litter' and 'jobs are low paying' were identified as separated variables  
Alpha <.6

**Table 6.** Future Community View of Spring Break Tourism

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Items Loading on Factor</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>Explained Variance (%)</b>	<b>Alpha</b>
Community view of future SBT	1. SB tourism should increase in SPI	.860	72.495	.809
	2. Tourism benefits outweigh costs	.836		
	3. SB tourism is a bright spot in future of SPI	.775		

**Table 7.** Community Attachment/Place correlates

<b>Community Attachment (Place)</b>			
<b>Personal Attitudes</b>	Personal Benefits	Pearson Correlation	<b>.420**</b>
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	215
	Personal Cost	Pearson Correlation	-.019
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.787
		N	215
<b>Community Attitudes to SBT</b>	Community Cost	Pearson Correlation	-.093
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.174
		N	215
		Community Benefits	Pearson Correlation
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N		215
	Exclusion from benefits		Pearson Correlation
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.331
		N	213
		Community View of Future SB Tourism	Pearson Correlation
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N		215

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 8.** Community Attachment/People correlates

<b>Personal Attitudes</b>	Personal Benefits	Pearson Correlation	<b>.290**</b>
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	215
	Personal Costs	Pearson Correlation	-.006
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.934
		N	215
<b>Community Attitudes to SBT</b>	Community Cost	Pearson Correlation	-.074
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.278
		N	215
	Community Benefits	Pearson Correlation	<b>.351**</b>
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	215
	Exclusion from benefits	Pearson Correlation	.109
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.114
		N	213
Future Community View of SB Tourism	Pearson Correlation	<b>.208**</b>	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	215	

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 9.** Regression – Impact of Community Attachment (Place/People) On Community BenefitsModel Summary<sup>a</sup>

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.475 <sup>a</sup>	.226	.218	.70970

a. Predictors: (Constant), Community Attachment(People/Place)

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1(Constant)	1.647	.244		6.757	.000
Community Attachment/Place	<b>.401</b>	.076	.418	5.291	<b>.000</b>
Community Attachment/People	.070	.068	.082	1.033	.303

a. Dependent Variable: Community Benefit

)

**Table 10.** Regression – Impact of Community Attachment (Place/People) On Personal BenefitsModel Summary<sup>a</sup>

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.421 <sup>a</sup>	.177	.170	.88089

a. Predictors: (Constant), Community Attachment (People/Place)

Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1(Constant)	1.313	.303		4.341	.000
Community Attachment/Place	<b>.461</b>	.094	.399	4.901	<b>.000</b>
Community Attachment/People	.034	.084	.033	.400	.690

a. Dependent Variable: Personal Benefit

**Table 11.** Regression – Impact of Community Attachment (Place/People) On View of Future SB Tourism;Model Summary<sup>a</sup>

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.234 <sup>a</sup>	<b>.055</b>	.046	.99466

a. Predictors: (Constant), Community Attachment (People/Place)

Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.278	.342		6.667	<b>.000</b>
Community Attachment/Place	.171	.106	.140	1.606	.110
Community Attachment/People	.127	.095	.117	1.342	.181

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a. Dependent Variable: Community View of future SB tourism

**Table 12.** Correlations between Contact Frequency, Household Income, Distance from SB spots, Attitudes to Tourism and Community Attachment

		<b>Contact Frequency</b>	<b>Household Annual Income</b>	<b>Distance from SB tourism spots</b>
Community View of Future SB Tourism	Pearson Correlation	<b>.221**</b>	.044	.035
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>.001</b>	.536	.615
	N	211	204	210
Community Benefits	Pearson Correlation	<b>.196**</b>	-.135	-.009
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>.004</b>	.055	.897
	N	211	204	210
Community Cost	Pearson Correlation	-.054	.000	.001
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.432	.996	.989
	N	211	204	210
Personal Cost	Pearson Correlation	<b>-.138*</b>	-.069	-.010
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>.045</b>	.324	.888
	N	212	205	211
Personal Benefit	Pearson Correlation	.219**	<b>-.166*</b>	-.097
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	<b>.018</b>	.162
	N	212	205	211
Community Attachment (Place)	Pearson Correlation	<b>.160*</b>	-.014	<b>-.155</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>.020</b>	.842	<b>.025*</b>
	N	211	204	210
Community Attachment (People)	Pearson Correlation	.106	.056	-.121
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.125	.425	.081
	N	211	204	210

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 14.** ANOVA: Source of Employment and Perceptions of Costs/Benefits

<b>SOURCE OF EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Employment in tourism industry</b>					
Personal Benefits				3.898	.050
Yes	46	3.496	.969805		
No	16	3.179	.953734		
	7				
<b>Friends and family employment in tourism industry</b>					
Personal Benefits				6.267	.013
Yes	84	3.449	1.000401		
No	12	3.114	.922510		
	8				
Community Benefits				16.129	.000
Yes	84	3.758	.797659		
No	12	3.324	.752559		
	8				
Community Cost				4.852	.030
Yes	84	2.707	.905357		
No	12	3.323	.752559		
	8				
Community View of Future SB Tourism				7.619	0.060
Yes	84	3.676	1.010801		
No	12	3.120	.997889		
	8				

**Table 15.** ANOVA: Source of Income and Perceptions of Costs/Benefits

<b>SOURCE OF INCOME</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Employment in tourism industry</b>						
Personal Benefits					3.898	.050
	Yes	46	3.496	.969805		
	No	167	3.179	.953734		
<b>Friends and family employment in tourism industry</b>						
Personal Benefits					6.267	.013
	Yes	84	3.449405	1.000401		
	No	128	3.114041	.922510		
Community Benefits					16.12	.000
	Yes	84	3.758321	.797659		
	No	128	3.323698	.752559		
Community Cost					4.852	.029
	Yes	84	2.707279	.905357		
	No	128	3.323698	.752559		
Community View of Future SB Tourism					7.619	.060
	Yes	84	3.672619	1.010801		
	No	128	3.120899	.997889		
<b>Source of majority of income.</b>						
Personal Benefits					6.919 904	.009
	Yes	64	3.543403	.937832		
	No	149	3.283854	.949706		
Community Benefits					8.926 975	.003
	Yes	64	3.707797	.809120		
	No	149	3.397905	.779168		
Community View of Future SB Tourism					4.819 969	.029
	Yes	64	3.671875	.960401		
	No	149	3.341163	1.027464		
<b>Source of majority of family/friends income.</b>						
Personal Benefits					29.04 1942	.000
	Yes	58	3.935249	.648462		
	No	155	3.324790	.085147		
Community Benefits					27.73 3451	.000
	Yes	58	3.935249	.648462		
	No	155	3.324790	.085147		

**Table 16:** Mean scores for community attitudes

	<b>N</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Personal Benefits	213	3.2478	.96370
Community Benefits	213	<b>3.4910</b>	.79916
Personal Costs	213	<b>2.5115</b>	.97132
Community Costs	213	2.8677	.86143
Community View of Future SB Tourism	213	3.4405	1.01695

**Table 17.** Mean score for Community Attachment

	<b>N</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Community Attachment - Place	215	3.9243	.83674
Community Attachment - People	216	3.2593	.96616