Response to Lankford
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   What is This?
Response to Lankford

JOHN AP AND JOHN L. CROMPTON

The authors welcome the opportunity to address the issues raised by Lankford (2001 [this issue]). There is wide recognition of the need to develop standardized scales for measuring tourism impacts, because they can be useful tools for soliciting public input into tourism development plans and for monitoring reactions as those plans are implemented.

Our review of existing literature indicated that the existing tourism impact scales developed by Kim (1992), Madrigal (1993), and Lankford and Howard (1994) did not reflect the standard physical/environmental, social/cultural, and economic dimensions that have been widely espoused in the literature (Mathieson and Wall 1982) and in most of the tourism textbooks (e.g., Gee, Mackens, and Choy 1989; Hudman and Hawkins 1989; Fridgen 1991; McIntosh and Goeldner 1995). This observation was not intended to be critical of the contributions to the development of tourism impact scales made by others. Indeed, we commented that Lankford and Howard’s (1994) work was “the only reasonably generic tourism impact scale to have appeared in the literature that has been shown to be reliable and valid” (Ap and Crompton 1998, p. 123). However, we believed that more development work was needed because the empirically derived scales to that point were inconsistent with the prevailing three-dimensional conceptual taxonomy.

We disagree with Lankford’s contention that “a taxonomic framework would be extremely difficult to identify due to the variation in communities, levels of development, ethnic makeup, sociodemographics of resident and tourism populations, land use, and competing industries in any given instance or place” (p. 315). Irrespective of context, there is wide agreement that tourism impacts relating to the three broad dimensions listed above are likely to occur. Their operationalization is likely to be different, and we recognized that by noting that our instrument “is intended to provide a nucleus of core domains and items that can be adapted or supplemented to fit the specific characteristics of any particular community” (Ap and Crompton 1998, p. 129).

Lankford is concerned “the authors report that this (Ap and Crompton) scale is superior to other scales and approaches to studying this topic because other scales do not appear to be consistent with any ‘taxonomic’ frameworks that appear in the literature” (p. 315). We make no apologies for this claim! The earlier empirically derived impact scales that consistently identified two dimensions imply that the widely accepted three-dimensional conceptual framework of tourism impacts is incorrect. In contrast, our study results offered some confirmatory evidence that the prevailing framework is useful.

We believe that scale development should be driven by strong a priori theory and conceptualization. If this is subsequently verified by empirical evidence, then it strengthens the case for subsequent generalization. Lankford appears to favor the reverse procedure, that is, to deduce a conceptualization from empirical results. Obviously, that is a legitimate approach, but in our view, it makes subsequent generalization more tenuous.

Lankford cites several studies that have replicated his findings of two dimensions—positive and negative (Kim 1992)—or concern for local tourism development, and personal and community benefits (Lankford and Howard 1994). He implies that such replications testify to the viability of these scales. We disagree because the two-dimensional structure does not offer any insight as to the theory or concept underlying it. The dimensions do not appear to relate to, or to enhance, any well-recognized conceptualization or theoretical understanding of the impacts of tourism. Rather, they appear to be the output of methodological procedures, without obvious intuitive appeal or practical application.

Lankford expressed concern with our statement, “Like Madrigal (1993) and Kim (1992), the scale used by Lankford and Howard (1994) was adapted from the impact items used and reported by Perdue, Long, and Allen (1990)” (Ap and Crompton 1998). We acknowledge that the phrase “was adapted from” was misleading. It should be replaced by the word included. Our unfortunate choice of words could be construed to suggest criticism of the rigor and procedures used by Lankford and Howard. That was not our intent, and we apologize if it was interpreted in this way.

Finally, Lankford inappropriately questions the rigor of the procedures relating to the way we interpreted our factor analysis results. When exploratory factor analysis is used in scale development, its purpose is to inform researchers’ decisions, not to replace their judgment. In this context, the issue as to whether they loaded “clearly” (a wonderfully ambiguous word!) on a single dimension is irrelevant. The critical concern is the alpha value of the scale to which items are assigned. All of the alpha values we reported were well above the accepted minimum criterion. Similarly, his criticism of our use of a .9 eigenvalue criterion is misplaced. We stated in the original (1998) article:

A 0.9 eigenvalue, rather than the conventional 1.0 value, was used because it enabled a more comprehensive number and range of items to be retained—“It is always preferable to construct too many items rather than too few; inadequate items can always be eliminated but one is rarely in a position to add ‘good’

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items at a later stage in the research when the original pool of such items is inadequate” (Carmines and Zeller 1979, p. 21). Moreover, the Cronbach’s coefficients of .81 and .86 for Factors 6 and 7, respectively, [the two factors for which the 0.9 criterion was used] were acceptably strong (p. 126).

REFERENCES


