Case Study

Sustainably changing small traders' harassment behaviors — A theoretical framework

Annmarie Nicely [a, *], Jonathan Day [b, 1], Sandra Sydnor [c, 2], Raslinda Mohd Ghazali [d, e, 3]

[a] *School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, 239 Marriott Hall, Purdue University, 900 W. State Street, West Lafayette, IN 47907, USA*
[b] *School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, 255 Marriott Hall, Purdue University, 900 W. State Street, West Lafayette, IN 47907, USA*
[c] *School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, 251 Marriott Hall, Purdue University, 900 W. State Street, West Lafayette, IN 47907, USA*
[d] *School of Tourism, Hospitality and Environmental Management, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia*
[e] *School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, Marriott Hall, Purdue University, 900 W. State Street, West Lafayette, IN 47907, USA*

HIGHLIGHTS

- A model for sustainably reducing small traders' harassment behaviors was proposed.
- The framework was based on established theories of behavior modification.
- The framework was used to analyze Jamaica's visitor harassment mitigation program.
- Jamaica's program had clear learning gaps which compromised its long-term success.

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

The goal of the paper was to put forward a theoretical model for sustainably changing small traders' harassment behaviors and to apply it to a destination that has been grappling with the problem for decades. One hundred and eighty-one newspaper articles, 37 annual tourism reports, and 20 other government documents were reviewed to determine Jamaica's visitor harassment mitigation initiatives and activities from 1957 to 2013. Also, seven leaders from 14 of the island's craft markets were interviewed to determine the effects of these programs on their constituents' harassment behaviors. The archives and interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic content analysis. The case analysis revealed that while Jamaica had initiatives likely to discourage their small independent traders' engagement in harassment behaviors, the initiatives developed to strengthen their knowledge of the desired less aggressive trading behaviors had deficiencies likely to limit their engagement in these behaviors. The framework had implicationsfor how measures to curtail visitor harassment are developed and tested.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Visitor harassment is a global phenomenon negatively affecting the sustainability of tourism sectors in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and the Caribbean (de Albuquerque & McElroy, 2001; Kozak, 2007; J. McElroy, Tarlow, & Carlisle, 2007). Despite vigorous efforts by territories like the Caribbean to understand and curtail the problem, the issue still remains an area of major concern (Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association, 2007; J. McElroy et al., 2007). Although few, there has been significant research work in the area. Studies have: identified the types of harassment behaviors; indicated where the behaviors typically occur; elaborated on the impact of the behaviors on destinations; ascertained possible determinants of these selling behaviors; and proposed solutions for addressing them (Ajagunna, 2006; de Albuquerque & McElroy, 1999; de Albuquerque & McElroy, 2001; Dunn & Dunn, 2002b; Hall, 2012; Kozak, 2007; J. McElroy et al., 2007; J. L. McElroy, Tarlow, & Carlisle, 2007; Skipper, 2009). However, a clear absence in the literature is a theoretical framework to guide the development of sustainable solutions to the problem.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 765 494 4740; fax: +1 765 494 0327.
E-mail addresses: ajnicely@purdue.edu (A. Nicely), gjday@purdue.edu (J. Day), ssydnorb@purdue.edu (S. Sydnor), rmohdgha@purdue.edu (R. Mohd Ghazali).
[1] Tel.: +1 765 496 2084; fax: +1 765 494 0327.
[2] Tel.: +1 765 494 3449; fax: +1 765 494 0327.
[3] Tel.: +1 765 337 4105; fax: +1 765 494 0327.

The goal of the present study was two-fold: first, to use established theories of behavior modification to craft a model for sustainably changing small traders' harassment behaviors at tourist destinations; and second, to apply the model to the case of one Caribbean island that has been grappling with the problem for decades. The framework is significant as it could take research in this stream one step further. Tourism destinations could also use the framework to guide the development and improvement of their own visitor harassment mitigation program. It is important for readers of this paper to note that the aim of this study was not to test theory, but rather to propose a model for effectively mitigating harassment behaviors at tourist destinations. "*Visitor harassment*", as used within the context of the present study, is "an individual or group contact or non-contact legal or illegal aggressive trading behavior between locals (traders) and visitors (buyers) that result in visitors (buyers or potential buyers) feeling varying degrees of anger, fear and/or sadness" (Nicely & Ghazali, 2014, p. 268). Examples of individual or group contact and non-contact behaviors include: an individual or group of traders pulling or pushing a visitor (individual and group contact behaviors); a crowd of traders surrounding a visitor at once (group non-contact behavior); and a trader hurling abusive, rude or intimidating language at a visitor when he or she refuses to make a purchase (individual non-contact behavior) (Nicely & Mohd Ghazali, 2014). A "*visitor harassment mitigation program*" is all the initiatives of a destination, whether administered publicly or privately, where a central goal is to reduce the harassment of visitors. Finally, "*learning*" is the acquisition of knowledge, making meaning of such knowledge, and using it to act (Barkley & Bianco, 2000; Casey, 2005; Dominiak, 2006; Huber, 1991; Mavrinac, 2005; Merriam, 2001; Morris, Bessant, & Barnes, 2006).

2. Theoretical foundation for the model

According to previous behavior modification theories, behavior can be manipulated. In fact, Skinner found in 1948 that behavior can indeed be conditioned (Skinner, 1948, 1981). More specifically, it can be reinforced using stimuli and behavior reinforced will likely be repeated and those not will likely weaken. He further explained that reinforcers (stimuli) can also be varied (Skinner, 1981) as well as be positive or negative, such as giving or removing a reward. Skinner (1948) also determined that the shorter the intervals between reinforcers, the more pronounced the conditioning. The researcher however, contended that punishment will likely weaken an undesirable behavior but not necessarily strengthen the desired related behavior (McLeod, 2007; Skinner, 1948). Skinner's theory was referred to as the *theory of operant conditioning*.

Another influential theory of behavior modification is Kurt Lewin's *theory of planned change*. Lewin (1947) explained the change process in human systems using a three-stage model: unfreeze-change-freeze. The model requires prior learning to be rejected and replaced. According to Lewin (1947), unfreezing is the process of letting go of behaviors that are counterproductive, ensuring that forces against the undesirable behavior is greater than forces in support of the behavior. Then there is a change in thoughts, feelings, behavior, or all three among constituents. This is followed by a process of freezing, which means establishing the change as a new habit so that it becomes standard operating procedure (Agboola & Salawu, 2011; Burnes, 2004). Later studies have also confirmed the importance of unlearning, changing beliefs or unfreezing to successful application of new knowledge (Akgün, Bryrne, Lynn, & Keskin, 2007; Akgün, Lynn, & Byrne, 2006). Therefore, an undesired behavior can be changed to a desired one by persuading persons to desist the undesired behavior (unfreezing), introducing the desired behavior (changing), and reinforcing the desired behavior through the introduction and/or removal of rewards and benefits or through punishment (freezing).

The third behavior modification theory is Albert Bandura's *social learning theory*. According to Bandura (1989), humans learn through imitation once certain components are within their repertoire (Bandura & Huston, 1961). The brain, when storing a new sensory input, will look for connections to earlier information (Merriam, 2008). Therefore, persons learn by observing others either directly through mimicking their behavior or vicariously by observing how the behavior was reinforced or punished in another (Bandura, 1989). Bandura's experiments with children also found that while reinforcement was not crucial for imitation, incentives would reactivate a subsequent performance (Masia & Chase, 1997). Masia and Chase (1997) also found, after a careful review of the work of Skinner (1953) and Ollendick, Dailey, and Shapiro (1983), that imitated behavior will be sustained after intermittent reinforcement.

However, to facilitate learning through observation, Bandura (1989) thought the following were necessary. First, *attention processes*: when the observer pays attention to the events modeled. Second, *representational processes*: the observed behavior is then represented in memory. Rehearsal can reduce knowledge loss here. Third, *production processes*: the events seen are then converted to actions similar to that modeled. Finally, *motivational processes*: the new behavior is then positively or negatively reinforced (Bandura, 1989; Grusec, 1992). The tenets of social learning theory have been used in a number of industries. In the United States it was used in the chemical industry to improve the industry's learning from crisis (Nathan & Kovoor-Misra, 2002).

Bandura (1978) also related his social learning theory to *the theory of aggression*. According to Bandura's *theory of aggression*, "people are not born with performed repertoires of aggressive behavior, they must learn them" (p. 14) and very often they do so vicariously by observing the behavior and the related consequences of persons in their families, communities, and the media. Bandura (1978) believed that levels of aggression would increase with repeated performance.

Bandura (1989) also believed what persons thought, believed, and felt could influence their behavior and the antecedents of such behavior could be modified through social influences, in particular through modeling, instruction, and social persuasion. Therefore, desired behaviors can be acquired through observation and imitation and the new behavior can be reinforced by observing environmental responses or consequences to a model's behavior.

In 1985, Ajzen (1991) developed the *theory of planned behavior*. This was an extension of the Fishbein and Ajzen's Expectancy-Value Model of Attitude which stated that beliefs can influence attitude. The scholars contended that if an individual believed that a behavior was good or bad (behavioral belief), there was local support or non-support for that behavior (normative belief), and the behavior was easy or difficult (control belief), then this would result in his or her positive or negative attitude towards the behavior (attitude towards the behavior). Ajzen (1991) went further and stated that human behavior could be explained and even predicted from these attitudes and intention. He also found that intention and perceived behavioral control could accurately predict behavior. Therefore, the stronger the intention and perceived behavioral control linked to the behavior in question, the stronger the behavior (Fig. 1). However Ajzen (1991) cautioned users of the Theory of Planned Behavior that to accurately predict one's behavior from his or her belief, the individual's belief dimension must be clearly defined and opportunities and resources must be in place for the behavior to occur. Therefore, important antecedents of behavior change include belief, attitude, and subsequently intention modification.