

Analyzing Resident Place Satisfaction in a Tourist Destination through Auto-Photography: The Case of Southern Shores, North Carolina

by

Allison M. Hueber

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Director of Thesis: Dr. Derek Alderman

Major Department: Geography

Resident place satisfaction in tourist destinations lies at the heart of the movement toward more socially sustainable development. Addressing the place-based views and concerns of residents is necessary for maintaining public support for tourism. This project analyzes place satisfaction among full-time residents living in Southern Shores, North Carolina. The qualitative methods of auto-photography and photo-elicitation interview are used with thirteen residents of varying lengths of residence in the Outer Banks community. Participants were supplied with disposable cameras and asked to photograph what they like and dislike about Southern Shores. In reacting to their photographs, participants communicated views, feelings, and a sense of place that allowed researchers to identify positive and negative aspects of the community and tourism development. For some participating residents, the very act of photographing Southern Shores and choosing what to represent visually made them more cognizant of place satisfaction, thus pointing to the method's potential as a public education and extension tool.

Analyzing Resident Place Satisfaction in a Tourist Destination through Auto-Photography:

The Case of Southern Shores, North Carolina

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The Faculty and Staff of the Department of Geography

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by

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Allison M. Hueber

APPROVED BY:

DIRECTOR OF THESIS

Dr. Derek Alderman

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Dr. Burrell Montz

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Dr. Thomas Crawford

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Dr. Pat Long

CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

Dr. Burrell Montz

DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

Dr. Paul Gemperline

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Chapter One: Statement of Thesis Objectives

Introduction

The coast is one of the most desirable places to both live and visit while also being one of the most fragile. Coastal destinations have attained an iconic status that exemplifies the human-environment relationship. The coastal environment proves to be extremely attractive to both visitors and residents because of the abundant resources it offers. Hundreds of thousands of tourists flock to beaches every year in search of sand and sun, as well as many other types of amenities offered by coastal locations. Tourism plays a large role in shaping a place from environmental, economic, social and cultural standpoints. While coastal tourism plays a major role in the lives of visitors, it also plays a critical role in the lives of residents, shaping their sense of place and community.

In tourist destinations, the preferences and interests of visitors often are put ahead of those who reside and work at these locations. Tourists generate revenue for businesses, many of which exist to cater to visitors during the tourist season. The main goal of most coastal resorts is to ensure the satisfaction of visitors; however, nurturing the relationship between visitors and residents needs to be a goal as well. As the topics of sustainability and tourism continue to merge together, tourism planners continue to discuss how they can ensure the welfare of the environment, the local community and the tourism industry. Resident satisfaction in tourist destinations lies at the heart of the movement toward socially sustainable tourism (Williams & Lawson, 2001).

In order for a socially sustainable tourism industry to exist, resident opinions about tourism and the future of its development within their community must be incorporated into the tourism planning process. In order for this to occur, resident perceptions and attitudes toward

their communities and the place of tourism must be better understood. These opinions are vital to enhancing the quality of life of the host community. Addressing the place-based views and concerns of residents is critical in maintaining public support for tourism (Andereck & Vogt, 2000). Likewise, commercial tourism ventures may not be able to succeed in a community without resident support. Research into the feelings and attitudes of residents can assist planners in selecting those types of developments that minimize negative impacts on the host community. If allowed to develop without proper planning, tourism has the ability to create severe negative impacts and thus play a negative role in the lives of residents. For tourism development to be beneficial to the community, it must first be planned in a responsible way (Byrd et al, 2008).

Purpose of Thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze place satisfaction among local residents living in a coastal community that is also a popular tourist destination. Instead of using a conventional questionnaire or survey, this in-depth study used the qualitative methods of auto-photography and photo-elicitation interviews. Studies have shown that photographs have the power to unlock feelings that would not otherwise be revealed in a conventional survey or interview. This thesis is based on the idea that photographs can be used to gain entry into a person's sense of place. In reacting to and explaining their feelings about photographs, participants convey their ideas and perceptions about their community, and how tourism fits into these perceptions, both positively and negatively.

The research used auto-photography and photo-elicitation to gain insight into the feelings and opinions of full-time residents of Southern Shores, North Carolina in order to address their perceived levels of place satisfaction. The thesis evaluates what participating residents like and dislike about the community and the general themes and patterns that characterize these likes and

dislikes. The thesis also examines the influence that length of residence, employment status, and gender have on place satisfaction among the residents of Southern Shores. Lastly, the thesis examines where tourism fits, positively and negatively, into perceptions of place satisfaction among the residents, allowing the researchers to identify issues and areas of concerns related to tourism.

In addition to advancing our understanding of resident feelings towards their community and tourism development, the thesis contributes to the methodological use of photography in geography and tourism studies. Previous visual research and interpretation studies have come from the fields of landscape aesthetics, visual sociology and visual anthropology. Visual methodologies have been sporadically used in tourism research, although they are of increasing importance (MacKay & Couldwell, 2004). Sense of place and place satisfaction research has used a number of methods, including surveys and interviews, but infrequently makes use of photo-based methods.

Significance of Thesis

The goals of this thesis are to advance the understanding of resident place satisfaction in a tourism destination and how tourism affects place satisfaction, positively and negatively. By gaining a better understanding of the feelings and attitudes of residents, community officials and tourism planners will have a better idea of how they can improve the aspects of the community that are most important to residents. They will also have a greater understanding of those issues that are of the utmost concern to residents.

This thesis calls upon residents and asks them to tell personal stories about their experiences in the community. The interview portion of the project asked participants to tell why they chose to take the photographs that they did, what the photos represent and the photos'

significance in the context of place satisfaction. The thesis is innovative, as auto-photography and photo-elicitation are relatively new to tourism studies, and geographical investigations using auto-photography have tended to focus on the study of children's geographies and not sense of place in communities. In the past, tourists have been asked to chronicle their travel experiences by taking photographs and providing an explanation of their significance, but few studies have called upon residents of tourist destinations to relay their experiences living in the community through the taking of photographs.

Organization of Thesis

This thesis is organized into seven chapters. Chapter one provides an introduction to the topic and the general purpose of the thesis. Chapter two, the literature review, provides an evaluation of articles and studies addressing issues in tourism, sustainability, resident perceptions of tourism, and photography methodologies. Chapter three describes how the data were collected and the methodology used. This chapter also describes the location of study, how the participants were selected, and the procedures applied during the project. The results and discussion portions of the thesis are broken down into three different chapters. Chapter four describes the content analysis of the elements found in the photographs based on characteristics of the participants. Chapter five provides a discourse analysis of the photographs. Chapter six discusses the issues of concern among the research participants and chapter seven provides the major conclusions and findings resulting from the thesis.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of literature found to be relevant and important to the research conducted in this thesis. This chapter describes the significance of place satisfaction, implications for sustainable tourism, resident attitudes towards tourism development and photography-based methodologies.

Sense of Place & Place Satisfaction

A place is defined as a setting that has been given meaning based on human experiences, relationships, emotions and thoughts. Places consist of the physical environment, activities conducted in that environment, and social/psychological processes (Stedman et al, 2004). More specifically, sense of place can be described as a compilation of meanings, knowledge, attachment, commitment and satisfaction that an individual or group associates with a particular place. Place satisfaction is an aspect of sense of place and deals with how a place meets or fails to meet preconceived expectations, needs or standards of quality of life that a person holds (Stedman, 2002; Shamai, 1991). Community sense of place is a concept that crosses many disciplines and recognizes the ways in which a place takes on special meaning to a person. Sustainable tourism development relies on the identification of the characteristics that make a destination a unique. These characteristics can work to both improve resident place satisfaction and attract visitors (Hao et al, forthcoming).

In order for a place to be sustainable, it needs to have a stable resident population. Residents create economic, social, cultural and environmental vitality for the place. In return, residents' place satisfaction is based upon these interrelated factors. To attract and retain its resident population base, policy makers and planners must consider the expectations and needs

of current and potential residents. Surveys created by local governments often attempt to measure the level of place satisfaction of their residents. These surveys measure residents' perceptions of aspects of living in the place, such as satisfaction with community health and safety, culture and the arts, leisure and recreation, infrastructure, transportation and the natural environment (Insch & Florek, 2008). In his book, Buettner (2010) discusses place satisfaction and emotional health and makes suggestions for what communities can do to better ensure the satisfaction of their residents. Buettner recommends that communities support the arts; increase biking and walking; create a greenbelt; prohibit drive-through restaurants; reduce smoking; shrink signage; and empower the local population.

Communities that are tourist destinations differ from non-tourist destination communities based on the fact that the former experience drastic amounts of change on a weekly, monthly and seasonal basis. Tourism has positive and negative effects on all aspects of a place, including how residents feel about their community. Tourism supplements the cultural and recreational aspects of a place, giving residents more access to various activities and events (Insch & Florek, 2008). Yet, by bringing thousands of outsiders into the place, tourism increases safety concerns for residents, while also possibly decreasing the integrity of the natural environment. Because of the impacts that tourism brings to a community, planners must pay special attention to the place-based perceptions and expectations of the location's residential population.

Implications for Sustainable Tourism

Sustainability has been a popular term used recently by environmentalists and businesses hoping to "go green." According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the traditional, and most simple definition of sustainability calls for "policies and strategies that meet society's present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own

needs” (USEPA, 2010). Sustainable tourism involves designing management approaches and tools so that they better integrate tourism development and the protection of the natural environment at tourist destinations. Sustainable tourism seeks to find an appropriate balance between tourism-related economic development, environmental protection and the satisfaction of the desires of tourists and local residents alike (Hunter, 2002). According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), sustainable tourism encompasses six main principles (WTO, 2004):

- (1) optimal use of environmental resources
- (2) respecting the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities
- (3) providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders
- (4) constant monitoring of impacts
- (5) informed participation of all relevant stakeholders
- (6) a high level of tourist satisfaction

Sustainable tourism can be divided into three different areas: environmental, economic, and social. The environmental element consists of both the natural and built environment. The economic consists of the new money that enters the economy through tourism as well as the profits that are obtained by local businesses through tourism activities. Lastly, the social element includes the interactions between visitors and residents of the community. In order for tourism to be sustainable, it is vital that all three of these aspects are acknowledged and planned appropriately (Gilmore & Simmons, 2007).

Sustainable tourism has developed around two schools of thought: the functional approach and the political economy approach. The functional approach places an emphasis on the economic importance of tourism to all the participants in a community. This approach also discusses how tourism’s adverse effects can be minimized and efficiency improved. The political-economy approach emphasizes the need for the tourism industry to take responsibility in the long-term maintenance of the resources at a location by allowing the local government and

communities themselves to hold higher stakes in any tourism development at a location (Kitnuntaviwat & Tang, 2008).

Sustainable tourism gained popularity during the 1990s when researchers began to see the relationship between environmental and cultural degradation and tourism at tourist destinations (Stoddard et al., 2008). Even more recently, the sustainable tourism movement has been shifting to make residents the focal point of tourism development and planning. The sustainable tourism paradigm tries to achieve a balance between the traditional utility paradigm, social exchange theory, which looks at the tradeoffs between economic costs and benefits, and the new environmental paradigm, which focuses on the conservation of resources and the improvement of the well-being of communities and their future residents (Choi & Sirakaya, 2005).

The main goal of sustainable community tourism is to prevent the deterioration of the social, cultural and environmental systems of the host community. In addition, members of the host community should benefit in some way from tourism development in their community. It is believed that active participation by community members can make sustainable community tourism possible. Successful and effective communication channels and receptive local governments are key to this process as well. The key components of sustainable community tourism have been identified as community- based tourism, long-term planning, management and policy, natural and human resource protection, acceptable scale of development, limited economic benefits and an ethical attitude toward the environment (Choi & Sirakaya, 2005).

In order for sustainable tourism to succeed, a partnership between the tourism industry itself and the host community is vital and calls for the “harmonious relationship between the visitor, the host community, and the place, without depleting resources, cheating the visitor, or exploiting the local population” (Sheldon & Abenoja, 2001, 436). “Resident responsive

tourism” is a type of community-driven tourism development that advocates local involvement in tourism development within the community in order to ensure the vitality of destinations (Sheldon & Abenoja, 2001).

Coastal Development & Tourism

Even a cursory observation of many tourist destinations, particularly in coastal regions, reveals the profound impacts of tourism development. High rise development in coastal areas, increases in pollution and the destruction of fragile ecological systems are all consequences of the tourism industry’s exploitative nature. Land use behaviors that are associated with coastal development activities, which include the need for infrastructure for the tourism industry, contribute to land cover that increases impervious surfaces, alters the hydrologic cycle, lowers water quality, disturbs natural habitats, and changes a location’s aesthetics and sense of place (Crawford, 2007).

Coastal tourism and development in the United States have witnessed dramatic change over the past thirty years. During this time, the economy within coastal counties has shifted from traditional maritime activities to a more service-oriented and tourism-driven market (Klein, Osleeb & Viola, 2004). In 2003, the Pew Commission reported that the coastal resident population will increase 25 million by 2015 and will consume more than 20,000 acres of coastal habitat (Crawford, 2007). Much of this development will be due to the growing number of seasonal tourists visiting coastal areas. From 1990 to 2000, North Carolina’s coastal population grew by 17.5% (Crawford, 2007). This growth continues to put an increasing amount of stress on the coastal environment of North Carolina.

Studies have shown that in the United States, coastal areas are the most popular tourist destination, ahead of both national parks and historic sites. Yearly, about 180 million people

visit the coast for recreational purposes. In the United States, approximately 85 percent of tourist-related revenues are generated by coastal states (YOTO, 1998). According to the North Carolina Department of Commerce, in 2003, North Carolina was the sixth most visited state in the nation with more than 49 million tourists. The tourism industry supports over 180,000 jobs, and beach related activities are among the most popular tourism outlets (Ellis & Vogelsong, 2005).

The sustainable development of coastal tourism depends on a number of factors. These factors include the development of good coastal management practices, especially those related to infrastructure; clean air and water; maintenance of safe and secure recreational environment; beach restoration; and policies for coastal wildlife and habitat protection (Cicin-Sain & Knecht, 1999). Sustainable tourism in coastal environments also requires the host community and tourists to support these practices.

Resident Attitudes Toward Tourism

Resident attitudes toward the impacts of tourism have been studied extensively for over 30 years. In the 1960s, the research tended to focus on the positive aspects. The 1970s brought more research into the negative impacts, and a more balanced approach looking at both the positive and negative aspects of tourism was introduced in the 1980s (Andereck & Vogt, 2000). Existing literature suggests that residents play a major role in the tourism development process because they are directly impacted by it. In turn, the receptiveness of residents to tourism development plays a role in attracting and pleasing tourists (Choi & Sirakaya, 2005).

The majority of studies have revealed that, in general, residents have positive feelings toward tourism development. Residents generally report having positive attitudes toward tourism and economic improvement, more recreational opportunities, an improvement in quality

of life, an improvement in appearance and the development of cultural activities. From an economic standpoint, tourism is usually seen in a positive light. Tourism decreases unemployment by creating new jobs by employing residents in hotels, restaurants and other tourist services. Tourism also generates indirect employment by creating demand for local products that would not otherwise exist without tourists. Tourism development encourages new infrastructure development, communication and transportation facilities. Because of these benefits, residents of resort communities are expected to have higher standards of living and a higher income as a result of tourism development. However, this does not mean that residents do not view tourism in negative ways and recognize the problems of increased traffic and congestion, pollution, and a decline in resident hospitality (Andereck & Vogt, 2000).

Even though there are obvious benefits when it comes to tourism, some studies suggest that tourism negatively impacts the lives of the residential community. The development of tourism in these areas is often justified because of the economic benefit; however, problems arise environmentally, culturally and socially (Lankford & Howard, 1994). According to residents, public services, environmental concerns, and opportunities for citizen involvement appear to be the issues most sensitive to increases in tourism development in communities (Allen et. al, 1988). The seasonal nature of tourism often creates friction between residents and tourists. During the high tourist season, infrastructure and services are stretched to the maximum. Overcrowding and traffic congestion caused by tourism creates an inconvenience for residents who must go about their daily lives (Sheldon & Var, 1984). Some tourism scholars have suggested that residents have been marginalized and subordinated by the tourism development process and should instead be treated as major stakeholders (Choi & Sirakaya, 2005).

Southern Shores, North Carolina, the location of study for this project, has experienced its own tensions between tourists and residents. As discussed by Sheldon and Var (1984), traffic congestion and overcrowding are two consequences of tourism that have become irritating for residents. In September 2010, a mandatory evacuation was issued for all visitors of Southern Shores due to the approaching Hurricane Earl. In Southern Shores, there are two roads that lead from the beaches to U.S. Highway 158 and the Wright Memorial Bridge, which connects the Outer Banks with the mainland. The first is the main road, Route 12. The other, South Dogwood Trail, is a back-road. South Dogwood Trail is located in a community where many of the local residents of Southern Shores live. Figure 1 shows the location of South Dogwood Trail and Route 12. During the visitor evacuation process in September 2010, residents became irritated that the quiet back road along which they lived was now a thoroughfare for evacuating visitors. As a result, a roadblock was constructed on South Dogwood Trail by the town of Southern Shores in order to deter visitors from taking this route. This is a useful example of the tensions that exist between visitors and residents in a tourist destination.

Personal characteristics play a role in dictating how residents feel about tourism. Easterling (2005) has found that there are many residents within a tourism system who are not economically involved with tourists, but are still highly impacted by their presence. In her findings, she indicates that these residents are the ones who report the most negative perceptions of tourism development. The literature suggests that the longer respondents live in an area, the more negative their views toward tourism become (Um and Crompton, 1987). Sheldon and Var (1984) found that lifelong residents tend to be more sensitive to the impact of tourism in their daily lives, and that newcomers tend to appreciate the economic gains that tourism produces. In their study, Lankford and Howard (1994) found that those residents born in the area and long-



Figure 1: Location of South Dogwood Trail and Route 12
Source: Google Maps

term residents tended to hold less favorable feelings toward tourism, but the difference was not profound. In contrast, Tomljenovic and Faulker (1999) found that older residents tend to be more tolerant towards tourists in their community and less concerned with the environmental impacts of tourism than younger residents. Their study revealed that older residents tend to be highly concerned with crime, safety and disturbance in their neighborhood, although only about 20 percent credited a threat to their safety to tourism. McCool and Martin (1994) and Williams et al. (1995) found that long-term residents tend to have a less favorable opinion of tourism than did short term residents. Girard and Gartner (1993) found that long-term residents generally did not want to see increased tourism development. Other studies show that women tend to be more opposed to tourism development than men (Mason and Cheyne, 2000; Harrill and Potts, 2003).

Kitnuntaviwat and Tang (2008) found that sustainability attitudes and sense of community affect the way residents perceive tourism and their reactions to tourism development. In order for sustainable tourism to succeed, participation of the local community is vital. If residents are alienated from the tourism decision making process, they will likely have negative feelings toward future tourism developments. They will also harbor feelings of ill will towards tourists. Visitors are not likely to return to a place in which the local people do not make them feel welcome (Kitnuntaviwat and Tang, 2008). It is imperative that resort towns realize the importance of recognizing the needs of their residents along with the needs of tourists and investors. Tourism planners increasingly view residents as being a vital part of a destination's "hospitality atmosphere" and try to incorporate their opinions into planning efforts. Studying the local populations' perception of tourism impacts can help to minimize the friction between tourists and residents and can help governing bodies and tourism planners make decisions

regarding tourism development that will satisfy the needs of both residents and tourists alike (Lankford & Howard, 1994).

Theoretical Perspectives

Social-carrying capacity

Social-carrying capacity describes a threshold that characterizes how well a community is able to cope with the negative social impacts of tourism development. The threshold will be low in a community that lacks proper tourism planning that matches the expectations and needs of residents. Portrayals of dissatisfaction by residents will likely create an unwelcoming atmosphere and discourage further tourist visits (Mansfeld, 1992).

Social-carrying capacity is made up of three different categories. The first, destination characteristics, is made up of both the sociocultural structure of the community and the location's qualities. The second category, development-process characteristics refers to a community's ability to adapt to changes caused by tourism development. The last category, tourist characteristics, suggests that the number of tourists present in a community, the length of their stay, their racial and economic characteristics and their behavior all have an impact on the community (Mansfeld, 1992).

Measuring Community Attachment

Community attachment is defined as "the extent and pattern of social participation and integration into the community, and sentiment or affect toward the community" (McCool & Martin, 1994, 30). Past research has measured resident attachment in various ways. Um and Crompton (1987) measured resident attachment levels in a community based on length of residence, birthplace and ethnic heritage. Williams et al. (1995) measured community attachment based on length of residence, age and income. Jurowski (1998) measured attachment

by looking at how respondents rated their quality of life and satisfaction with the community as a place to live.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory in tourism research focuses on the assumption that tourism development is associated with economic benefits in exchange for various social and environmental impacts (Harrill, 2004). Social exchange theory suggests that residents are likely to support tourism development as long as they believe that the benefits will exceed the costs. (Kitnuntaviwat and Tang, 2008). In the case of tourism research, the exchange is a social characteristic of the encounter between residents and guests. This encounter is often unbalanced due to the exploitation of either the resident or the tourist (Ap, 1992).

Importance of Photographs

Photographs contribute to ethnographic research because they are considered visual data. The visual has always been an important component in geographical research (Thomas, 2009). Visual methods provide a qualitative approach to data generation. Visual approaches to methodology can include photographs and dialogue that provide knowledge about the human condition and help foster a better understanding of social and cultural factors (Keller et. al, 2008). Visually-based research methodologies involve the collection and critical interpretation of photographs as a source of data. These data can provide researchers with a better idea of the meanings that people attach to a place.

The differences in interviews that use images and interviews that use words only reside in the way humans respond to each of these symbolic representations. The parts of the brain that process visual information are evolutionarily older than those that process verbal information. Because of this, exchanges using images evoke deeper elements of consciousness than do verbal

exchanges (Harper, 2002). In their study, Miller et al. (2010) made use of visual stimuli in the form of colored picture cards that illustrated a variety of tourist behaviors. These visuals became referents for the participants and helped them to better convey meanings. Study participants were asked to sort the picture cards according to places that they most and least desired to visit and again according to which tourist activities they thought had the greatest negative environmental impact. These sorting methods helped to stimulate the discussion of what aspects are most appealing to tourists and what they perceive as being environmentally harmful. Results of the study indicate that respondents' understanding of how tourism relates to the environment is weak (Miller et al, 2010).

Auto-Photography

Auto-photography is an ethnographic field research technique that attempts to understand what qualities of environments and places are important to subjects in their daily lives. Auto-photography relies heavily on technology, especially the development of the camera and film. This research method, therefore, has not been used in geographical research for a long period of time (Thomas, 2009). Auto-photography involves content that is meaningful to the subject and selected by the subject from many different alternatives. Auto-photography requires the subject to select the appropriate environment, focus on the portion of it that makes up the nonverbal message and make the decision by taking the photo (Ziller and Lewis, 1981).

Auto-photography has been used mostly by geographers studying children's geographies. In the past, geographers have also used this method to study identity, time- space geography and human-environment interactions. This type of research has proven to be very useful in obtaining information and ideas from those who find it difficult to articulate and verbally explain what they are thinking. This research method is also useful for those who may be intimidated by

participating in a research study (Thomas, 2009). Auto-photography puts the research subjects in control, which can be both an advantage and disadvantage for the researcher. The researcher has no control over the selection of the photographs. It is also difficult for the researcher to understand the complete mental process that takes place when the participant chooses to take a photograph.

Auto-photography came into being in the 1960s and early 1970s when ethnographers began to question the ways in which subjects viewed the world. In 1966, Solworth and Adair gave cameras to Navajo Native Americans in Arizona. They taught them to use the cameras and edit film. The result of the study gave the researchers a better understanding of how these people view the world. The 1970s and 1980s brought the inventions of the instamatic and “Polaroid” cameras, which allowed research subjects to take photos and have instant results. These cameras were expensive, however, so researchers were often forced to accompany their subjects in the photo taking process. Ziller and his colleagues conducted a number of auto-photography studies during the 1970s and 1980s in which they asked research subjects to photograph their environment (Ziller et al., 1977; Ziller and Lewis, 1981; Ziller and Rorer, 1985). These studies gave researchers a better insight into how people see and interpret places and environments. Inexpensive disposable cameras became popular in the 1990s, allowing researchers to distribute cameras to their subjects and not be forced to accompany them on their photographic experience (Thomas, 2009).

Gotschi, Delve and Freyer (2009) highlight the fact that participatory methods in photography are being used more often in research and discuss the reasons why this may be the case:

- (1) to develop a deeper understanding of individuals and groups and their beliefs and social relations;
- (2) to give the researched a stronger voice;
- (3) to give the researcher a better idea of how research subjects think about the research topic at hand;
- (4) to provide an additional qualitative method for complementing other data;
- (5) to share the stories of the photographs with policy makers, governments and others (Gotschi et al., 2009).

The visual has always been an important component in geographical research. Usually, the most important aspect of auto-photographs as data is how the research subject orients himself or herself to the environment which they photographed. The images contain symbols, but there are many ways in which these symbols can be interpreted. Photos are the production of the subject and show his or her position when taking the photo. From these photos, researchers can understand the different social motivations of the subject by examining why certain scenes are captured in photos over others. Each photo contains important information about the subject who took the photo (Thomas, 2009).

In tourism studies, Visitor Employed Photography (VEP) has been used to capture visitor's perceptions of a location. However, these locations are not only experienced by visitors, but by year-round residents as well. Residents may have different perceptions of the place, and these views can be captured through resident employed photography. It is likely that residents have deeper feelings about a place because they are more familiar with it, and because of this familiarity, may be able to bring about a wider range of topics than photographs taken by visitors (Stedman et al, 2004). VEP, or in the case of this study, resident-employed photography, can greatly assist in understanding place attachment because:

- (1) it can convey multilayered meanings;
- (2) photographs have the ability to serve as a reference and point of focus during the interviews;

- (3) photographs are taken in ways that are not easily captured using other methods, such as surveys.
(Stedman, 2004)

Photo-Elicitation

Photo-elicitation takes auto-photography to the next level by using the photos to evoke responses from participants (Hurworth et. al, 2005). The interview process entails a discussion between the researcher and the participant about the photos the participant has taken (Keller et. al, 2008). Photographs are not always what they appear to be and may represent something very different when comparing the perception of the researcher to the participant. Photo-elicitation serves as a follow-up method and helps the researcher understand the true intentions of the participant in taking the photo (Stedman, 2004). Photo-elicitation is commonly used in order to improve the cultural meaningfulness of research questions (MacKay and Couldwell, 2004).

Photo-elicitation has been used in a number of studies, including health settings (Hurworth et. al, 2005), outdoor adventure experiences (Loeffler, 2004), cultural studies (Samuels, 2004) and tourist behavior (Zainuddin, 2009). Samuels (2004) looked at the differences between word-only interviews and photo-elicited interviews. He found that those interviews that included photographs tended to bring forth not only more information, but more detailed information as well. Samuels also found that having photographs present in the research process helped to establish a bond between the researcher and the participants, as well as minimizing uneasiness between the two. Hurworth et al. (2005) found that in health studies, photo-elicitation leads participants to divulge more specific and more detailed narratives than the interviews could have provided alone.

Advocates for using photo-elicitation as a method of study argue that photo-elicitation produces more concrete information, has the ability to trigger memory, and is more likely to evoke more emotional and multi-layered responses in participants than a word-only interview (Croghan et al., 2008). Photo-elicitation can also be used to make the interviewees feel more comfortable in the interview situation, as they can refer to the photos to assist them in answering questions. The photographs are often used as a starting point from which trust can be developed between the researcher and the study participant (Cederholm, 2004). By bringing images into the center of the research process, it puts the focus on the photographs rather than on the participant. Photo-elicitation is a collaborative process where the researcher becomes the listener as the participant interprets the meanings of the photo (Loeffler, 2004).

This study contributes to the current literature because it examines the usefulness of auto-photography and photo-elicitation methods in geography and tourism studies. This particular study differs from previously conducted studies because it uses a different sample population. Previous studies using auto-photography and photo-elicitation have used either children or visitors as their research participants. Also, this study helps to advance the knowledge of the place satisfaction of residents living in a tourist destination. Overall, the study makes suggestions for town officials and planners regarding how they can better incorporate the feelings of residents in order to maintain their support of tourism.

Chapter Three: Data & Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an explanation of how the study's empirical research was conducted. The chapter begins by describing the study area of the project and then describes the process by which research participants were selected. The chapter then describes data collection and how the interviews with participants were conducted. The last portion of the chapter gives a brief discussion of content and discourse analysis and how both were utilized in the project.

Study Area

This study was conducted in Southern Shores, North Carolina. A case study approach seems appropriate for this type of project because case studies allow for research to be conducted in a grounded, real-life situation. In-depth discussions that are relevant to real-world problems and situations will be obtained from the research (Wilson and McIntosh, 2007). As shown in Figure 2, Southern Shores is located on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Southern Shores is a small oceanfront town located on the northern portion of the Outer Banks in Dare County. The Outer Banks is a chain of barrier islands on the Atlantic Seaboard. Dare County's year-round population was 33,955, according to the 2008 census. The Dare County Planning Department estimates that the seasonal tourist population increases to approximately 200,000 (Hao et al, forthcoming). Southern Shores is located just north of the Wright Memorial Bridge that connects the Outer Banks to the mainland. According to Peter Rascoe (2010), the town manager of Southern Shores, the year round population in 2010 was 2,600 with an additional 15,000 seasonal tourists. According to the US Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey, 46.5 percent of the year-round population is male, while 53.5 percent is female.

Northeast North Carolina Coast

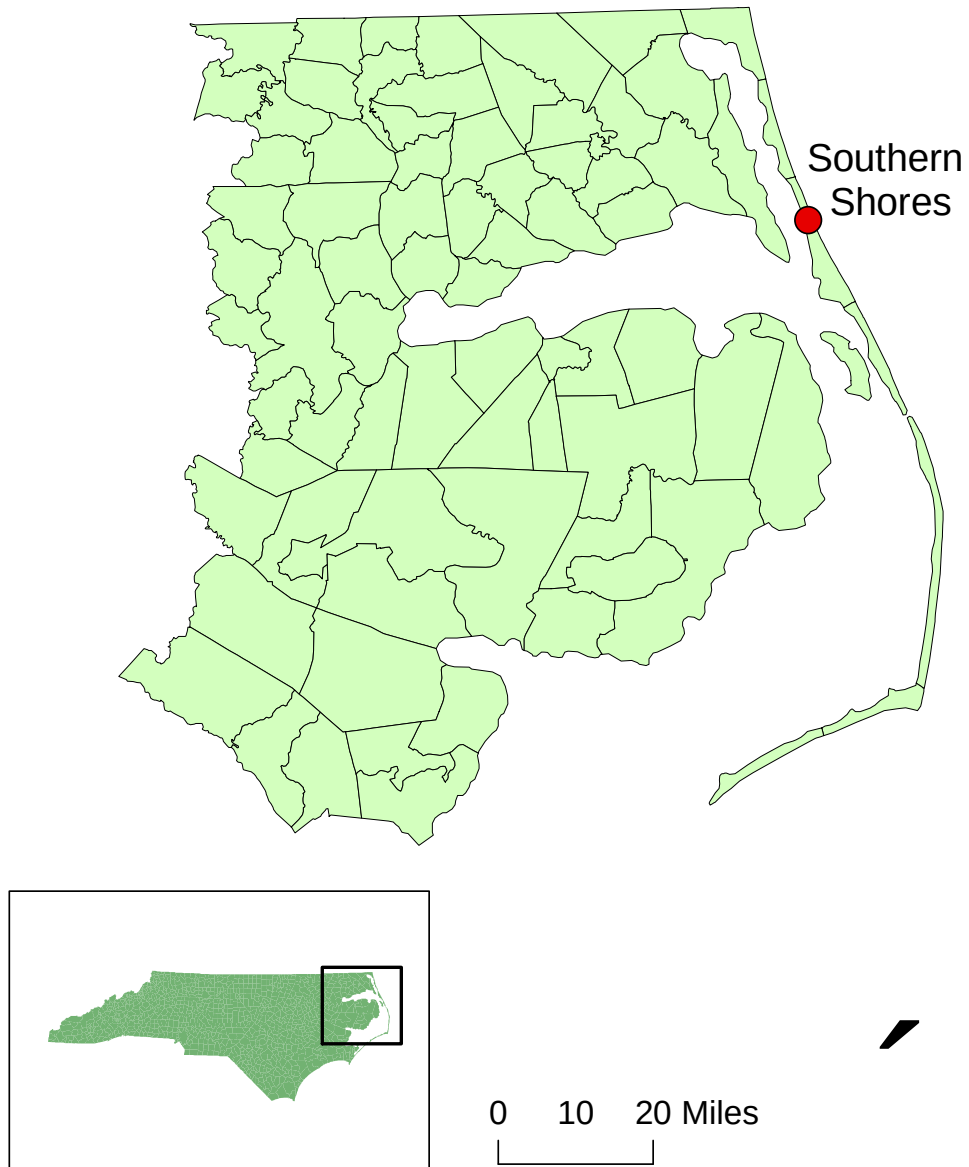


Figure 2: Location of Southern Shores, North Carolina

Approximately 57.3 percent of the town's population is in the labor force. About 53.3 percent of the homes in Southern Shores are owner-occupied, leaving 46.7 percent vacant, indicating the large number of rental homes in the town (US Census Bureau, 2011).

Southern Shores is a small town that serves as both a place of residence and a tourist destination. Tourist destinations often have problems that arise due to conflicts between residents and tourists. While sometimes hidden in larger destinations, these conflicts can often be magnified in small towns. Likewise, smaller tourist destinations such as Southern Shores, often use the "local flavor" of the destination as a selling point. In order to maintain this "local flavor" and a harmonious relationship between local residents and tourists, tourism planners and officials must be sensitive to local resident values and opinions, especially in small tourist destinations.

Selection of Research Participants

The participants chosen for this study are residents of the town of Southern Shores. Southern Shores witnesses a large tourist season with thousands of visitors flocking to its beaches, yet has a sizeable year-round resident population. Participants were drawn from members of the Southern Shores Civic Association (SSCA). By using this group in the participant recruitment and selection strategy, the researcher was given access to the participants' mailing and email addresses. Membership in the SSCA also signals a certain level of commitment and concern for Southern Shores as a place.

The SSCA is open to both year-round residents and those who simply own property in Southern Shores. The SSCA performs a number of services for citizens of the town, as well as its guests. Services include maintenance of the beach access points, parking areas, tennis courts, and marinas. Membership in the SSCA is relatively non-exclusive, as it only costs \$50 per year

to join. The SSCA manages an online database which contains a directory of its members. The directory includes information about the members, including their mailing addresses and email addresses. For the purposes of this study, access to this directory was granted by the SSCA. The SSCA directory contains 3,042 listings. These listings include those of property owners and second home owners, not exclusively year-round residents of the town. For the purpose of this study, only year-round residents of Southern Shores were selected as participants. This is not to suggest that second-home owners are not legitimate stakeholders within the community (e.g. see Hao, forthcoming) but it is vital to engage research participants who will see and experience the community for a significant portion of the year. Using the SSCA directory, a pool of potential participants was created. Those people with postal mailing addresses in Southern Shores (indicating that they are full-time residents) were contacted by email to see who might be interesting in participating in the study.

Approximately 400 residents were contacted by email on October 1, 2010. The final set of research participants was then selected using “criterion-based sampling.” This type of sampling asks potential participants for some information about themselves to see if they meet the criteria for inclusion in the study (Loeffler, 2004). Thus, potential participants were asked how long they have lived in Southern Shores full time; if they currently work in the area; if they retired to Southern Shores; and specifically, if they would be willing to participate in an auto-photography study and a photo-elicitation interview process. Contacted residents were given a week to respond via email. Approximately 50 responses were received from interested residents, however only 14 residents were selected for the study due to limited time restraints and funding. Participants were selected based on their length of residence in the town, their gender, and their current employment status. Before returning his camera, one participant dropped out of the

project for a personal reason. Therefore, 13 photograph collections were generated and 13 interviews were conducted.

The selection process sought to find participants who have lived in Southern Shores for varied amounts of time. The study was then able to compare the perspectives of people living in the area for a short period of time versus those who have lived in the community for a longer period of time. Inspiration for examining resident perceptions based on lengths of residence in the community came from a case study of Chincoteague Island, Virginia, conducted by Easterling (2005).

Easterling's survey contained items that measured residents' attitudes toward the benefits and costs of tourism. First, the survey asked residents about the length of residency, residency type, and achieved education level. The survey then examined resident perceptions regarding congestion and crowding, increased costs of living, feelings of estrangement, and changes in way of life. The study found that there were significant differences in attitudes between the different groups of residents. Those who were born on the island had different opinions about tourism than those who moved there later.

The population composition of Southern Shores is similar to that of Chincoteague Island, as both locations have residents with varying length of residence in the community. This study sought to acquire the same type of information gathered by Easterling, but by using auto-photograph and photo-elicitation as the primary methods instead of a conventional survey.

Data Collection

The residents who were selected to participate in the auto-photography and photo-elicitation study were each given a disposable camera and a brief set of instructions. They were asked to take 15 photographs that depict what they like and dislike about their community.

Instructions were brief, so as to not cause confusion among the participants. By providing such a broad prompt, this study wanted to delve into the imagination of the participants in order to obtain an unmediated representation of their true feelings about their community. Auto-photography is a participatory method that allows for the subjects to reflect on their own existence and place in their communities. Taking photographs often helps subjects to enhance their own observational skills. Auto-photography produces a situation in which the researched are able to construct and communicate the meanings that they have attributed to images that they themselves have produced. Consequently, the photographs can serve as a resource for the subject as he or she articulates a narrative about him or herself to the researcher (Johnsen et al, 2008). This method allows participants to use the space around them to demonstrate their perceptions rather than just talk about their thoughts and feelings or answer predetermined questions (Phoenix, 2010). Allowing participants to take their own photographs gives them the ability to include and exclude what they feel is important to them personally (Epstein et al, 2006). The auto-photography method is especially important in understanding place attachment. This method allows participants to tell stories and document their experiences through the photographs that they have taken (Stedman, 2004).

Fifteen photographs were deemed to be sufficient to capture the feelings and attitudes of the residents without becoming burdensome to the participants. Participants were asked to return the disposable cameras to the researcher by November 5, 2010 after the 15 photographs had been taken. The film was then developed by the researcher at no cost to the participant. Having the researcher handle film development allowed for less potential error and loss of images as well as the conversion of photographs into digital files. Once the participants submitted cameras and photographs were developed, photo-elicitation interviews were scheduled in between November

9, 2010 and November 29, 2010. Interviews were held at either Starbucks in Kitty Hawk, NC, Bonnie's Bagels, or Duck Woods Country Club, both in Southern Shores. Participants decided the location in which they wanted the interview to be held. All three of the locations were convenient to the participants and provided comfortable places to sit to conduct the interviews. The interviews were generally 45 to 90 minutes in length.

The researcher conducted an in-depth interview with each of the participants individually in order to gain a better perspective of how residents felt about their community as reflected in the photographs that were taken. Interviews were recorded using a digital recording device. Before the interview, each photograph was given a number so that during the interview process the photos could be referenced and the information recorded.

At the beginning of the interview, each participant was asked some brief biographical questions. Participants were then given a chance to lead the conversation about the photographs. To further the depth of the interview, the laddering technique was applied. The laddering technique refers to the process of asking probing follow up questions that encourage participants to think on a deeper, more emotional level. Examples of questions that were asked include:

- What is this a photo of?
- Why did you choose to take this photo?
- Is this an aspect of your community that you like or dislike? Why?

A direct, participant-led analysis of the photographs and the participant follow-up responses helped the researcher to understand what the participating residents of Southern Shores liked and disliked about their community. Since Southern Shores is a tourist destination, residents' perceptions and attitudes about tourism in their community were main themes in the photographs taken, and interview questions sought to elucidate the role of tourism in place satisfaction. Participants were asked if there were any photos missing from their collection that would

exemplify their likes and dislikes within the community, assuming that participants may have forgotten to take a photo or could not find one that captured their perception of place.

In order to gain a better perspective about the place satisfaction of the residents of Southern Shores, the following questions were also asked:

- What motivated you to move to the Outer Banks?
- What have been your general impressions of the Outer Banks as a community?
- How satisfied are you with living here?
- What do you believe makes a place satisfying to live in?
- What improvements would you like to see made to the community?

These questions helped to gain a broader understanding of why the participant chose the Outer Banks as his or her place of residency, what their general impressions are of the community, and what is their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the community and improvements they would like to see made.

Asking participants to take photographs during the months of October and November had both advantages and disadvantages. These months are not considered to be the conventional tourist season, Memorial Day to Labor Day, but do fall into what some consider the “shoulder season,” from Easter weekend to Thanksgiving (Hao et al, forthcoming). Some participants discussed that they were unable to take photos of large crowds, traffic, and other elements of tourism that they disliked. This is why each participant was asked if they would have taken additional photographs if they had been given a longer period of time to complete the project. An advantage to this time period, as acknowledged by participants, was that the participants were forced to think about the aspects of the community and tourism in particular that they liked instead of focusing on solely the negative aspects of tourism. It also forced participants to look past the large crowds and traffic and examine the elements of the community that cause these issues.

Being a member of the Southern Shores community gave the researcher a valuable advantage in conducting this project at this study site. First of all, knowledge of the community itself and the make-up of its residents helped to give the researcher an advantage in finding participants for the project. The researcher was introduced in the initial email to residents as a fellow member of the community. Some residents may have been more willing to participate in the project because they felt that they were helping a fellow community member. Also, in interviewing the participants, the researcher was familiar with many of the issues discussed and the locations of various features throughout the community.

The researcher being a member of the community also presented disadvantages to the study. As a resident of the community, the researcher had previously developed opinions about the community and the problems that exist. The researcher did her best to minimize the influence that these opinions may have had on the research. It is also possible that the research participants' responses were conditioned by the fact that the researcher was a fellow member of the community; however, participants were reminded that they could speak freely about their concerns.

Content Analysis

A content analysis of the photographs taken by participants was used to explore the number and type of elements displayed visually in the photographs. Content analysis is a well-established method in social research and requires the researcher to count the number of times a particular theme or issue appears in the text, or in this case, the photograph. The result of this method was a numerical summary of the importance of certain features in the photographs over others.

Content analysis is an observation research method that allows for the systematic evaluation of the content of recorded communication, such as photographs (Hall and Valentin, 2005). In this study, the content analysis of photographs provided a means of recording the frequency of pictorial elements and allowed for inferences to be made regarding the prevalence and absence of types of content (Rose, 2001).

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis was used in conjunction with content analysis to examine the photographs in a greater totality. Discourse analysis determined the overarching discourse and themes that were present in the group photographs taken by participants. The nature of the discourse analysis was somewhat subjective as the researcher determined the overarching themes that seemed to be present in the photographs after looking at photographs and reflecting on comments made by participants in the photo-elicitation interviews. The main disadvantage of this type of research was the potential influence of the researcher. However, this type of research is not different from other methods of research in the social sciences. Similar to this study, research in the social sciences largely rests on the judgment of the researcher and the application of the research process. By incorporating content analysis with discourse analysis, the researcher was able to put a numerical breakdown of place satisfaction results in a larger, more interpretive context.

Although content analysis is extremely useful in charting the elements of the photos, the research must move further than just content description and focus on larger themes or taken for granted ideas behind the photos (Albers & James, 1988). Discourse is a way of talking about or representing the world to make it meaningful. It is a shared way of thinking about reality that places a key role in how people construct and give meaning to the landscape (Alderman and

Ward, 2008). This research will follow a recent geographic trend in adapting the previous techniques of discourse analysis to critically examine images (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2002). It requires close and skillful reading and interpretation of visual images (Alderman and Ward, 2008).

For this study, a number of major discourses or interpretative themes became evident through the analysis of photographs taken by research participants. Many different layers of meaning can be interpreted through an image; therefore, there was a large number of discourses or ways of thinking about Southern Shores that became apparent.

Chapter Four: Results & Discussion - Content Analysis

This chapter is one of three that presents the results and discusses the findings. In this chapter is a description of the characteristics of the participants and the content analysis of the photographs taken by residents. The content analysis gives a breakdown of the number of positive and negative images photographed and discusses the elements displayed in the photographs for each of the respective collections. Chapter five provides a discussion of the discourses derived from the participants' photographs and the dialogue during the photo-elicitation portion of the project. Chapter six discusses the various issues of resident concern as derived from both the photographs and the interviews. Selected photographs taken by participants are included in the thesis. The photo captions consist of quotations provided by the participant, using his or her pseudonym.

A key component in place satisfaction involves residents' concerns regarding the place in which they reside and whether or not these concerns are acknowledged by town officials and managers. Residents show concern for the appearance of the place, the services that are provided, current and future development, congestion and traffic, their health and safety, and their overall happiness living in that location. A tourist destination located on the coast brings about even more concerns from local residents. These include concerns regarding tourist behavior and tourism development, as well as concerns regarding beach access, beach replenishment and the impact of storms. The photographs taken by participants illustrate the aspects of the community that the participants feel are positive and negative.

As mentioned previously, a broad prompt was given to participants, so as not to restrict the type of photographs taken. As a result, the types of images vary within the study's

photograph collection. Participants were quite creative in what they chose to photograph and in the manner in which they represented some of the issues and themes most important to them. Some photographs show places, people and events that participants felt were vital components of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the community. Other photographs were more symbolic, but rooted in community concerns held by participants. Photographs were taken within the town of Southern Shores itself and within the surrounding Outer Banks community. Participants were asked to take 15 photographs, however, some chose to take more and a few participants took fewer.

Since not all of the photographs taken were self-explanatory or self-evident, the photo-elicitation process assisted greatly in gaining a better understanding of the concerns of the participants. Some of the photographs that, at first glance, would be expected to represent a negative aspect of the community actually represented something positive in the eyes of the participant, and vice versa. The photo-elicitation interview portion of the project allowed for these possible discrepancies to be resolved. In addition, the interview process allowed for participants to recall stories and articulate them to the researcher. Participants gave accounts of their connections with the community. Stories of interactions with people, other residents and tourists alike, and with the environment were common. Stories of the participant's spiritual connection with the place were common in the conversations as well. All of these stories proved to be rich with information and offered valuable data for the project.

Characteristics of Participants

Of the 13 residents selected to participate in the project, six were male and seven were female, as illustrated in Table 1. Six of the participants were employed and seven were not employed. The participants were split into three groups based on their length of residence. The

first group (Group 1) was made up of four participants who had lived in Southern Shores for more than 16 years. One male and three females made up this group with three of the participants employed and one unemployed. The second group (Group 2) consisted of those participants who had resided in the town for six to 15 years. Five people were placed into this group, with three being female and two being male. Four of the participants in this group were unemployed while one was employed. The last group (Group 3) was made up of four participants who had resided in Southern Shores for less than five years. This group consisted of one female and three males. Two of the participants in this group were unemployed and the remaining two were employed. In order for the identities of the participants to remain anonymous, all names were changed, so pseudonyms were given to each of the participants. The following provides a brief biography of each of the participants:

The first group of participants consisted of Paul, Carol, Betty, and Donna. Paul has resided in Southern Shores for 24 years and is employed in the tourism industry. Paul moved to Southern Shores from Virginia after visiting the Outer Banks as a tourist in the years prior. Paul has raised a family in the community. Carol, a resident for 21 years, moved to Southern Shores from New Jersey. Her husband is a native of the area, so she was familiar with the Outer Banks before becoming a permanent resident. She is employed by her church and has raised children in Southern Shores. Betty has lived in Southern Shores for 20 years and is a real estate agent. She began visiting Southern Shores as a tourist before moving to the town from her home in West Virginia. She has raised a family in the community. Betty also owns a second home in Southern Shores that is rented to tourists. Donna is retired and has lived in the community for 17 years. She also owns a second home that is rented to tourists.

Pseudonym	Length of Residence (years)	Sex (M/F)	Work Status (working/non-working)
Group 1			
Paul	24	M	Working
Carol	21	F	Working
Betty	20	F	Working
Donna	17	F	Non-working
Group 2			
Anne	15	F	Non-working
Daniel	15	M	Working
Sandra	11	F	Non-working
Barbara	7	F	Non-working
Robert	6	M	Working
Group 3			
Mary	4	F	Non-working
Thomas	3	M	Working
William	3	M	Non-working
Michael	1	M	Working

Table 1: Participant characteristics

the second group of participants was made up of Anne, Daniel, Sandra, Barbara, and Robert.

Anne, a 15 year resident, is retired and moved to Southern Shores from California. She raised a family in the community. Daniel has also lived in Southern Shores for 15 years and currently works for the local school system. Sandra, an 11 year resident, moved to Southern Shores after residing in many areas of the country, as her late husband was employed by the military.

Barbara has lived in the community for seven years, but began vacationing in Southern Shores in the early 1980s. She moved to Southern Shores from New York after retiring from her job as a teacher. Robert, a resident for six years is currently retired. He began visiting the Outer Bank as a tourist 12 years ago.

The third participant group consisted of Mary, Thomas, William, and Michael. Mary has resided in Southern Shores for four years. She began visiting the Outer Banks as a tourist initially and is currently retired. Thomas has called Southern Shores home for three years after retiring from his career. He and his family moved frequently but vacationed often in the Outer Banks. Thomas currently operates a business in the community. William has also resided in Southern Shores for three years. He moved to the community from Washington, D.C. William was quite familiar with the area before moving, as he began visiting the Outer Banks forty years ago. Lastly, Michael, a resident for only one year, currently commutes to Virginia for work. His family moved to the Outer Banks after frequently vacationing in the area. Each participant comes from a different background, from where they initially resided to whether or not they are currently employed. Each characteristic plays an important role in the participant's place satisfaction. Each participant's situation dictates what aspects of the community that he or she "likes" or "dislikes."

In order to investigate the place satisfaction of the participants, the photographs were analyzed four times, each based on a different variable. Each analysis determined the proportion of likes to dislikes for each of the groups, followed by a content analysis of the features found in the photographs. The first analysis addressed the group of participants as a whole to determine the overall place satisfaction of the participants. The second looked at the place satisfaction of participants based on their length of residence in the community. The third analysis investigated the place satisfaction of participants based on their current employment status and the last analysis looked at place satisfaction based on the gender of the participant. These variables were selected because places can be both empowering and constraining to different groups of people. Variation in length of residence, employment status, and gender can instill different degrees of place satisfaction and can play a role in determining what a person needs and desires from a place.

General Place Satisfaction of Participants

Because participants were given cameras and a very brief set of directions instructing them to take photographs of what they liked and disliked about their community, some participants chose to photograph only aspects of Southern Shores, while others interpreted their community as being the entire Outer Banks. Both interpretations are valid because the goals of the project are to better understand resident place satisfaction in a tourist destination, whether Southern Shores alone or the Outer Banks as a whole. Both interpretations provide a better idea of the community features that satisfy and dissatisfy participants.

The photographs that participants chose to take exhibited three different types of images, including *overt*, *surface*, and *deep*. Overt images were shown in the photographs in which the participant photographed the exact feature which he or she liked or disliked, as shown in Figure

3. The store shown in the photograph shows the participant's dislike for big retail chain stores in the community. Surface images were shown in those photos in which the participant photographed an element that was meant to represent another feature, as depicted in Figure 4. This photo represents the participant's appreciation for volunteerism within the community. Deep messages, as shown in Figure 5, were abstract, often representing another topic or idea that the participant liked or disliked. This photograph represents the participant's appreciation for patriotism in the community. In order to better understand the meanings of the messages presented in the photos, the photo-elicited interviews were extremely helpful.

The first analysis consisted of determining the number of images representing participant satisfaction (like) and the number representing participant dissatisfaction (dislike) with elements of the community. A total of 181 photographs were taken by the 13 participants. Of these, 137 (76%) were defined by the participants in their photo-elicitation interviews as "like" images and 44 (24%) were "dislike" images. Table 2 shows the number of photographs taken by each participant and the percentage of those photos that participants identified as being likes and dislikes.

Next, the photographs were analyzed by the type of photograph taken. The Outer Banks, as a tourist destination, is both a built and natural place. Both aspects attract visitors and play a role in the place satisfaction of residents. The built environment consists of those features of the community that are strongly influenced by humans. The natural environment, on the other hand, consists of features that are native to the environment, with less human intervention. Both the built and natural components of a place are vital to its sustainability as a tourist destination and a residential community. The natural environment, such as beaches and waterways attract visitors and residents and makes the Outer Banks community a desirable place to live or visit. On the



Figure 3: Example of an overt image, as displayed in a participant photograph.



Figure 4: Example of a surface image, as displayed in a participant photograph.



Figure 5: Example of a deep message, as displayed in a participant photograph.

Name (pseudonym)	# Photos taken	% Likes	% Dislikes
Anne	11	81.8	18.2
Barbara	14	71.4	28.6
Betty	16	81.3	18.8
Carol	12	83.3	16.7
Daniel	19	84.2	15.8
Donna	16	93.8	6.2
Mary	12	50	50
Michael	14	85.7	14.3
Paul	10	80	20
Robert	9	77.8	22.2
Sandra	13	76.9	23.1
Thomas	20	65	35
William	14	57.1	42.9

Table 2: Percentage of “likes” and “dislikes” per participant.

opposite end of the spectrum, the built environment makes the Outer Banks livable, providing the basic services necessary for everyday life. Though that may be the case, the built environment is also represented by commercialization and development that goes beyond necessity. Figures 6 and 7 provide examples of participant photographs taken of the natural and built environments, respectively.

One hundred and thirty-three (73%) of the photographs in the total collection displayed a feature of the built environment. Forty-eight of the photographs (27%) in the total collection displayed features of the natural environment. As shown in Figure 8, of the 133 photos depicting the built environment, 90 of them (68%) were identified by research participants as being “like” images. Forty-three of the photos (32%) were described as being “dislike” images. Of the 48 natural environment photos, 47 (98%) were “like” images and only one (2%) was a “dislike” image. This analysis perhaps illustrates that both the built and natural environments contain elements that are important to participants. The built environment tended to be photographed more because participants came into contact with these elements on a daily basis. The built environment tended to have more critics, as participants identified elements of the built environment as a “dislike” much more frequently than they did elements of the natural environment.

The second analysis investigated the qualitative differences in the photographs in each of the collections. Photographs were analyzed by the type of feature being depicted in the photograph. The purpose of this analysis was to examine the images that participants chose to display in their photographs, and examine the issues of place satisfaction. Table 3 illustrates the “likes” displayed in the photographs. Photographs of various businesses around the community, the beach/ocean, waterways/canals, and forest/foilage were the most common likes of



Figure 6: Example of the natural environment, as displayed in a participant photograph.



Figure 7: Example of the built environment, as displayed in a participant photograph.

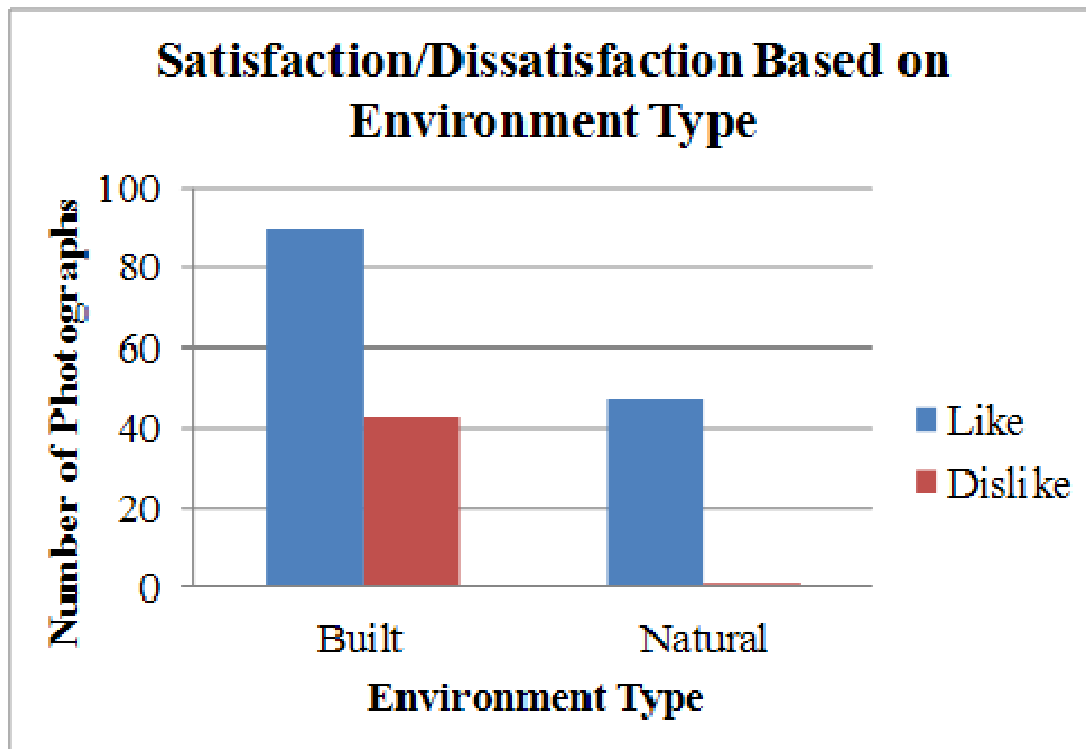


Figure 8: Satisfaction and dissatisfaction based on the type of environment, as displayed in participant photographs.

participants. The businesses that were most frequently photographed as “likes” were small stores and non-chain restaurants as displayed in Figure 9. Big businesses were only represented once as a “like”. Houses/ architecture, recreational services, neighborhood features, and community events were also frequently photographed. Other features that were photographed and identified as “likes” include icons of the community, Jockey’s Ridge, the Wright Brother’s Memorial monument, representations of patriotism, wildlife, representations of environmental sustainability (e.g. wind turbines, recycling containers) piers, churches, signs, roads, and representations of the climate (e.g. thermometer showing temperature).

As shown in Table 4, a number of “dislikes” were also displayed in the photographs taken by participants. The most common “dislike” shown in the photographs were images related to roads. Participants used photographs to document a lack of crosswalks and sidewalks for pedestrians, excessive traffic, and dangerous road designs. Another frequent photographed “dislike” dealt with businesses. The majority of the businesses displayed in these photographs were large stores such as The Home Depot, Wal-Mart, and Food Lion. Other “dislikes” included the excessive use of signs, empty buildings and houses and architectural styles that participants felt did not “fit” the beach. Photographs of utilities, governmental buildings such as town hall and the police station, and pollution were also included. Interestingly, the only “dislike” photograph taken of the natural environment represented the storms that often strike the Outer Banks.

Place Satisfaction of Participants Based on Length of Residence

The photographs taken by participants were then sorted into three collections based on their length of residence within the community. Photographs were analyzed again by the number of likes and dislikes and by the types of features shown in each of the photos, but this time with a



Figure 9: “The old mom and pop businesses that have been around for decades need to be preserved. This is the heritage of our community that we are talking about and by tearing them down strips us of our history.” – Daniel

Feature	Number of Photos
Business	14
Beach/ocean	13
Forest/foilage	13
Waterway/canal	13
Recreation	11
House	10
Beach Access	9
Event	7
Neighborhood	7
Icon	5
Environmental Sustainability	4
Jockey's Ridge	4
Pier	4
Wildlife	4
Church	3
Patriotism	3
Wright Brother's Memorial	3
Sign	3
Climate	2
Government Service	2
Road	2
Tourists	1

Table 3: Areas of participant satisfaction, as shown in photographs.

Feature	Number of Photos
Road	13
Business	11
House	5
Sign	4
Building	3
Government Service	2
Pollution	2
Utilities	2
Neighborhood	1
Storm	1

Table 4: Areas of participant dissatisfaction, as shown in photographs.

special eye to the participants' length of residence. Sorted collection 1 consisted of the photographs taken by participants in Group 1, participants who have resided in Southern Shores for more than 16 years. Sorted collection 2 consisted of the photos taken by participants in Group 2, participants who have lived in the town for six to 15 years. Sorted collection 3 was made up of the photographs taken by participants in group 3, those who have called Southern Shores home for less than five years.

The first collection yielded 54 photographs in total. As depicted in Figure 10, 46 (85%) of the photos displayed "like" images. Eight (15%) of the photographs showed "dislike" images. The second collection produced 66 photographs. "Like" images were depicted in 52 (79%) of the photos in the collection. "Dislike" images were shown in 14 (21%) of the photos in the collection. The third collection generated 60 photographs. Of these, 39 (65%) photos were "like" images, while 21 (35%) photos were "dislike" images. As the proportional breakdown of "like" and "dislike" images illustrates, the participants who have resided in the community for a longer period of time took a higher percentage of photographs displaying what they interpreted as "likes" and a lower percentage of "dislikes" than the other two groups. The participants who have resided in the community for the least amount of time took a lower percentage of photos displaying what they perceived as "likes" and a greater percentage of photos showing "dislikes."

The features represented in the photographs taken by participants also differed by length of residence. Figure 11 shows the areas of resident satisfaction based on length of residence. All three of the groups frequently photographed elements of the natural environment, such as the beach, waterways, and foliage as features of the community that they liked. However, the first group of participants, who have lived in Southern Shores the longest, photographed images of their neighborhood, recreational features, and community events more frequently than the other

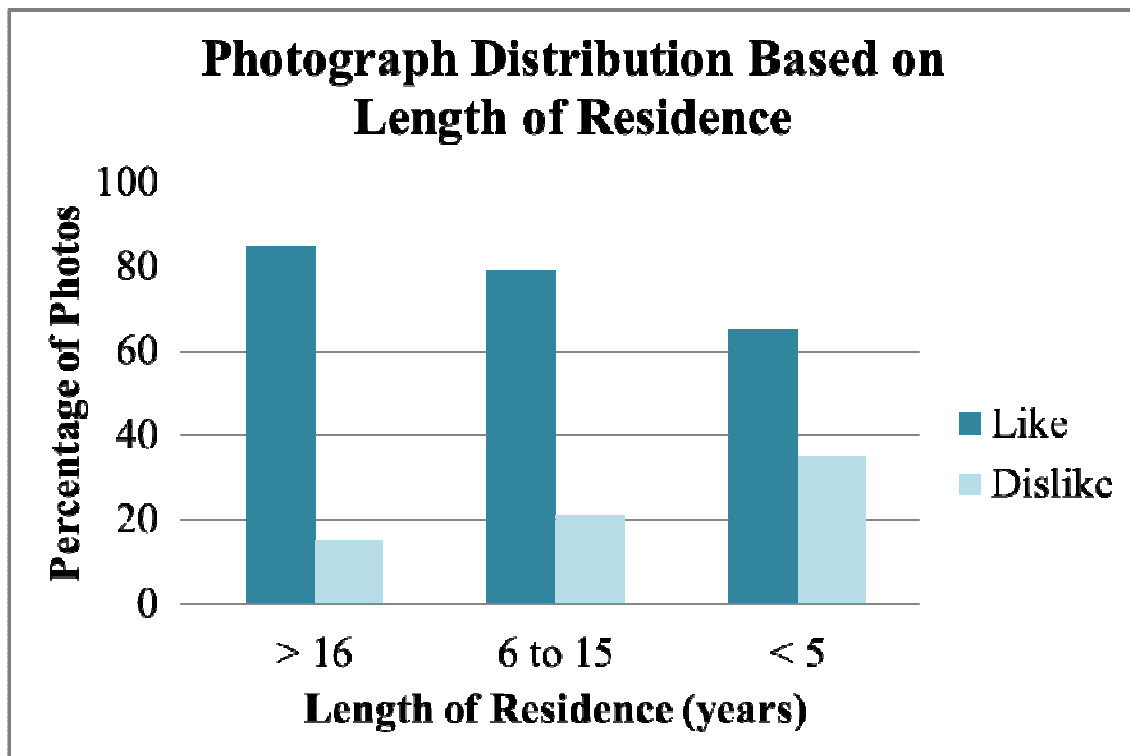


Figure 10: Photograph distribution based on length of residence of participants.

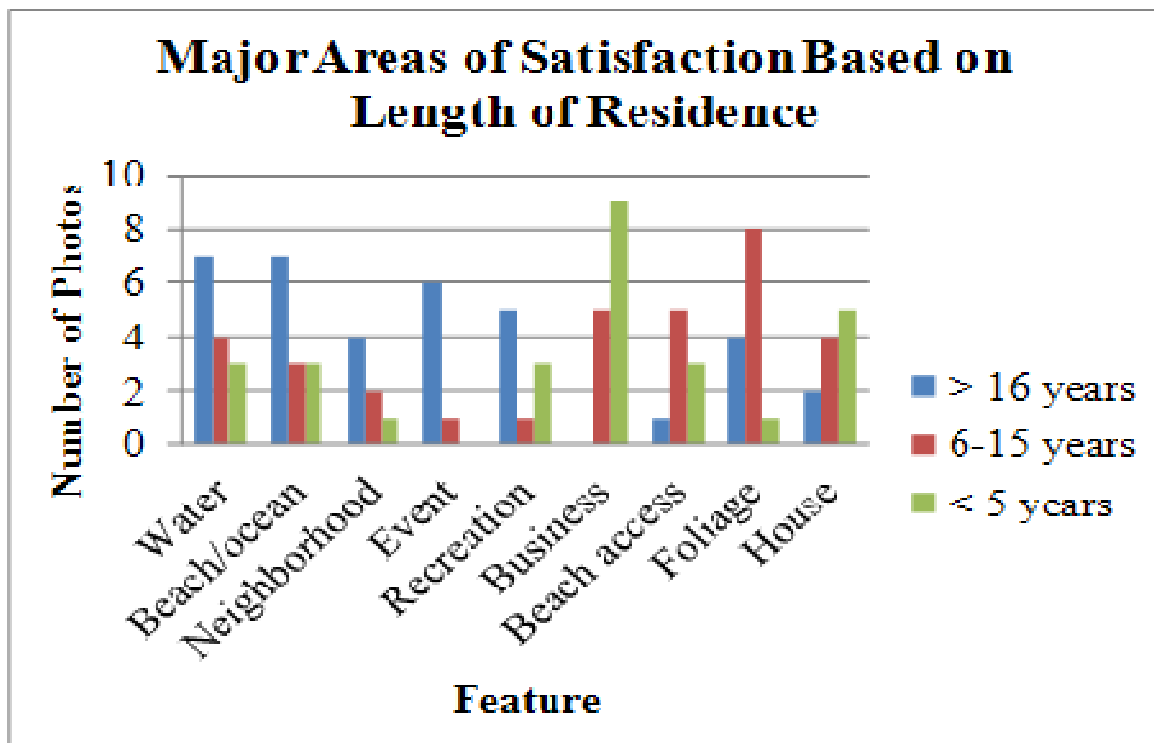


Figure 11: Major areas of satisfaction based on the length of residence of participants, as shown in photographs.

groups. Examples of photographs of neighborhood and recreational features are shown in Figures 12 and 13. Group two and three photographed businesses, mostly small non-chain stores and restaurants, and houses/architecture as features that they most liked.

In all three of the groups, businesses and roads, as shown in Figure 14, were among the most frequently photographed “dislikes.” The first group also photographed pollution as a main dislike. The second and third groups photographed houses and signs that represented town rules and regulations as features they disliked about the community. The first group has lived in the community for a longer period of time and seemed to be more concerned with environmental factors, while the groups who have lived in the community for a lesser amount of time are more critical of the decisions made by town officials. Figure 15 shows the major areas of resident dissatisfaction based on length of residence.

Place Satisfaction of Participants Based on Employment Status

Next, the participant’s photographs were analyzed by the number of likes and dislikes and by the types of features shown in each of the photos, as a function of employment status. The photographs were arranged into two collections, based on employment status. The first collection contained photographs taken by those participants who were currently employed. The photographs taken by participants who were unemployed made up the second collection.

In total, the participants who were currently employed took 92 photographs. Seventy-four photos displayed what the participant considered a like and 18 represented a self-identified dislike. The participants who were unemployed took a total of 89 photos. Sixty-two of the photos showed a like and 27 represented a dislike. As shown in Figure 16, 80 percent of the photos taken by employed participants were of features of the community that they liked, while



Figure 12: “I really like that Southern Shores takes spots like this and turns them into places for the community. I like that it’s located in a place where kids can walk or ride their bikes.” - Carol



Figure 13: “I love golf courses and there are some of the most beautiful courses here on the Outer Banks. There are a lot of opportunities for recreation and to get out and enjoy the environment.” - Betty



Figure 14: “The traffic gets so bad in the summer and tourists disrespect traffic rules and regulations. They speed and don’t stop at stop signs. It’s like tourists’ minds go on vacation as soon as they cross over the bridge.” - Mary

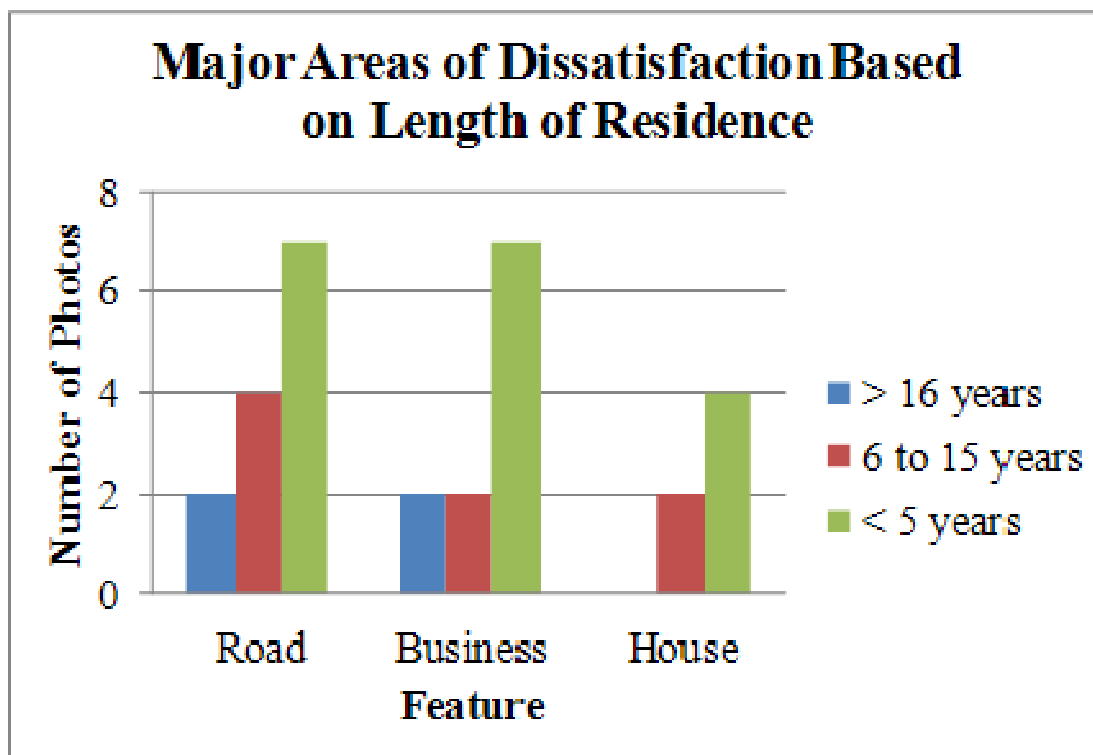


Figure 15: Major areas of resident dissatisfaction based on length of residence, as shown in photographs.

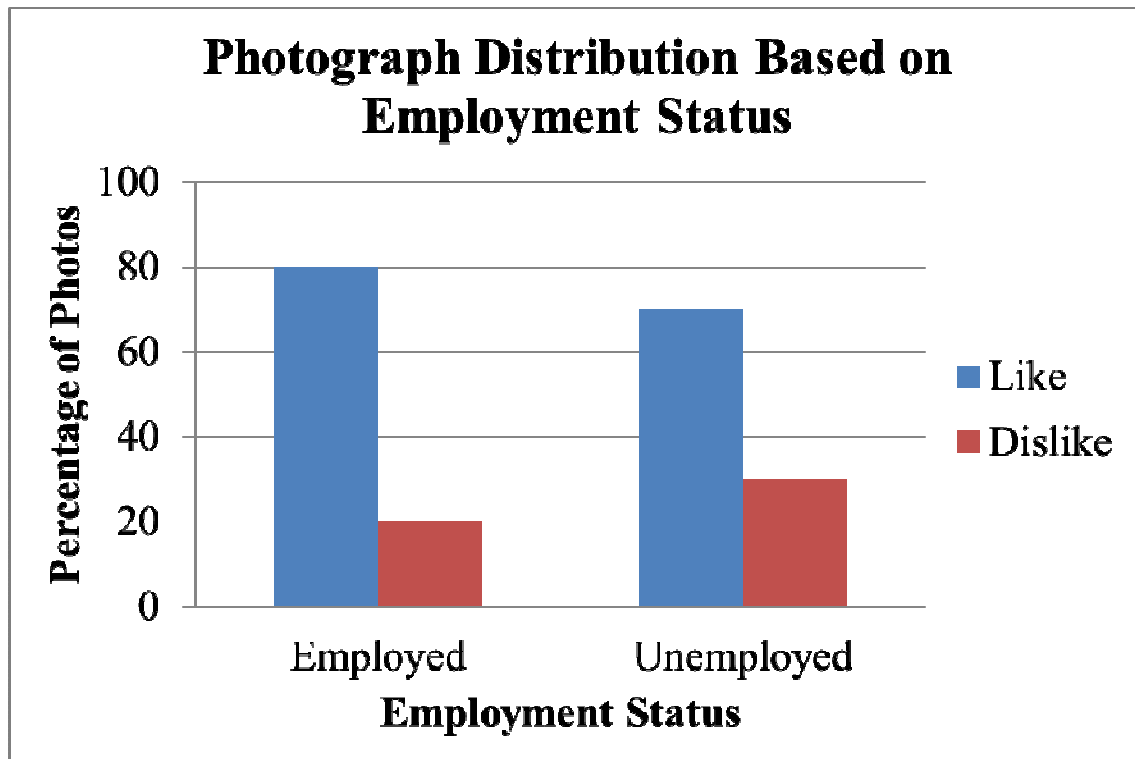


Figure 16: Percentage of ‘likes’ and dislikes” based on participant employment status.

20 percent represented aspects of the community that they disliked. Seventy percent of the photographs taken by unemployed participants displayed a like and 30 percent displayed a dislike. Therefore, there does not appear to be a large difference in the number of “likes” and “dislikes” identified by those participants who were employed and those who were unemployed.

Even though there was not a major difference in the numbers of “likes” and “dislikes” identified by employed and unemployed participants, differences and commonalities became apparent in the types of features depicted in the photographs taken by each of the groups. Once again, photographs of waterways, foliage and the beach/ocean were common “likes” among both groups. Similarly, roads and traffic were the most popular “dislikes” for the employed and unemployed alike. The employed participants displayed businesses and images of their neighborhood as elements of the community that they liked, while the photos taken by participants who were unemployed showed recreational features as common “likes.” Figure 17 illustrates the commonalities and differences in “likes” and “dislikes” between the employed and unemployed groups. It makes sense that unemployed participants may have a greater appreciation for recreational features such as golf courses than their employed counterparts because they have more time to enjoy these features. Employed participants tended to be younger in age and may have children, which would explain their appreciation for neighborhood features.

Place Satisfaction of Participants Based on Gender

Lastly, the number of likes and dislikes were tallied and the types of features found in the photographs were analyzed based on the gender of the participants, as shown in Figure 18. Males and females often view places in different ways and appreciate certain features of the community more than others. It is important that a community ensure the satisfaction of both

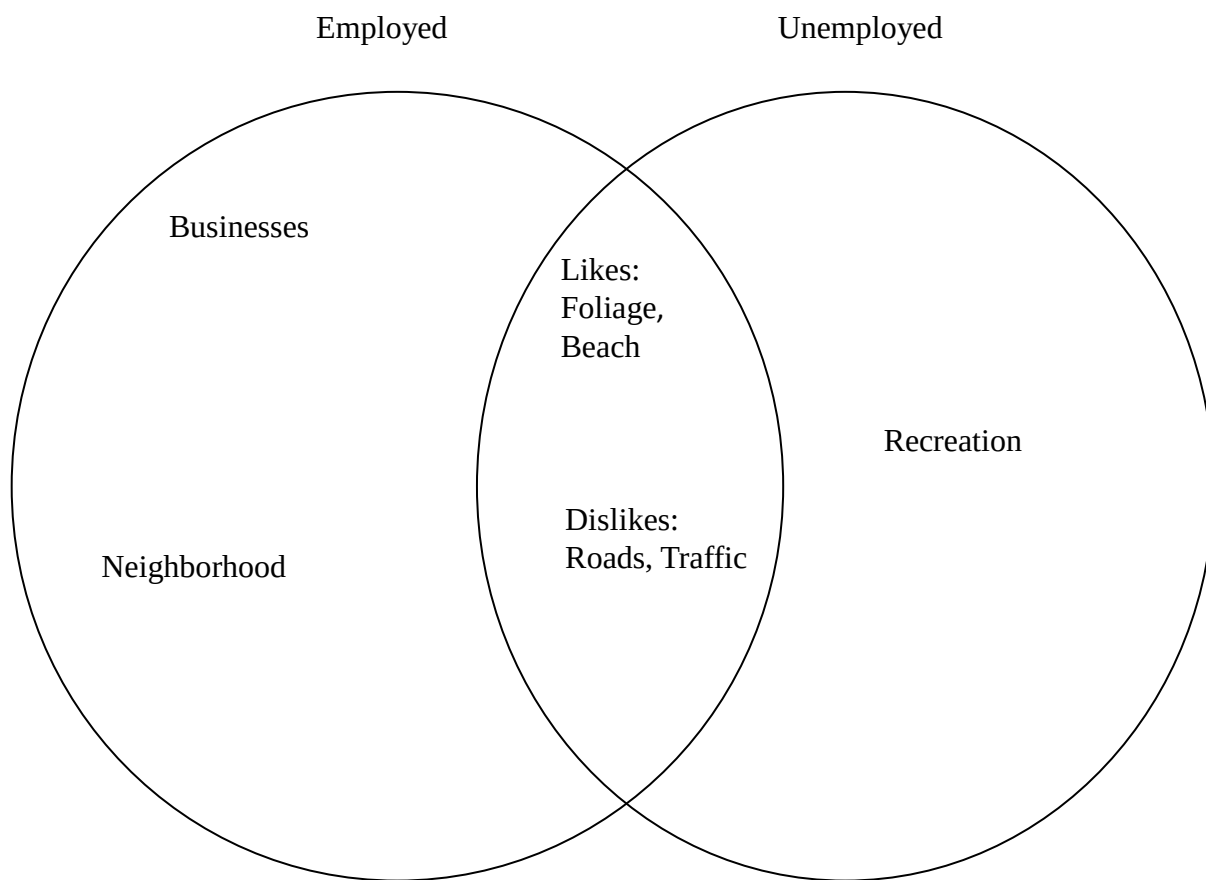


Figure 17: Major areas of participant satisfaction and dissatisfaction based on employment status, as shown in photographs.

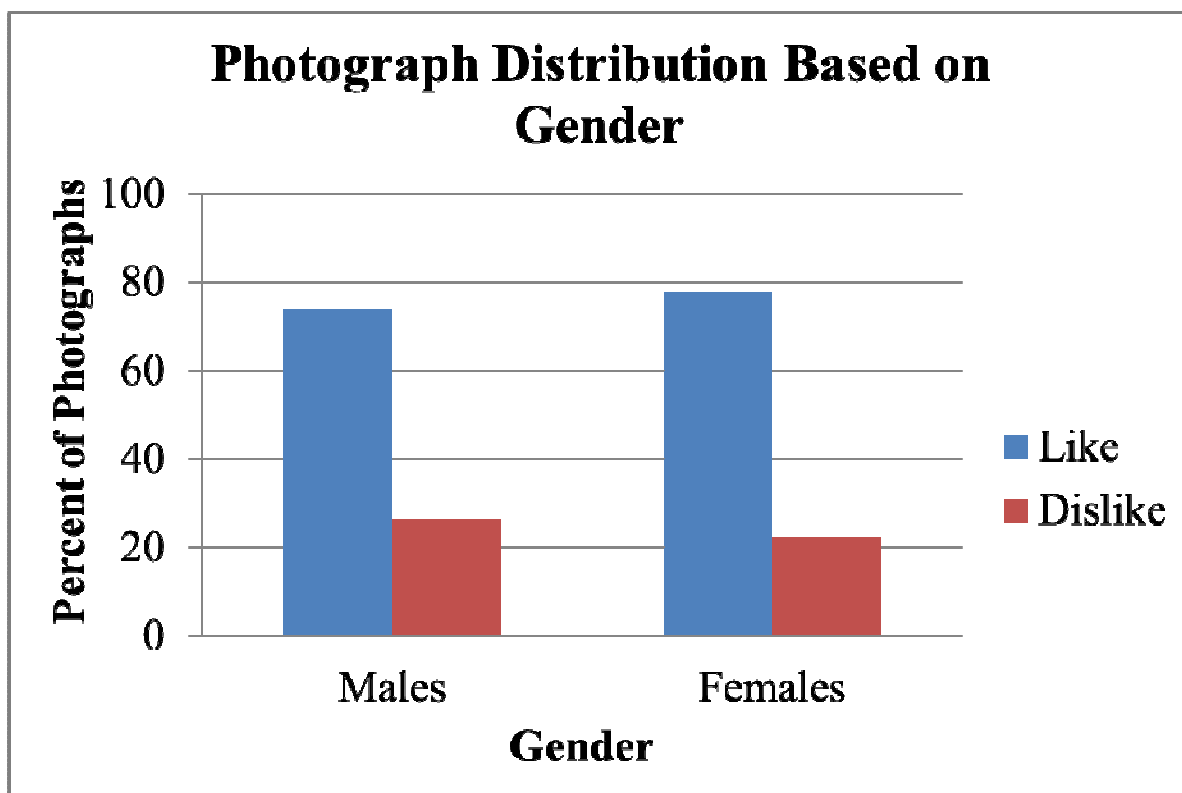


Figure 18: Percentage of “likes” and “dislikes” based on gender.

males and females for the purposes of social equity. In this study, males took a total of 87 photographs with 64 (74%) of them being “likes” and 23 (26%) being “dislikes”. Females took a total of 94 photographs with 73 (78%) being “likes” and 21 (22%) being “dislikes.” Clearly, there was not a large difference between male and female participants in the number of “like” and “dislike” photographs they chose to take. Though this may be the case, there were some considerable differences in the types of features the two groups chose to photograph. Males tended to photograph the built environment more than females. Out of the 87 photographs taken by males, 63 (72%) of the photos were of the built environment and 24 (28%) of the natural environment. Females, on the other hand, took 45 (48%) photos of the built environment and 49 (52%) of the natural environment. This distinction is shown in Figure 19. The most popular “like” features photographed by males were small businesses, houses, canals/waterways and beach accesses. Females, on the other hand, most frequently photographed the beach/ocean, forest/foliage, community events, waterways/canals and recreational features as “likes.” The “dislikes” of the two groups were relatively similar, with roads and big businesses photographed as the most common dislikes. Males tended to “dislike” houses more than females, while females tended to “dislike” signs more than males.

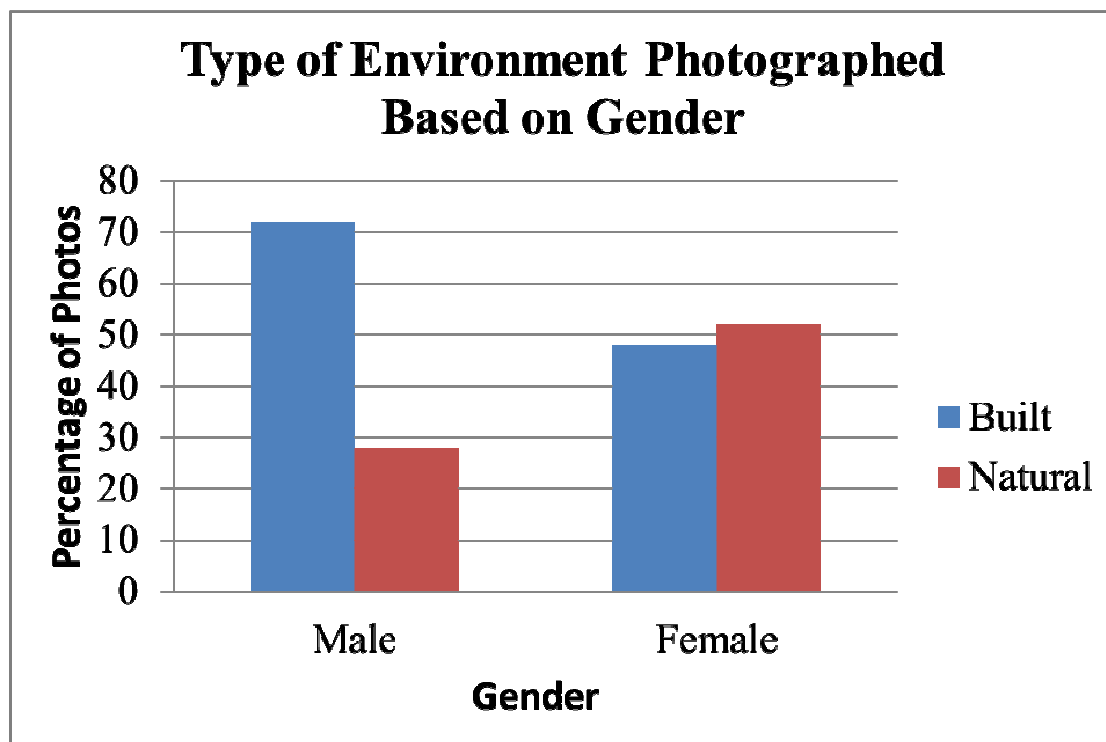


Figure 19: Type of environment photographed based on the gender of participants.

Chapter Five: Results & Discussion - Discourse Analysis

This chapter focuses on the findings of the discourse analysis. Discourse analysis seeks to identify, through a deep reading and interpretation, the major themes with participants' expressions of place satisfaction.

A Place Divided

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, a simple content analysis can only go so far in uncovering the perceptions and sense of place of research participants. Consequently, it is necessary to analyze participants' visual and verbal responses in terms of larger discourses or themes. By analyzing the photographs, certain overarching discourses became apparent to the researcher. These discourses delve deeper into the meanings and representations of the participant photographs. The discourse analysis also pulls from the responses that the participant provided in the photo-elicitation interviews.

One discourse that became apparent during both the review of the photographs taken by residents and the photo-elicitation interview process is the representation of Southern Shores community as a place divided. Even though the main attraction of living in Southern Shores is the proximity to the beach, the vast majority of the year-round residents interviewed purposely resided away from the beach area of the town because of the tourist population in this area during the summer months. In order to better understand this concept, it is necessary to understand the layout of Southern Shores. The town is split into what year-round residents refer to as the "woods", where most of the year-round resident population lives and the "beach", where the majority of the rental homes exist.

Even though the "woods" and the "beach" are both part of the same small coastal town, the participants clearly viewed these areas of the town as having far different qualities. These

differing qualities include variations in the population, the architectural design of the homes, the cost of land, and the overall environmental appearance. Participants referred to the “woods” as being a neighborhood, while they referenced the “beach” as being a rental community. The “woods” community exhibits a sense of permanence because the homes are residential in style, as depicted in Figure 20, and the people who live in these houses tend to be year-round residents. Most participants acknowledged that living in the “beach” section of the town would not be desirable for a number of reasons. First of all, the “beach” community is a transient one, with people moving in and out on a weekly basis. Participants stressed the importance of having a neighborhood as one of the requirements for place satisfaction.

The architectural design of the homes and the cost of the land in these two areas and also differs dramatically. Homes in the “beach” community are customarily built on pilings as to protect the home from possible storm surge. Many of the homes in this zone also make use of a “reverse construction” style. This means that the main living area is located on the top floor of the home, while the bedrooms are below. Homes are built this way in order to maximize the view of the ocean. This construction style suits the needs of the tourist population, but may not be the ideal layout for those who may want to make the home a permanent residence. According to the interviews, older residents find it difficult to navigate the many stairs that are characteristic of these types of homes. The “woods” community consists of homes that are more suited to the year-round resident who may view the home as a permanent residence. Participants made it clear throughout this study that having a suitable home that fits their everyday needs is another component of place satisfaction. Similarly, land farther away from the beach tends to be cheaper than the land closer to the coast. Year-round residents may choose to purchase or build homes farther from the beach because it is cheaper.



Figure 20: “This is our home, located in a quiet, residential community. We had this house built so it suits our needs. There are no rentals here so it is a very nice, peaceful neighborhood.” - Thomas

In addition to the differences in architectural style of the homes and the cost of land in the “woods” and the “beach”, there are also variations in home size. Participants discussed a noticeable increase in the size of rental homes that have been constructed in the “beach” community in recent years. Some participants deemed these homes “mini-hotels,” as they house up to ten bedrooms each, with multiple kitchens, exercise facilities and sometimes even indoor pools, as evident in Figure 21. Most participants described these homes as “eyesores” because they take up the majority of the property, leaving little room for foliage and a small space between homes. Participants worry that an increase in these types of homes will detract from the quiet, family friendly atmosphere of the Outer Banks. Because these homes tend to attract large, extended families or groups of families, and as a result, parking and noise issues come into play. Participants find it disturbing that these large homes are taking the place of the small beach cottages that once populated the Outer Banks.

The “beach” and the “woods” communities each exhibit differences in their environmental appearances. The “beach” consists of hearty trees and shrubs, such as live oaks, that can withstand salt-spray and harsh winds. In contrast, the “woods” is considered a deciduous maritime forest and is made up of live oak, red cedar, wax myrtle, loblolly pine and even some hardwood tree species. For many residents, living in an area surrounded by trees is a necessary component of place satisfaction. Trees offer privacy and shade, a necessity during the hot summer months. Participants acknowledged that the beach environment can be a difficult place to live because of the strong winds, especially during the winter months. The “woods” environment lends itself better to year-round residents because it is farther away from the beach and is more protected from strong winds and salt-spray. Participants acknowledged that they feel safer living in the “woods” than in the “beach” during a hurricane or strong storm because it



Figure 21: “I like the quaintness of the Outer Banks, how it used to be. The big houses, these ten bedroom mini-hotels take away from the quaintness of the Outer Banks. I don’t understand how the property can even support them.”- Paul

is further from the ocean. While the “woods” and “beach” communities represent a physical, natural distinction, participants appear to also interpret it as an important social boundary.

In addition to the physical division of the “woods” and “beach” areas of the community, divisions between not only residents and tourists, but between residents themselves also exist. Regional tensions are created between those who have resided in the area for a long period of time and whose families originate from southern states and those who have moved to the area from other parts of the country. Thomas, a participant who lived in various places around the country before settling in Southern Shores three years ago discussed how those originally from southern states and those from “up north” do not always see eye to eye regarding certain issues. He recalled seeing a bumper sticker that read “We don’t give a damn how you did it up north!” on numerous vehicles in the Outer Banks. Likewise, William discussed his displeasure with “the people from the New Jersey suburbs who move here and want their green lawns and white fences.” These regional tensions play a large role in the social structure of the community, creating divisions in the population base, and have an effect on place satisfaction.

Tensions also exist between newer residents and those residents who have resided in the area for a longer period of time. Newer residents tend to have a mindset closer to that of visitors than residents. Previous literature conveys the idea that there is a clear line between resident and visitor, when in fact, the line is very blurry. Newer residents see a place in a much different way and may require different types of services and amenities than those residents who have lived in the area for a longer period of time. The length of time that a person has resided in an area clearly plays a role in his or her place satisfaction. Different mindsets regarding the community may create tensions between newer residents and residents who have lived in the area for a longer amount time.

A Place of Consistency

Even though Southern Shores is located on an ever-changing barrier island, some participants invoked a discourse that represented the community as a place of consistency. The majority of participants began vacationing in Southern Shores long before calling it home. Many of the participants either served or had spouses who served in the military and as a result their families moved frequently, often to different areas of the country or the world. A number of participants bought homes in Southern Shores during the time of their military service.

Most of the participants developed a significant bond with the community before becoming year-round residents, a characteristic different from previous studies (i.e. Easterling, 2005). Even though this may be the case, participants recognized that they felt differently toward the community when they were vacationers as opposed to when they became year-round residents. Thomas shared that his children feel as though Southern Shores is their hometown because it was the only place that their family was able to return to summer after summer consistently. The children, now grown, feel a connection with the place and both held their weddings in Southern Shores.

Similarly, participants felt as though they live in a “special place” because they were located in close proximity to so many tourist attractions. According to participants, one of the benefits of living in Southern Shores was that their relatives and friends often want to visit them. Participants’ families often combine their vacations with family visits and thus save money on lodging. Living in a place that is appealing to other people, especially family and friends plays a role place satisfaction. The community in which the participants reside is appealing to others for a number of reasons that also contribute to the place satisfaction of residents. From this

standpoint, tourism is seen as a positive aspect of living in a tourist destination. This point illustrates how tourism can contribute to the place satisfaction of residents.

Human-Environment Interaction

Another discourse that became apparent in the photographs and interviews is Southern Shores as a place that fosters human interaction with the environment. It is clear that participants identify the beach/ocean as being an important aspect to everyday life in the community. Every participant in the study photographed the beach/ocean, as shown in Figure 22, as an aspect of the community that they liked. In a number of cases, participants labeled the photograph that they took of the beach as being the one image that most defines the community. Other photographs that depict the importance of the human-environment interaction include photographs of Jockey's Ridge, the emblematic sand dunes and various ecological reserves located on the Outer Banks (Figure 23).

A number of participants mentioned their spiritual connection with the environment as being an important aspect of why they chose to live in the Outer Banks community. On Sandra's first visit to the Outer Banks, she felt that it was her home. After her husband's death, she felt safe living in the community and the proximity to the beach provided her with peace of mind. She found that living near the coast helped her grieve when her mother passed away several years later. Betty found the beach as being a stress reliever. It provides a comfortable location to walk and reflect on daily life. Anne felt as though the proximity to the beach was good for a health. It promotes a healthy lifestyle and encourages people to walk, swim and enjoy nature.

The human-environment interactions discussed were not solely positive in the eyes of the participants. Hurricanes, tropical storms and nor'easters often hit the Outer Banks, forcing



Figure 22: “The beach is a big attraction of course. I’ve always loved the ocean. There is nothing more restful and calming and wonderful than sitting there and looking at the ocean. It’s a big part of our lives.” - Anne



Figure 23: “Jockey’s Ridge is just such a cool place. You can watch the hang gliders and it’s so relaxing. I think that’s why a lot of people come here. You can go to places like Jockey’s Ridge and create your own fun and not have to worry about spending more money.”- Betty

residents to adapt to the effects of driving rain, harsh winds and storm surge. Participants described hurricanes as being one of the negative aspects of the community. Barbara photographed hurricanes as being a dislike, as shown in Figure 24. Participants conveyed that hurricanes are not only scary experiences but are also the cause of disorder around the community. Emergency managers and town officials are forced to make evacuation decisions for both tourists and residents. Oftentimes, officials advise evacuations but leave the final decision up to the residents themselves. Participants described the mental anguish that these decisions can create, including concern for their homes, belongings and pets. Participants worry about the cost of evacuating (gas, hotel fees, etc.) and the fact that if they do evacuate, no one will be present to handle damages that maybe occur to their homes.

Living in a coastal community that is susceptible to frequent storms also means higher costs. In addition to high insurance premiums, taxpayers' money is used to fix roads and utilities that have been damaged as a result of a storm. The majority of participants discussed their displeasure with the construction of new utility poles, as shown in Figure 25, located along the main road (State Highway 158) on the Outer Banks. The majority of participants found these poles to be unsightly and from what they believed, unnecessary. Daniel was the only participant who felt as if these new poles were a positive addition because they would be more resistant to high winds. Thomas voiced similar annoyance with roadwork that occurred in Southern Shores beginning in September 2009. The project involved fixing Highway 12 and raising the utility lines so that they would not be covered with water during storm events. This particular participant owned a business and felt that the construction would have been better suited for the winter months when there are fewer tourists, rather than during the tourist season.

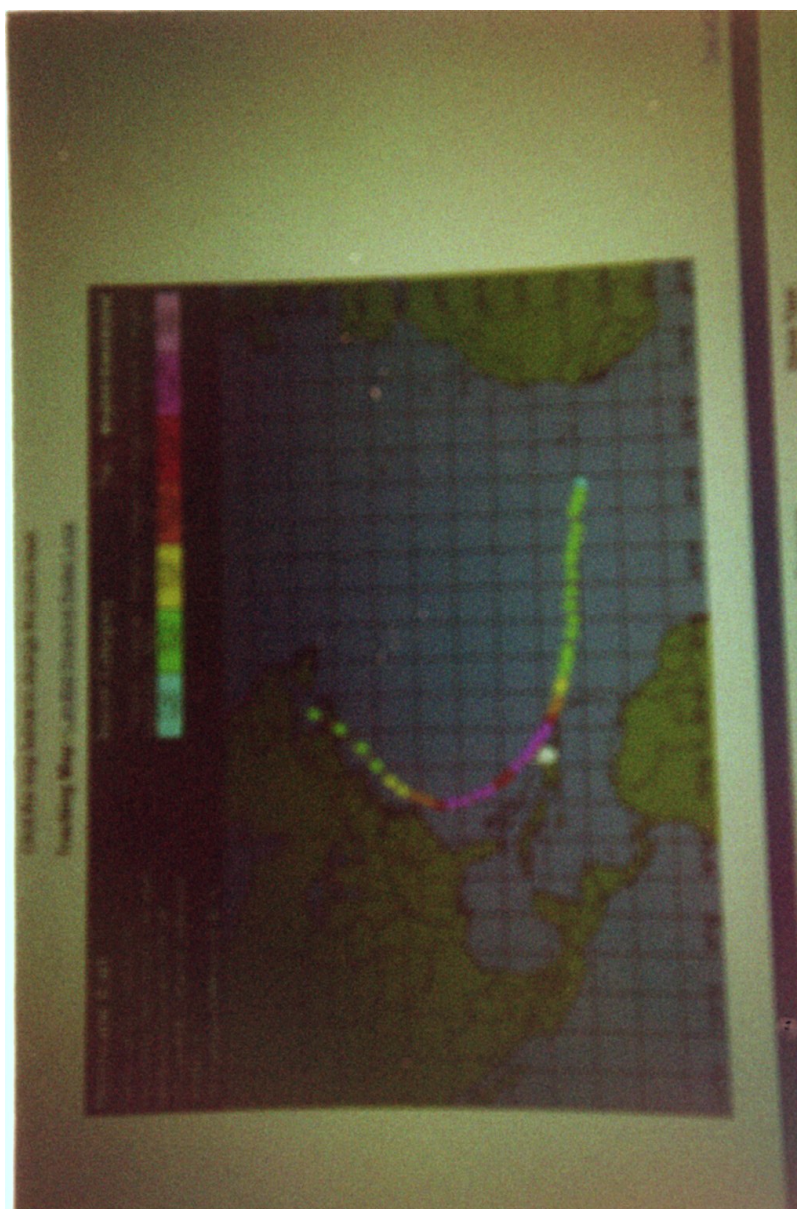


Figure 24: “I took this photo to show the hurricanes that hit the Outer Banks. This is one thing that I really don’t like about living here. They cause us to have very costly insurance and they can be scary. We’ve evacuated a couple of times. We figure if they tell us to go, we need to go.” - Barbara



Figure 25: “The poles that they are putting up along the bypass are eyesores. I guess it will help to strengthen the utilities, but this is an ugly way of doing it.” - Paul

From the photographs and interviews with participants, it is apparent that the majority feel a connection with their natural environment. Paul and Daniel stressed the importance of sharing this connection with visitors by fostering eco-tourism within the community. According to them, businesses that support eco-tourism, as shown in Figure 26, should be encouraged to bring their services to the Outer Banks. Residents felt that by nurturing the tourists' connection to the environment, tourists will be more likely to treat the environment with more respect. Creating an eco-tourism sector in the Outer Banks would help discourage tourists from disturbing nature in harmful ways. Participants stressed the fact that guides who are familiar with the flora and the fauna associated with the area should lead tours so habitats are not disturbed. Participants were pleased with the waterfront boardwalks and bike trails, as shown in Figures 27 and 28, which have already been established in various locations across the Outer Banks as an outlet for self-guided eco-tourism. These trails and boardwalks provide direction for people and help to prevent them from traveling into areas that may be easily disturbed.

Increasing the environmental sustainability of the community was another topic important to some of the participants. Mary and Daniel discussed their appreciation for the wind turbines, as shown in Figure 29, that have been installed in various locations on the Outer Banks. Both agree that harvesting the wind for energy on the Outer Banks is a smart decision and hope for more of them to be constructed in the future. Mary would even consider installing one at her own home once they become more affordable. Daniel and Mary also discussed other solutions to the energy crisis and the generation of drinkable water. Carol voiced her appreciation for the curbside recycling program in Southern Shores, as shown in Figure 30. Southern Shores is one of the few towns on the Outer Banks that provides this service to its residents and visitors.



Figure 26: “I like these types of businesses. The business is to take you into the ecology sections of the community. The guides take you to explore but yet not disturb the environment. We need to preserve the integrity of this environment.”- Daniel



Figure 27: “The new boardwalk along the sound and the parks they have recently made are beautiful and it’s so lovely to walk along the water. Whenever we have guests we take them there.” – Donna



Figure 28: “I love that the town has set aside land for these bicycle paths. It shows that they want to preserve land for the people to use. It helps us to enjoy nature and stay healthy.”- Carol



Figure 29: “The wind turbines that have been installed are just wonderful. I wish we had more of them. I wish I had one in my own backyard, but I just can’t afford that. I think it’s great that they’re trying to conserve energy and go green.” – Mary



Figure 30: “We have curbside recycling in Southern Shores and I think that it’s great that the town makes it easier for residents and tourists to recycle. Otherwise, they probably wouldn’t do it.” - Carol

residential and rental homes are equipped with recycling bins, thus making the recycling process very simple. Carol felt as though Southern Shores had the right idea in making recycling easy for residents and tourists.

A Place of Rich History

The Outer Banks community proves to be historical, from the first flight of the Wright Brothers in 1903 to the various lifesaving stations and lighthouses that have stood for hundreds of years around the island. Participants voiced pleasure in the fact that their community takes pride in the history of the area. The Wright Brothers Memorial (Figure 31) was one of the landmarks that was photographed and discussed most by participants. Those who chose to photograph the Memorial did so because they felt that it showcased an important historical event for not only the Outer Banks, but for the world as well. One participant shared that the Wright Brothers Memorial was one of the motivations behind her daughter getting her pilot's license. Another participant discussed how the First Flight Centennial Celebration that took place in December 2003 was one of the most memorable events she had ever attended. People came from all over the world for the celebration, and participants felt proud to call the Outer Banks their home.

Preservation of older buildings and architecture as a way to uphold the historical nature of the community is a similar topic discussed by participants. Photographs of the old Nags Head style cottages, as shown in Figure 32, were common in the collections, as well as historic businesses and restaurants. The traditional style ranch homes, or flattop homes, as depicted in Figure 33, were types of homes built around the Outer Banks community during the mid-twentieth century. Participants want some of these homes to be preserved as a way to maintain the old flavor of the beach. The Outer Banks Community Foundation works to raise funds to



Figure 31: “I really love the history behind the Wright Brother’s Monument. My daughter worked there when she was in high school and it inspired her to go get her pilot’s license.” - Betty



Figure 32: “We used to come to the Outer Banks a long time ago and this is what all the houses looked like. We just love the old Nags Head style. We built a house in 2000 that resembled the old style houses. There’s history behind these houses and it’s a neat memory.” - Betty



Figure 33: “I feel sad that they are tearing down the flat top houses in Southern Shores. If you’ve been here a long time, they are part of the history. I realize people are entitled to do what they want with their property, but I hope a few get saved.” - Carol

preserve the flat top homes, and many of the participants in this project are either members of the foundation or support its purpose. Many of the old businesses and homes have sentimental value to participants who have either lived in or visited the community for a long period of time. Participants hated to see old memories torn down in order for new development to be constructed.

Participants felt that the historical aspects of the community can attract tourists who are interested in the history and culture of a destination and are looking for more than just a week at the beach. According to them, continuing to preserve the heritage of the Outer Banks community would help to encourage cultural tourism in the area and give tourists more options for activities while on vacation. Fostering cultural and heritage tourism in the Outer Banks community would give local residents the opportunity to showcase what they love about their community and possibly provide residents with additional business prospects in the field.

A Community of Volunteers

Participants frequently labeled Southern Shores as a community of volunteers. Participants themselves, as well as their friends and family, have involved themselves in a number of volunteer activities around the community. The community takes care of its less fortunate and helps those from outside of the community. Betty discussed her involvement with a visually impaired fishing tournament, as shown in Figure 34, that took place at one of the local piers. Many people volunteered that day, including local students. She said that it is a common occurrence to find residents who are ready and willing to volunteer at various community events. One may think that the unemployed participants would be more inclined to volunteer because of the extra time they may have, but this was not necessarily the case. Both groups of employed



Figure 34: “I helped with the visually impaired fishing tournament at the local pier. I love it because that’s how our community is. We had so many volunteers and I really like this about our community. We’re very giving.” - Betty

and unemployed participants discussed their roles in volunteerism in the community and how it played a role in contributing to their place satisfaction.

Thomas, Sandra and Michael chose to include photographs of churches in their collections. As shown in Figure 35, Sandra chose to photograph her church as a part of the community that she liked. Some participants discussed being quite active within their own church community, while others simply attend Sunday services. Participants found that by joining a church, it enabled them to meet other people when they first moved into the community. One participant said that the people of her church became her family because she did not know anyone when she first moved to the Outer Banks. Other participants discussed how the church communities were distinctive in the Outer Banks and other tourist destinations for that matter because during the tourist season there is a mix of local residents and tourists who attend services, as compared to the off-season when only residents attend. Participants acknowledged the importance of having the tourists attend services because their monetary contributions are vital to the maintenance of the church. This again makes the point that tourism can contribute to resident place satisfaction.

Preservation of Natural Beauty

The preservation of the natural beauty of the Outer Banks community was a popular theme or discourse running throughout the participant responses. Participants found it necessary to maintain the integrity of nature because it is why they chose this community as their home in the first place. Similarly, it is what draws tourists to choose the Outer Banks as their destination. All of the research participants agreed with the concept of preserving the Outer Bank's natural beauty, however, they disagreed on the types and degrees of preservation.



Figure 35: “This is my church, Kitty Hawk Baptist. When I first moved here, I didn’t have any family or anything so they served as my family. My faith is very important to me and I like that the church is very active in the community.” - Sandra

Examples of areas in which participants disagreed were the presence of green lawns and the construction of large rental homes. William found it disturbing that fellow residents would buy a plot of land and cut down every tree before building their home, as is evident in Figure 36. William built his home where he did because of the presence of the maritime forest. He does not understand the reasoning behind destroying parts of the forest in order to plant a green lawn in an area in which lawns are unnatural. He feels that lawns are not only eyesores, but also the irrigation that is needed for their upkeep creates water supply issues. However, other participants included photographs of homes with green lawns as images that they liked. They liked the suburban, neighborhood feel that the traditional residential home created.

Similarly, participants were divided on the issue dealing with the construction of large houses, deemed as “mini-hotels” by some participants. William and Paul felt as though these types of homes detract from the general feel of the community and the natural environment by taking up the entire piece of land. These types of homes also bring about parking, water usage and septic issues. Betty and Thomas, on the other hand, took photographs of large rental homes as aspects of the community that they liked. Both were very large, yet incorporated the old “Nags Head style” architecture into their construction. These participants felt that these homes were beautiful additions and improved the appeal of the community.

Participants, for the most part, acknowledged that having big-box retail stores such as the Home Depot and Wal-Mart present in the community did make their lives easier; however, the majority said they would sacrifice the conveniences that these stores provided for the preservation of the land. Participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the large tourist stores such as Wings, as shown in Figure 37. These stores are scattered across the Outer Banks, and



Figure 36: “I don’t understand why people buy a piece of property and tear down all the trees. It just doesn’t make sense to me. Why move to a maritime forest and put in a green lawn? I hate it. It’s a waste of water and it doesn’t look good.” – William



Figure 37: "There are way too many of these types of stores. There's no need for all of them. I have no idea how they all stay in business. Their stuff is terribly overpriced because they all run 50- 75 percent off all the time. We need more of a mix of retail, not these types of stores."- Thomas

sell low-quality products and souvenirs. Participants acknowledged that these stores come with the tourism industry; however, they felt that there were far too many of them. Paul felt as though it was only a matter of time until the natural beauty of the Outer Banks is taken away by the construction of big businesses, large rental homes and roads. He felt that this process has already started, and that the residents must fight in order to preserve the natural beauty of the Outer Banks so that future generations can enjoy it.

Another issue that concerned participants was water pollution. Betty worried about the drainage pipes that direct storm water off the roads and dump it directly into the ocean, as is evident in Figure 38. Oil and other debris accompany the water, especially after a large storm event. This concerned her because she has known children who have gotten sick after swimming or surfing near these pipes. Sandra was similarly concerned about bacteria that were found at the sound-side beach in Southern Shores. On occasion, the beach is closed because the water tests indicate that the levels of bacteria are not safe for swimming, as represented in Figure 39.



Figure 38: “This pipe takes all the storm water off the road and its nasty water. While my kids were growing up here several of their friends got sick because they go down there to swim or surf. We need to treat that water someplace else rather than taking it right off the road and putting it into the ocean.” - Betty



Figure 39: “This sign shows the problems they are having at the sound-side beach, with bacteria in the water. This has been a hot topic at town council meetings, how we can fix the problem.” – Sandra

Chapter Six: Results and Discussion - Issues of Concern Among Participants

This chapter is the third of three that present and discuss the findings of the thesis, focusing specifically on issues of concern identified by participants through their photographs and the follow-up interviews.

Tourist Behavior

Participants highlighted several points of friction that exist between residents and tourists. Many of the participants expressed concern over the fact that tourists oftentimes do not clean up after themselves or their pets. There was a sentiment expressed by participants that tourists do not care about the appearance of the town because they live there for a very limited amount of time. Residents expressed the view that tourists are interested in having a good time and “getting their money’s worth” while on vacation, and as a result they are often loud and disrespectful to local residents. Residents find it bothersome that tourists often do not realize that there are people who live in the town year-round and have a daily routine, such as waking up early for work in the morning.

Another tourist behavior that participants find bothersome is the tourists’ need for instant gratification. Participants presented the idea that since the majority of tourists on the Outer Banks travel from the northern states, many are accustomed to quick, immediate service. Many do not realize (or do not care) that the pace of life in southern states is often different than what they are familiar with. Residents identify tourists as being demanding and recalled events when tourists were rude to locals at restaurants and stores because they were not served quickly enough for the tourist’s liking. In contrast, two residents interviewed showed annoyance for tourists because of their “vacation pace.” These residents have full-time jobs and feel as though

tourists often have a slower speed of pace and this often interferes with the daily routine of local residents.

Development

Further development in the community of the Outer Banks has some residents divided based on the responses of participants. During the interview phase of the project, residents provided their opinion on the construction of the new Currituck County Bridge that will connect the northern Outer Banks to the mainland. Nine participants were in support of the bridge construction and four did not support the construction. The majority viewed the bridge as a means of alleviating traffic problems during the peak tourism season. The remaining participants felt that the bridge would exacerbate the overpopulation and traffic congestion problems. Since the new bridge is still in the planning phase, residents were not able to document this concern in a photograph. Though this may be the case, this was a popular topic that came up during the interviews.

In contrast, photographs that appear frequently in the study's collection are images of empty stores and strip malls found in Southern Shores, as shown in Figure 40. Participants are disturbed that new buildings are being constructed when there are so many vacant buildings already in existence. It is suggested that these existing buildings be renovated and put to use before new buildings are constructed. As shown in Figure 41, photographs of large stores such as Wal Mart and Home Depot are also frequent. Participants discussed their annoyance with the construction of a new Lowes store near the Wright Brother's Memorial Monument. There is a general agreement that the Lowes itself is unnecessary and its location near the monument is disrespectful.



Figure 40: “We have a lot of new construction and all these empty stores. They should try to fill these buildings before they build new ones.” - Daniel



Figure 41: “Big retail stores such as this one are unnecessary here. They take away from the mom and pop stores that had been around forever. This Home Depot forced Kitty Hawk Hardware to close down. That was a small family owned business that was good for the community, and now they’re gone.” – Daniel

Services and Utilities

Another area of concern discussed by participants deals with the services and utilities provided to the public. Many of the participants felt as though there are redundancies when it comes to the services that are provided to residents and tourists. Thomas discussed the importance of consolidating some of the services, such as the police and fire forces. He believes that it is wasteful for each of the towns on the Outer Banks to hire year-round police and fire forces, which do the vast majority of their work during the tourist season. His solution is to hire what is needed for the year-round population and contract outside help for the tourist season, as is done in many other resort destinations.

Anne and Daniel each discussed the need for public transportation on the Outer Banks. They believe that the addition of public buses would lighten the traffic and lessen the need for public parking. Also, public transportation during the tourist season would help to reduce the number of car accidents, especially those related to drunk driving. They believed that public transportation would be one way to alleviate some of the perceived tensions between tourists and residents. Both groups would benefit from a reduction in traffic and the need for parking.

A growing concern identified by some participants was the lack of medical facilities in the Outer Banks community. Recently, a local hospital was built, yet its services are limited. For Donna, this was a significant drawback of living in the community. According to her, residents are forced to drive up to 100 miles in order to reach certain specialists. In addition to a shortage of large medical facilities and specialists, the community does not offer a broad selection when it comes to family physicians, dentists, and other standard medical practices. Because of this lack of services, participants worry about continuing to reside in the community as they age.

Beach Access & Replenishment

Beach access and replenishment were other topics that were common in the discussions with participants. The majority of participants felt that beach access in the community was sufficient. Figure 42 shows an example of a beach access commonly found in the community. Most liked the fact that public parking was limited because it kept beach crowds to a minimum. In order to park near the beach accesses, the town of Southern Shores requires all vehicles to have a parking pass. Only residents of Southern Shores, second homeowners, and tourists renting homes within the town limits have the ability to obtain a parking pass. Participants did not oppose this method and felt it was a good way to limit traffic congestion near the beach accesses.

Beach replenishment, however, is a different issue altogether and participants were divided on the issue. Several participants were also second homeowners, with oceanfront rental homes. Participants with oceanfront homes wanted beach replenishment to occur in order to maintain the beach in front of their rental property. On the other hand, those participants who did not own a second home felt as though the beach should be left to take its natural course and that spending tax dollars to “fix nature” is not worthwhile. This indicates that property tenure is a major point of interest in Southern Shores and other coastal tourism communities. Future work in auto-photography might focus more intently on differences in likes and dislikes by property status of participants.

Rules and Restrictions

Participants voiced concerns regarding the local laws and covenants of Southern Shores and other towns on the Outer Banks. Participants felt that Southern Shores had too many laws

and that some were overly strict. The nature of these rules and regulations is a negative of small town bureaucracy. Betty felt that Southern Shores tends to post far too many signs, as shown in Figure 43. One rule that participants disliked the most was the restricted times of the year that dogs are allowed on the beach. Participants felt that as long as the dogs were leashed, than they should be allowed during any time of the year. This is an issue that participants have brought up with the town council, but have had little success in getting their voices heard. Participants also felt that it was necessary for laws to be consistent with other towns on the Outer Banks so as not to confuse both visitors and residents.

Participants understood that, because it is a popular tourist destination, Southern Shores and the Outer Banks community as a whole, need to create rules to regulate tourist behavior. As a result, resident privileges sometimes suffer. Paul discussed his displeasure with the new restrictions placed on beach driving. He felt as though tourists ruined the privilege of beach driving because they did not properly respect the rules that were already set in place. Also, new restrictions have been created because the beaches were no longer able to handle the sheer numbers of vehicles. Paul feels as though beach driving should be a privilege of residents and that tourists should either be restricted from participating or a hefty fee should be required.

Crime and Drugs

Most participants discussed feeling safe within the Southern Shores community. Participants acknowledged that some robberies do take place during the off-season months because so many rental houses are left vacant. For Betty, Thomas and Donna these robberies were a concern because they own rental homes in the community. Other participants did not worry about having their own homes broken into. Two participants, Paul and Anne both stated



Figure 43: “One thing I hate about Southern shores is all the signs. And they’re about things that basically say no. I mean, look at how many signs there are just to get on the beach to tell me what I can and can’t do. And that’s so typical in Southern Shores. We call it the land of no.” - Betty

that a drug problem does exist in the Outer Banks community. They felt that the problem is not because of tourism itself, but that tourism may be the reason the problem is not being dealt with appropriately. Paul and Anne discussed that the community tends to turn a blind eye to the problem and act as though it will go away on its own. They felt that the drug problem is being ignored because the community wants tourists to continue to perceive the Outer Banks as a family friendly destination and addressing it more directly would damage this image even if it would deal with the real problem.

Tourism and Resident Place Satisfaction

The majority of participants described tourism as being an “annoyance that could be dealt with” or a “necessary evil.” As previously discussed, length of residence, employment status, and gender all played a role in how participants viewed the community. All of the project participants initially visited the Outer Banks as tourists. At a later date, each made the decision to move to the community. As a result, participants may be more accepting of tourism and its impacts. If the participants had not been tourists, they may not fully understand the needs and wants of tourists when they are visiting a destination for vacation. Barbara felt that tourism was a vital part of the community, but as Southern Shores became more of her home, the tourists became more bothersome. She felt as though they were intrusive since they only spend a short amount of time in the community. Barbara’s sentiments towards tourists echoed throughout the discussions with other participants as well. Participants recalled events in which tourists were rude and appeared to be unaware that the community was a residential one, as well as a tourist destination.

On the other hand, participants acknowledged that tourists play an important role in the economy of the community. They realized that without tourism, the community would not be

what it is today. Several participants acknowledged that their lives would be adversely affected without the presence of the tourism industry. Betty said she enjoys the tourist season and being able to meet people from across the country. Other than the traffic and congestion that they bring, she misses them when they are gone. Paul and Daniel both discussed the importance of catering to the tourists' needs. They believe that, in order to sustain the economy of the community, it is important that tourists continue to choose the Outer Banks as their vacation destination. Issues such as severe traffic congestion on turnover days need to be resolved so that tourists do not gain a bad impression of the Outer Banks. There are many other beach communities in North Carolina and elsewhere in the country, and it is important to keep the tourists coming back to the Outer Banks.

The majority of the photographs taken by participants and the issues discussed during the photo-elicited interviews related in some way to tourism. Tourism sustains the Outer Banks community, helping to keep local stores and restaurants in business and providing funding for other community projects. As previously discussed, one of the most popular of the "dislike" photographs that participants chose to take dealt with roads. Traffic congestion, a lack of crosswalks and sidewalks for pedestrians and poor road designs were among the most popular complaints. Each one of these problems is exacerbated by tourism or affects it in some way. A large tourist population obviously increases the amount of vehicles. A lack of crosswalks and sidewalks, makes it difficult for tourists (and residents) to walk instead of drive to and from the beach and to other destinations. Poor road designs, such as dangerous turning lanes, increase the amount of accidents especially during times of high traffic.

Another popular complaint among participants was the presence of big box retail stores. All of the participants, with the exception of one, listed stores such as Home Depot, Wal-Mart

and Wings as “dislikes.” Participants believe that these stores exist in the community because they are sustained by the tourism industry. Participants also discussed their dissatisfaction with the construction of a new Lowes Home Improvement store. Participants do not feel as though the store is necessary and its location next to the Wright Brothers Memorial is even more disturbing. Stores such as the Home Depot and Loews are sustained indirectly by the tourism industry. The construction and upkeep of rental homes require these types of stores in order for supplies.

From the analysis of the photographs and the discussions, it is clear that the majority of the participants want the Outer Banks community to remain similar to what it is currently. They believe that the current infrastructure cannot handle an increase in tourists. The traffic situation during the summer months is a common point of frustration for residents and most likely for tourists as well. Participants feel as though solutions to the traffic and road issues need to be resolved not only for their own benefit but for the well-being of the tourism industry. Participants feel that if the traffic becomes worse, tourists may find alternative places to vacation, thus hurting the economy of the Outer Banks.

Participants also feel that by keeping development to a minimum, the “old flavor” of the beach will be kept intact. Participants discussed this as being one of the main reasons why they chose to vacation and live in the community. Likewise, they feel that this is probably one of the main reasons that tourists chose the Outer Banks as their vacation destination. Many other beach destinations have been built up over the past years with vast numbers of hotels, amusement parks and boardwalks. The Outer Banks, however, has remained a relatively quiet place, where development has been kept to a minimum. Large hotels are relatively hard to come by and the single-family beach cottage still remains the norm. Though this may be the case currently, many

participants are concerned about the daunting trend of the construction of large “mini-hotels.” These types of homes accommodate many families and the majority of participants feel that these structures detract from the “old flavor” that they hope to preserve.

Part of retaining the “old flavor” of the beach requires preserving some of the old businesses, many of which have been in existence for a number of decades. The Outer Banks is home to non-chain restaurants and shops that characterize life on the coast. Participants feel that these businesses are important to preserve because they help to retain the appeal of a small coastal community. This is not a simple task, however, due to the construction of large retail stores. Wal-Mart and Wings are able to sell goods to tourists for much cheaper than the smaller stores. Likewise, chain restaurants often put the smaller, local restaurants out of business.

Participants would like to see the tourism industry of the Outer Banks delve into projects that support ecotourism and heritage tourism. The Outer Banks has so much to offer from both an environmental and historical standpoint. When searching for a beach destination for vacation, visitors have many choices. Some visitors may search for a destination that offers more than just the attractions of the beach and the Outer Banks is one of these places. From the history of the Wright Brother’s first flight to the shipwrecks and lighthouses scattered across the Outer Banks, there are many different historical avenues that visitors can explore. Similarly, the environment of the Outer Banks fits the bill to make it a destination where visitors can participate in ecotourism.

Participants acknowledged that the Outer Banks has become branded as a tourist destination through the “OBX” brand name, as shown in Figure 44. It is not uncommon to see the popular “OBX” sticker on vehicles several hundreds of miles away from the destination. Participants thought it was noteworthy that residents and tourists alike place these stickers on



Figure 44: “I really like the logo. It’s unique and catchy and people from all over recognize it. I can be driving somewhere relatively far from the Outer Banks and people will wave. It’s neat how it caught on so fast!” – Barbara

their cars to identify with others who enjoy the Outer Banks either as a home or vacation destination.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions

Gaining a better understanding of resident place satisfaction, resident feelings towards their community, and resident perceptions of tourism is vital to fulfilling resident needs and creating a place where people want to live. It is hoped that this thesis has helped gain a better perspective of what residents of Southern Shores, North Carolina like and dislike about their community and the various features and issues that play a role in dictating these likes and dislikes. This thesis examined the elements of the Southern Shores community that most satisfy residents and those that residents feel need improvement. Tourist destinations often put the preferences of tourists ahead of those who live and work in the location, but this is simply not sustainable for the tourism industry at that destination. Tourist destinations need to maintain their resident population and in order to do so they must keep their residents satisfied or at least be responsive to their opinions and needs. Maintaining the resident population and ensuring satisfaction is vital to safeguarding resident support for tourism, one of the components of creating a socially sustainable tourism industry.

A methodology based on auto-photography and photo-elicitation was used in the thesis in order to explore the thoughts and feelings of residents of Southern Shores. In order to convey what the participants liked and disliked about their community, they were asked to catalog their likes and dislikes in a series of photographs. Studies show that photographs have the unique power of unlocking feelings that would not otherwise be revealed in a conventional survey or interview. This thesis sought to gain entry into the participants' sense of place and determine their level of place satisfaction. In reacting to the photographs, participants conveyed their perceptions of the community, and where tourism fits into these perceptions.

Generally speaking, it was found that the majority of the study's participants were satisfied with their community. Seventy six percent of the photographs depicted elements of the community that participants identified as a "like," while 24 percent portrayed features that participants identified as a "dislike." As chronicled by the photographs that they took, participants tended to like small businesses, the beach/ocean, waterways/canals, and forest/foliage the most. They tended to dislike roads/traffic and big chain retail stores most.

The thesis also examined the likes and dislikes of participants based on the personal characteristics of length of residence, employment status, and gender. Participants who lived in the community for a longer period of time were more satisfied with the community overall than those who had lived there for a shorter period of time. The group who had lived there the longest liked elements of their neighborhood, recreational features, and community events the most, while the two groups who lived in the community for a lesser amount of time liked small businesses and houses/architecture the most. All of the groups, regardless of length of residence, disliked large, retail stores and roads/traffic. The participants who had resided in the area the longest disliked pollution, while the participants living there for a shorter period of time disliked houses and signs representing community rules and regulations.

For this particular study, there was not a discernable difference found in the place satisfaction of employed and unemployed participants. There were however, differences and commonalities found in the types of features that employed and unemployed participants liked and disliked about the community. Employed participants tended to like local businesses and neighborhood features the most, while unemployed participants favored recreational features. Roads/traffic were most frequently photographed as being dislikes for both the employed group of participants and the unemployed group.

Similar to employment status, there was not a major difference found in the place satisfaction of female and male participants, but there were qualitative differences in the types of photographs each group chose to take. Female participants tended to take photographs of the beach/ocean, foliage/forest, community events, canals/waterways, and recreational features. Males favored photos of local businesses, houses, canals/waterways, and beach accesses. Interestingly, 72 percent of the photographs taken by males were of the built environment, while only 48 percent of the female group's photographs depicted the built environment.

The significant findings of this case study show that among the three participant characteristics, length of residence, employment status, and gender, length of residence was the only one that played a significant role in the place satisfaction of participants. Similarly, length of residence was the only characteristic that exhibited differences in opinions and feelings about tourism in the community. Length of residence, employment status, and gender all did, however, generate qualitative differences in the types of photographs taken by the different groups. It is apparent that personal characteristics dictate what community features residents like and dislike.

The information gained from this thesis was intended to assist planners, government officials, and community leaders in making decisions about future development in the community. Decision makers need to ensure that they communicate with, and involve, all stakeholder groups within the community. This thesis asks planners to rethink the importance of public input and the ways in which input is collected. It also asks that planners and officials understand the true value of individual opinion.

As this thesis has argued, community residents have important ideas and perceptions that they are willing to share. These perceptions can then inform public policy and planning efforts in Southern Shores. For example, zoning laws can limit the construction of big box retail stores

and can assign appropriate locations for their construction. Historic preservation can protect structures that are of historical significance to the Outer Banks community. Infrastructure planning can design and implement road systems that are both effective and safe. Small businesses can be given incentives to support their continuation in the community. Land can be set aside for recreation and neighborhood features such as parks and bike paths, since these are aspects of the community that are important to residents. Similarly, towns can sponsor community events and find ways to encourage volunteerism in the community.

In addition to providing information about how residents feel about their community and the perceived impacts of tourism in the area, this thesis also contributes to the methodological use of photography in geography and tourism studies. Research participants were very enthusiastic about being a part of this project, finding it both interesting and beneficial. One fact is plain and simple: residents like talking about themselves and sharing their stories about the community. The methods of auto-photography and photo-elicitation not only empower participants, but it puts them at the forefront of the discussion. Participants took photographs of what they wanted, and these photographs became the focus of the interviews. The photographs made the interview process more productive, as the photographs made the participants more comfortable and in return, more open. Instead of participants being asked a series of questions as in a standard interview, they were given the opportunity to discuss the photographs that they took and their experiences that went along with the photographs. Participants recalled stories and experiences, both of which served as valuable information for the project.

As compared to traditional survey methods, auto-photography and photo-elicitation allow the researcher to delve deeper into the feelings and perceptions of the participants. A survey of Dare County, NC residents conducted by the Center for Sustainable Tourism at East Carolina

University asked respondents to rate their levels of satisfaction with the community in terms of land use, economy and jobs, government, cultural opportunities, infrastructure and quality of life as related to tourism development. This type of survey is great for gaining the opinions of large numbers of people; however, it is not able to investigate further the experiences of residents and the stories they have to tell. A project that utilizes auto-photography and photo-elicitation as follow up methods to a survey process would provide a mass assessment of people as well as a deeper evaluation of their thoughts and perceptions. The goal of this thesis was not to receive a majority opinion, but to emphasize the importance and usefulness of individual opinions. The purpose of this study was not to gain a representative and comprehensive opinion of the entire population, but to get a deeper reading of peoples' perceptions and place satisfaction.

Auto-photography and photo-elicitation could also be a very useful supplement to public meetings and studies that utilize surveys. Photo based methods could also be used as a precursor to a survey, in order to identify the key issues that need to be addressed in the survey.

Photographs taken by participants could also be used to engage focus groups. These methods proved to be extremely useful and would undoubtedly be helpful in further studies of place satisfaction, as they have the power to unlock the thoughts and feelings of research participants. These methods help the research participants become more comfortable in the interview setting, giving the researcher the ability to learn vast amounts of information.

This type of project could be conducted in other communities and these methods applied across disciplines. Scholars may also find it useful to conduct a more in depth analysis by carrying out a content analysis of the words spoken by participants during the photo-elicitation interviews. If funding permits, future studies may try to expand the number of participants. More participants could be added, as well as a broader cross-section of people with various

biographical characteristics. More than one community could also be looked at and the commonalities and differences examined. Visitors to the area could also be asked to participate in the study to observe the commonalities and differences between visitor and resident place satisfaction in a tourist destination. Tourism business owners, vacation rental managers, public officials, and other economic stakeholders in the community could also be asked to participate in a future study in order to gain an even broader perspective. A longitudinal study using the same group of people from a community and asking them to take photographs at different points in time would allow the researcher to examine how people's perceptions and attitudes change over time. This study is only one way that the methods of auto-photography and photo-elicitation can be used to study place satisfaction in a tourist destination.

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