

SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES FACING THE
COSTA RICA SURF TOURISM INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

As surf tourism expands to more locations every year, tourism infrastructure of beach communities at surfbreaks is also developing to accommodate the influx of surf visitors. This study examined sustainability issues for Costa Rica's surf tourism destinations by reviewing the existing surf tourism industry, identifying sustainable tourism development issues facing surf tourism, and developing recommendations.

This qualitative study utilized questionnaires and interviews to examine the environmental, socio-cultural, and economic issues related to the following concepts: infrastructure, crowdedness, pollution, government's role, local community involvement, and visitor experience. The most commonly cited concerns were environmental impacts of pollution and socio-cultural impacts of crowding.

In order to plan for the increasing growth of the surf tour market and the sustainable tourism development of Costa Rica's surf destinations, recommendations were developed for improving upon the collaboration between private and public sectors within the surf tourism industry.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ASP Association of Surfing Professionals

CANATUR *Camara Nacional de Turismo* National Chamber of Tourism (Costa Rica)

CNS *Circuito Nacional de Surf* National Surf Circuit (Costa Rica)

FIT Free and Independent Traveler

ICT *Instituto Costarricense de Turismo* Costa Rica Tourist Board

ISA International Surfing Association

LDC Less Developed Country

MINAE *Ministerio de Ambiente y Energía* Ministry of the Environment and Energy

NGO Non-Government Organization

NOAA National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (USA)

TIES The International Ecotourism Society

TOI Tour Operators' Initiative

UNCED United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

WTO World Tourism Organization

WTTC World Travel and Tourism Council

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The activity of surfing has been around for centuries within the Polynesian culture. However, surfing officially was introduced to the Western culture when Captain Cook documented his first encounter with surfers on his voyage to the Hawaiian Islands in 1778 (Young, 1983; Finney & Houston, 1996; Towery & Pruett, 2002). Now, over 200 years later and following in the tradition of Captain Cook's sailing exploration around the world, many adventurous surf travelers go on their own exploration for surfable waves in many of the same places as Cook's journeys (GRC, 2002). This study examines surf tourism and discusses sustainability issues associated with it within the developing nation of Costa Rica.

The concept of sustainable tourism stems from discussions about overall sustainable development, and is often mentioned in the planning of tourism development in less-developed countries (LDC) realizing their tourism potential (Mowforth & Munt, 1998). One particular LDC, Costa Rica, has become a leader and example for implementing sustainable development strategies into its national policy and planning for tourism, and is often cited as a case study when discussing the various forms of sustainable tourism, such as nature, adventure, or ecotourism (Honey, 1999; Mowforth & Munt, 1998).

Various definitions exist for ecotourism or other types of nature-based tourism, however, where surf tourism fits in is still unclear. For example, the Costa Rica Chamber of Tourism (CANATUR) lists surfing as a "top ecotourism activity", however surf tour operators may not necessarily agree with that designation nor follow the same ecotourism

ethics. Surfing is dependent on the ocean and wave conditions, and the surf destinations are dependent on the open access and sustainability of the surf break. The changing ocean and beach environment can create new surf spots as well as alter existing ones. One certainty is that once a surf spot is discovered, it is difficult to keep a secret from other surfers.

The Surf Travel and Tourism Boom

Surfing inspired an image or 'culture' through film, television, print, music, clothing, and competitions, which in turn created a demand for people traveling to the beaches to learn to surf or be part of the surf culture (Orams, 1999; Reed, 1999; Buckley, 2002a). The late 1960s saw a surge in surf travel, which can be attributed to the release of Bruce Brown's (1966) movie, *The Endless Summer*, which documented two surfers' journey to follow the summer and surf various spots around the world. The movie inspired surfers everywhere to venture on their own search for uncrowded waves across the globe (Towery & Pruett, 2002). As media portrayed surf travel as an adventure set in tropical locations with pristine beaches, many surfers went searching for waves in remote destinations with similar tropical settings that had probably never seen a surfer or surfboard before (GRC, 2002). As a result of surfers' explorations, many "discovered" surf locations, such as Bali in Indonesia and Tamarindo in Costa Rica, have developed into significant tourism destinations today.

Surf tourism is just one of the niche markets coming out of the overall nature-based adventure tourism sector. Although the topic of surfing is quite new in the academic arena, it is not a small or new market by any means. The surf industry is a

worldwide multi-billion dollar industry estimated to total US\$10-\$15 billion a year (GRC, 2002; Buckley, 2002a). This figure includes sales of surf-related products such as surfboards, surfwear (t-shirts, boardshorts, rashguards), surf accessories (leash, surfboard wax, fins), and surf travel.

Surfing has both recreational and competitive aspects, and has developed into its own sport (Orams, 1999). The sport of surfing has its own governing body called the International Surfing Association (ISA) and a professional world tour competition circuit organized by the Association of Surfing Professional (ASP). The first official World Surfing Championship competition was held in Australia in 1964 (Young, 1983). Both the ISA and ASP now sponsor surf contest venues at beaches throughout the world for professional and amateur surfers, bringing new meaning to the term, *business traveler*.

Many leisure surf travelers also are able to travel to various surf venues throughout the world, often enlisting the help of surf tour operators to coordinate the travel arrangements. A search of the Internet and surf-related magazines will fetch hundreds of leads to companies that arrange fly-drive surf packages for the free and independent traveler (FIT) to the all-inclusive learn-to-surf camps that guarantee to make you into a surfer after one week. Surf tour operators have made searching for the perfect wave possible to do in just a short vacation. The majority of surf travelers are no longer just backpackers with plenty of free time to search for the perfect wave. With a “longboard revolution” bringing older surfers back into the water, surf travelers are even beginning to resemble the leisure traveler willing to pay a little more for some higher-end amenities when they travel, and choosing to engage in weeklong surf vacation packages at beachfront hotels and resorts (Bombard, 2003, pers. comm.).

Implications of Surf Tourism

Surfing is a recreational ocean activity and therefore surf tourism is closely linked to coastal tourism overall at surf destinations. Coastal tourism, which encompasses all forms of tourism based around the coastal zone's shore and water, is dependent on clean water and air, healthy marine ecosystems, safe recreational environment, and good coastal management practices (NOAA, 1998). The sustainable development of coastal tourism directly affects surfing because both coastal and surf tourism rely on the same natural resource, the ocean. Coastal developments on land can still affect surfing in the water. For example, pollution dispensed into the ocean can make it an unhealthy environment to surf in, and breakwaters or sea walls constructed to protect a coastal land development can alter the pattern of erosion and beach sand replenishment, which eventually changes the way a wave breaks at that surf spot, and could ultimately destroy the surfbreak.

The activity of surfing is a nonconsumptive activity because nothing tangible is taken from the ocean by its act. Yet, the surf tourist market has managed to create negative impacts for surf destinations. As surf spots get discovered and become popular, settlements appear in those areas to cater to the burgeoning surf destination. Barilotti (2002) described this phenomenon as *surfer colonialism* because "the impacts of human colonization—trash, roads, erosion, water pollution, development, environmental degradation, resource depletion—inevitably follow"(p.92).

Surf tourism is a significant niche market that can positively incorporate sustainable development principles. Surfing's intimacy with nature makes it a leading activity in promoting more responsible travel by its tourists. As most of the tourism

industry seeks to implement sustainable tourism strategies, the growing niche market of surf tourism must further focus on the specific issues pertaining to the maintenance of sustainable surf destinations.

Background on the Study Region: Costa Rica

Situated between Nicaragua and Panama, Costa Rica is a small, developing nation with a population of 3.94 million, and a total land area of 19,652 square miles that is rich in natural resources containing tropical rainforest, diverse wildlife, active volcanoes, and beaches on both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans (US Dept. of State, 2002). Although located within the politically volatile region of Central America, Costa Rica fortunately has a stable political system and favorable social conditions. They have no military or armed guerrilla groups, advocating instead peaceful ways to settle disputes. In 1987, then-President Oscar Arias received the Nobel Peace Prize for developing a regional peace agreement, and in 1993 the nation declared its permanent neutrality to the world (US Dept of State, 2002). With its reputation for peace, many tourists find Costa Rica to be a safe destination to visit.

The people of Costa Rica, known as *ticos*, are proud of their country's unique biodiversity and geography. With the help of their proactive government, environmentalism has become a national interest for many *ticos* (Honey, 1999). Environmental guarantees have been written into the national policy, such as Article 50 which states, "Every person has the right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment, being therefore entitled to denounce any acts that may infringe said right and claim redress for the damage caused" and Article 89 which states, "The cultural aims

of the Republic include: to protect its natural beauty, to preserve and develop the historic and artistic wealth of the Nation, and to support private initiative directed to scientific and artistic progress” (Costa Rica Legal Net, 1998).

In addition to constitutional proclamations, the Costa Rican government and citizens have realized how important a resource their country’s environment is and the tourism potential it has by being preserved. Approximately 27% of the country is designated as protected area, in which 12% comprises national park, biological reserve, wildlife refuge, and the rest falls under “protected zones” where sustainable land use projects such as reforestation or conservation projects take place (Blake & Becher, 2002). Numerous beaches also fall under this protected jurisdiction.

Tourism Development

In the 1980s, Costa Rica saw an increase in visitor arrivals from North America and Europe. As a result, the Costa Rican government began to invest their efforts in planning and promoting tourism. Tourism is now Costa Rica’s number one industry, overtaking the former agriculture industry leaders of bananas and coffee. In 2001, there were 1.1 million visitors and the tourism industry earned \$7.9 billion or 52% of the GDP of Costa Rica (ICT, 2002; US Dept of State, 2002).

In 1987, Costa Rica created a national strategy for sustainable development (Segreda, 2002). Since ecotourism has long been touted as a form of sustainable tourism, in 1996, President Figueres (1994-1998) launched a \$15 million ecotourism publicity campaign targeting North American ecotourists (Honey, 1999). Ecotourism has been praised as the sustainable form of tourism development and Costa Rica has adopted this

industry with great enthusiasm. The various ecosystems and abundant biodiversity attract thousands of tourists, making the small country a very well-known and respected ecotourism destination (Honey, 1999).

An environmental consciousness is dispensed to travelers as well as local citizens through ecotourism. Tourism dollars have been used to fund eco-projects, scientific research, and community services. There are two main government organizations that play a role in the planning and managing of nature-based ecotourism in Costa Rica, the Costa Rica's Tourism Board, *El Instituto Costarricense de Turismo* (ICT), and the Ministry of the Environment and Energy, *El Ministerio del Ambiente y Energía* (MINAE).

The ICT is the main tourism marketing and development arm of the government. Developed in 1955, ICT is responsible for regulating tourism activities, such as hotels, travel agencies, car rental companies, and tour operators. According to its website, ICT's main objectives are "To encourage and retain the presence of foreign visitors in the country, to promote construction and maintenance of infrastructure for tourists, to make the necessary international promotion so that Costa Rica becomes a known destination, and to promote and watch over tourism activity from the private sector" (<http://www.visit-costarica.com>).

Costa Rica has looked toward outside investors to provide for much of their tourism development. In 1985, the Tourism Development Incentives Law was passed to provide these international investors with incentives, and in 1987, ICT coordinated with USAID to help generate foreign investment to Costa Rica. With this law, ICT was able to administer incentives and tax exemptions to tourism development projects (Honey, 1999).

MINAE oversees environmental matters and accordance to the national goal of sustainable development, and is committed to a national strategy for conservation and protection of the national parks and sustainable use of biodiversity and forests, also known as the “green agenda”. Their mission statement says, “The Costa Rican State, through MINAE, will coordinate the efforts of the different social and economic sectors to achieve the national objectives related to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, promoting joint actions and strategic alliances at local, regional, national, and international level” (MINAE, 2003).

Although MINAE is not a tourism-focused organization, they realize the importance of nature-based tourism and the role it can play in environmental education and conservation. MINAE believes that coordination between the private and public sectors will increase the national environmental consciousness and ensure environmental program success (Niskanen, 2002).

Certification for Sustainable Tourism

Recently, the ICT created the “Sustainable Tourism Development Plan 2002-2012” which outlines steps to incorporate sustainability principles into national tourism planning (ICT, 2002). In addition, ICT and MINAE were also part of creating the Certification of Sustainable Tourism (CST), one of the strongest sustainable tourism certification programs overall (Honey & Rome, 2001). CST is a national sustainability rating system for tourism businesses, and is completely voluntary and free to hotels that want to be evaluated. ICT evaluators assess each hotel in four fundamental aspects: physical-biological parameters, infrastructure and services, external clients, and socio-

economic environment (<http://www.turismo-sostenible.co.cr>). Based on the evaluation results, the company receives a rating from zero to five, five being the highest level of outstanding operations in terms of sustainability. Incentives to being certified include publicity and promotion at the national level, and training.

Currently, the CST mainly focuses on hotels however the program has recently begun to evaluate tour operators as well. Although the CST guidelines for evaluating tour operators have not yet been officially published, the fundamental aspects of the program could still be useful. Because many tourism companies were consulted when designing the CST, the program is supported by most of the tourism industry (Rainforest Alliance, 1999). The program encourages tourism companies to strive towards a model of sustainability within their tour operations through incentives (<http://www.turismo-sostenible.co.cr>).

Costa Rica's progressive environmental policies and the CST program have made them leaders in sustainable tourism development strategies, serving as a model for other less-developed countries wanting to grasp their own potential to develop tourism in a sustainable manner (Honey, 1999; Weaver, 1999).

Surf Tourism

“Take one trip to Costa Rica and you will quickly see that the country was made for surfers—warm water year-round, tasty and inexpensive food, affordable lodging, friendly locals, and a wide variety of waves catching swells from two hemispheres and two oceans. As such, Costa Rica has become a popular destination for traveling surfers worldwide” (Parise, 2002: 1).

Costa Rica offers 735 miles of coastline on both the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea, and impressive surfbreaks and beaches to complement them. Surfing is considered one of the main reasons for beach popularity among North Americans and Europeans, and surfing can be the main purpose for their visit to Costa Rica (Biesanz, Biesanz, & Biesanz, 1999; Weaver, 1999). Of the total visitors to Costa Rica, 67% come for its beaches and from that total, 15% specifically come to surf (ICT, 2001).

Costa Rica can be divided into three main surf regions: the Pacific North, Pacific South, and the Caribbean (see Figure 9). Ideal wave conditions occur during the winter months (October to March) for the Caribbean side and during the summer months (April to September) for the Pacific regions; ensuring there is good surf to be found year-round (<http://www.wannasurf.com>). Many of the Costa Rican beach communities are now dotted with surf camps, surf schools, surf tours, and other surf businesses catering to traveling surfers of all experience levels.

Purpose of the Study

Costa Rican surf tourism continues to increase in popularity each year. Unfortunately, maintaining Costa Rica as a sustainable surf destination sometimes may not be the first consideration as more surf-related entrepreneurs come to the scene and try to take a piece from this surfing pie. However, surf travel companies are at the forefront of sustaining surf destinations through responsible business practices that will not undermine the very important factors that surf tourism businesses are dependent upon: the local beach community, the natural ocean environment, and the surf travelers. Surf destinations need to be concerned with sustainability of its tourism resources.

This study examined the growing surf tourism industry in Costa Rica and connects the surf entrepreneurs with the tourism policymakers by discussing issues pertaining to the sustainability of Costa Rica's worldwide-respected surf destinations. The analysis is based on a survey and interviews with various surf tourism suppliers operating in Costa Rica, as well as interviews with other related industry organizations. The purpose of this study was to investigate the importance of surf tourism as a market sector of Costa Rica in relation to sustainable tourism principles and practices. The goal was to produce recommendations on how surf tourism can be promoted and supported as a part of the national sustainable development strategy for tourism.

Study Objectives

This study accomplished the following objectives by answering the research questions listed:

1. To review the existing surf tour supply industry in Costa Rica.
 - a. Who and what is the surf tourism industry in Costa Rica?
2. To identify the sustainable tourism development issues that face Costa Rica's surf destinations.
 - a. What issues are surf tour operators most concerned about?
3. To develop recommendations for how the Costa Rican surf tourism industry can benefit from implementing sustainable tourism principles into its practices.
 - a. How can surf tourism contribute to the sustainability of surf destinations?

Significance of the Study

This study will fill gaps in research pertaining to surf tourism. Surf destinations are tourism attractions for local residents, traveling surfers, and non-surfers. Increased usage of these ocean and shoreline resources, through coastal development and crowding in the water, makes proper management important for the success of the surf location as a tourism destination.

Limitations of Study

The study was limited to surf travel companies operating tours within Costa Rica, with interviews being further limited to surf travel companies located in Costa Rica and conducted only from July 12-27, 2003. Although all Costa Rica-based respondents to the questionnaire were asked to do a follow-up interview, not all were available during the dates the study was being conducted in Costa Rica. Therefore, responses are based only on those that participated and may not necessarily represent the views of those that did not participate.

Since the sample consisted of only surf travel companies operating in Costa Rica, findings from this study may not be generalizable to the entire surf company population throughout the world. Also, only surf companies found through word-of-mouth, Internet, and magazine searches were contacted to participate in the study. Therefore, there may exist other surf operators with less marketing presence that could not be contacted.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Examinations of Surf Tourism

There are few academic studies done on the surf sector of the tourism industry and a recognized academic definition of surf tourism is still yet to be established. Surfing is discussed within the broad-based contexts of sustainable tourism (Ponting, 2001) and marine tourism (Orams, 1999), and also more narrowly defined within contexts of sport tourism (Poizat-Newcomb, 1999; Fluker, 2003) and nature-based adventure tourism (Buckley, 2002a).

In discussing surfing as a sport tourism activity, Fluker (2003) showed how surfing satisfies all dimensions within a sport framework model: challenge, conditions imposed, and response to the challenges and conditions. Surfing's application to the sport model is also demonstrated through the competitive aspects of surfing with the proliferation of professional and amateur surf contests worldwide (Orams, 1999). However, surfing differs from other organized sports because its field is an ocean and its main challenger is actually the wave. In addition, most surfers are not professionally paid athletes and therefore do not associate with the competitive aspects of surfing as a sport. For the non-competitors, surfing is done more as a recreational activity (Reed, 1999; Buckley, 2002a).

Due to its dependence on the natural ocean environment, when looking at surfing as a recreational tourism activity, it is more often discussed as a form of adventure-based nature tourism (Orams, 1999; Buckley, 2002a). Following along with the nature-based context, the Costa Rican National Chamber of Tourism (CANATUR) goes as far as

listing surfing as a one of its top ecotourism activities (<http://www.tourism.co.cr>).

Although surf tourism and ecotourism have an environmental connection—both involve traveling to enjoy the natural environment in an uncrowded setting—they should not be deemed as the same. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as “responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people” (<http://www.ecotourism.org>). Some authors might argue that most surfers do not tend to travel responsibly as stated in the ecotourism definition (Reed, 1999; George, 2000; Barilotti, 2002), however, the existence of surf-related conservation organizations (Surfrider Foundation, Surfers Against Sewage, Save the Waves) could demonstrate otherwise.

Interestingly, most surf journalists date the start of the surf travel boom in the 1960s, around the time air travel started to become affordable, lighter polyurethane foam surf boards made traveling easier, and Brown (1966) released his movie, *The Endless Summer* (Luecas, 1984; Reed, 1999; George, 2000; Towery & Pruett, 2002). Reed (1999) proposed that the surf travel phenomenon actually preceded ecotourism by at least 30 years, while ecotourism’s popularity is more recent, gaining its momentum only within the last 20 years.

Surf images in media, film, television, music, magazines, and clothing companies have all fueled the desire of surfers to travel and non-surfers to try it (Reed, 1999; George, 2000; Ponting & Wearing, 2003). Whether the act of surfing is done for sport, recreation, or an adventure in nature, the act of traveling to surf often takes surfers to less developed countries (LDC) in their explorations for the “perfect wave”. Therefore, surf

tourism should be examined in the context of sustainable development and developed as a form of sustainable tourism (Poizat-Newcomb, 1999; Ponting, 2001; Buckley, 2002a).

Sustainable Tourism Development

The 1992 Earth Summit held by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) produced Agenda 21, a set of sustainable development guidelines for businesses to adopt. Discussing ways that tourism can be “sustainable” is only one aspect of and cannot be separated from the larger issues of sustainable development (Swarbrooke, 1999; Mader, 2002). In response, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), World Tourism Organization (WTO), and the Earth Council released in 1996, the “Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry: Towards Environmentally Sustainable Development” (WTTC, 2002), a call for action specific to the travel and tourism industry.

The WTO modeled the changing trend in tourism, shown in Figure 1, that demonstrates how the different entities in "old-style tourism" affect each other by the flow of arrows from one stakeholder to the other, but do not directly share common interests. The "sustainable tourism" model pulls together the stakeholders and shows where areas of interest among them may overlap. Swarbrooke (1999) further recommended that the WTO model should include additional circles for other stakeholders such as the public sector, voluntary sector, media, and tourist.

The WTO states on its website, "sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that

economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems" (<http://www.world-tourism.org>). In other words, sustainable tourism managers, illustrated in Figure 2, need to take action in protecting the tourism resources and maintaining the quality of the tourism product to ensure its preservation for future generations (McCool, 2002; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2003).

The Impacts of Tourism

A successful sustainable tourism plan minimizes the negative consequences and maximizes the positive benefits of tourism. Sustainable tourism moves the industry away from large-scale mass tourism and embraces the small-scale tour operators that are supposedly more environmentally sensitive and socially conscious (McCool, 2002).

Table 1 lists three aspects of tourism impacts most often discussed: environmental, socio-cultural, and economic.

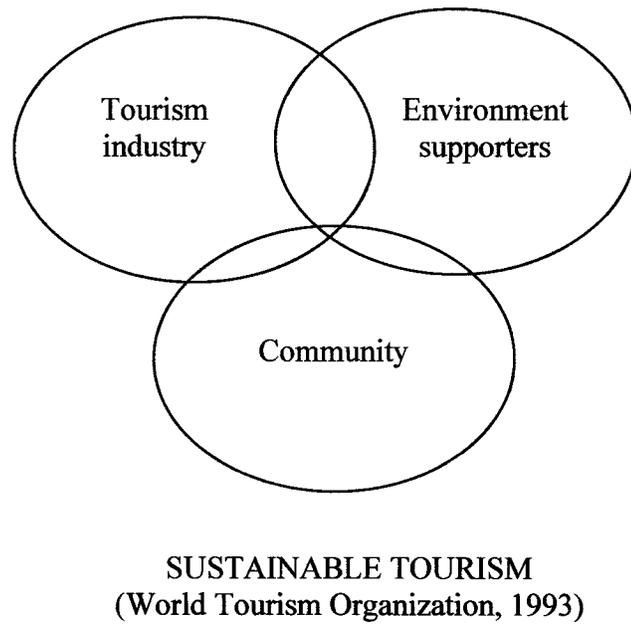
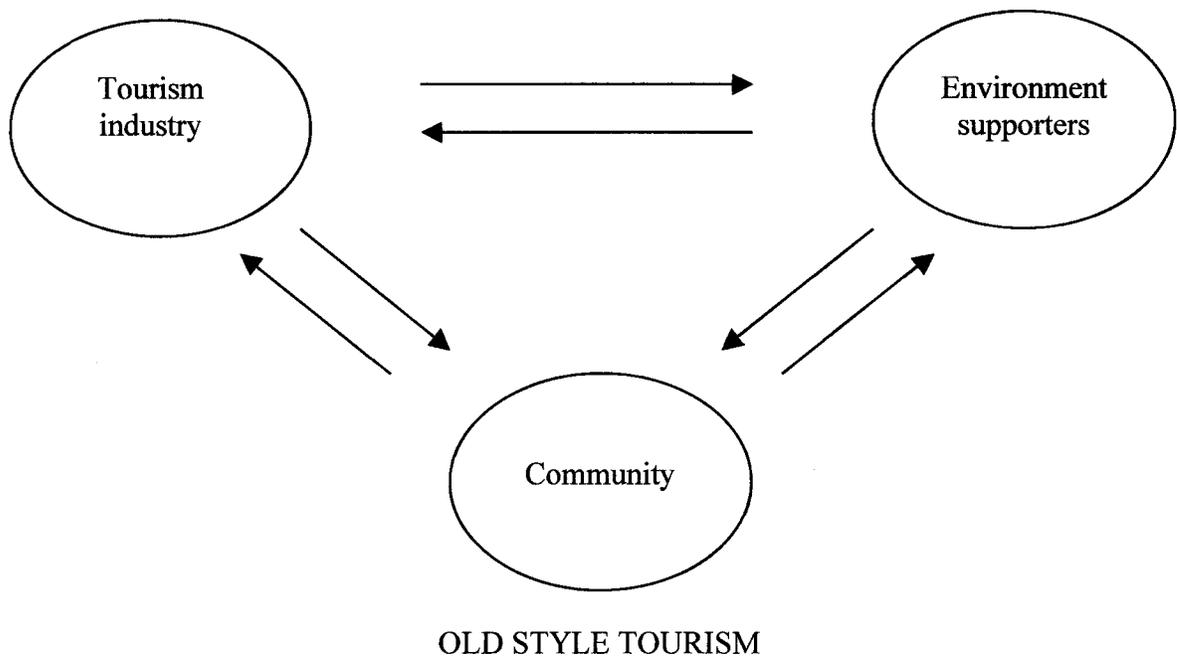


Figure 1. Evolution of Tourism
Source: Swarbrooke, 1999: 150.

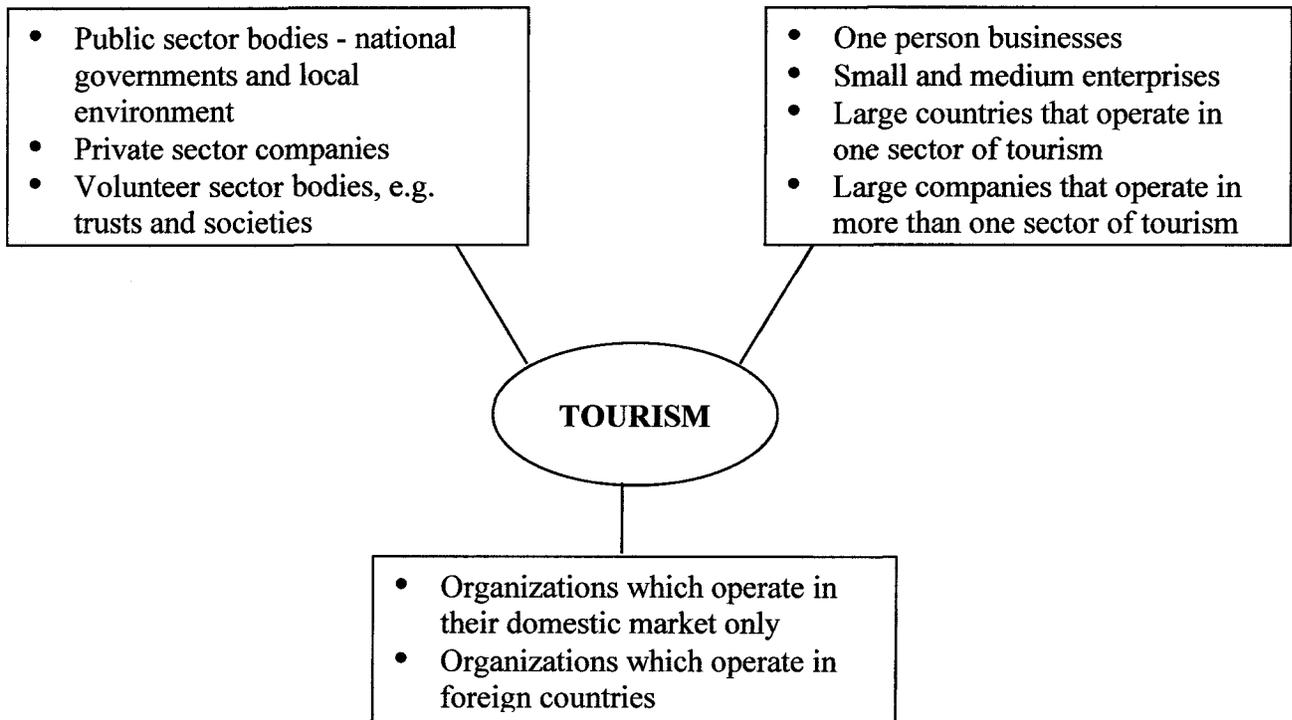


Figure 2. Different Types of Organizations in Tourism

Source: Swarbrooke 1999: 20

Table 1. Impacts of Tourism

	Negative Impacts	Positive Impacts
Environmental	<p>Threatening and Degradation of ecosystems from tourists and development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trampling in fragile environments • Construction of roads, buildings, breakwaters that alter settings • Deforestation • Increased visitors' usage puts pressure on wildlife and ecosystem <p>Depletion of Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freshwater, energy, food, raw materials, fossil fuels <p>Pollution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air pollution from emissions • Noise pollution • Littering and increased waste • Improper sewage disposal • Aesthetic pollution—disappearing landscapes and scenic views 	<p>Raising environmental awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves management and planning to reduce waste and construct energy efficient facilities • Educated clients will demand higher environmental standards from tourism services <p>Environmental conservation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of national parks and nature preserves to preserve natural environment as a tourism resource • Tour operators that make direct financial contributions to environmental conservation organizations • Park fees and tourist taxes increase government revenue to manage the parks and natural resources <p>Alternative employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism offers job opportunities away from illegal activities such as poaching or timber <p>Regulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controls visitor numbers to maintain quality of fragile site

Table 1. (Continued) Impacts of Tourism

	Negative Impacts	Positive Impacts
Socio-cultural	<p>Change or loss of Indigenous culture, identity, and values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture becomes commodified into souvenirs, art, entertainment • Appearance of big companies that represent Western culture to appease tourists' standardized tastes and demands (McDonalds, Starbucks, Coke, etc.) • Loss of authenticity or staged authenticity <p>Host and visitor clashes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourist behavior that does not respect local customs and values • Economic inequality between visitor and local resident • Income inequality between foreign and local employees <p>Social stresses on physical environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource use conflicts (water, energy, food) • Land-use conflicts (locals deprived of ownership, use, and/or access) • Cultural deterioration (vandalism and pilfering of cultural sites and artifacts) <p>Ethical issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased criminal activities • Child labor issues • Prostitution or sex tourism 	<p>Brings together the Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates jobs for local residents • Tourism facilities can also benefit locals • Increases standard of living • Involves community in preserving their culture and traditions through tourism planning of events, festivals <p>Fosters peace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of different cultures through exchange and interaction between host and visitor

Table 1. (Continued) Impacts of Tourism

	Negative Impacts	Positive Impacts
Economic	<p>Leakage of tourism earnings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overseas operators keep most income in own nation through pre-packaged tours • Imports for non-local products that tourist demand <p>All-inclusive tourism (cruises, resorts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourists remain in one place and rarely frequent local businesses • Employs fewer local residents <p>Infrastructure costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid by local government and through local taxes <p>Price inflation on goods and services</p> <p>Dependency on Tourism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seasonality of jobs • Disasters that decrease overall tourism can devastate the local economy 	<p>Foreign exchange earnings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulates investment to area <p>Generates jobs through tourism-related businesses</p> <p>Contributes to local economy through tourists' patronizing of local businesses</p> <p>Contributes to Government revenue through tourist taxes and fees</p> <p>Stimulates infrastructure development and improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better sewage, roads, electricity, telephone, and public transportation • Improves quality of life for community overall

(Table adapted from Swarbrooke, 1999 & UNEP, 2003)

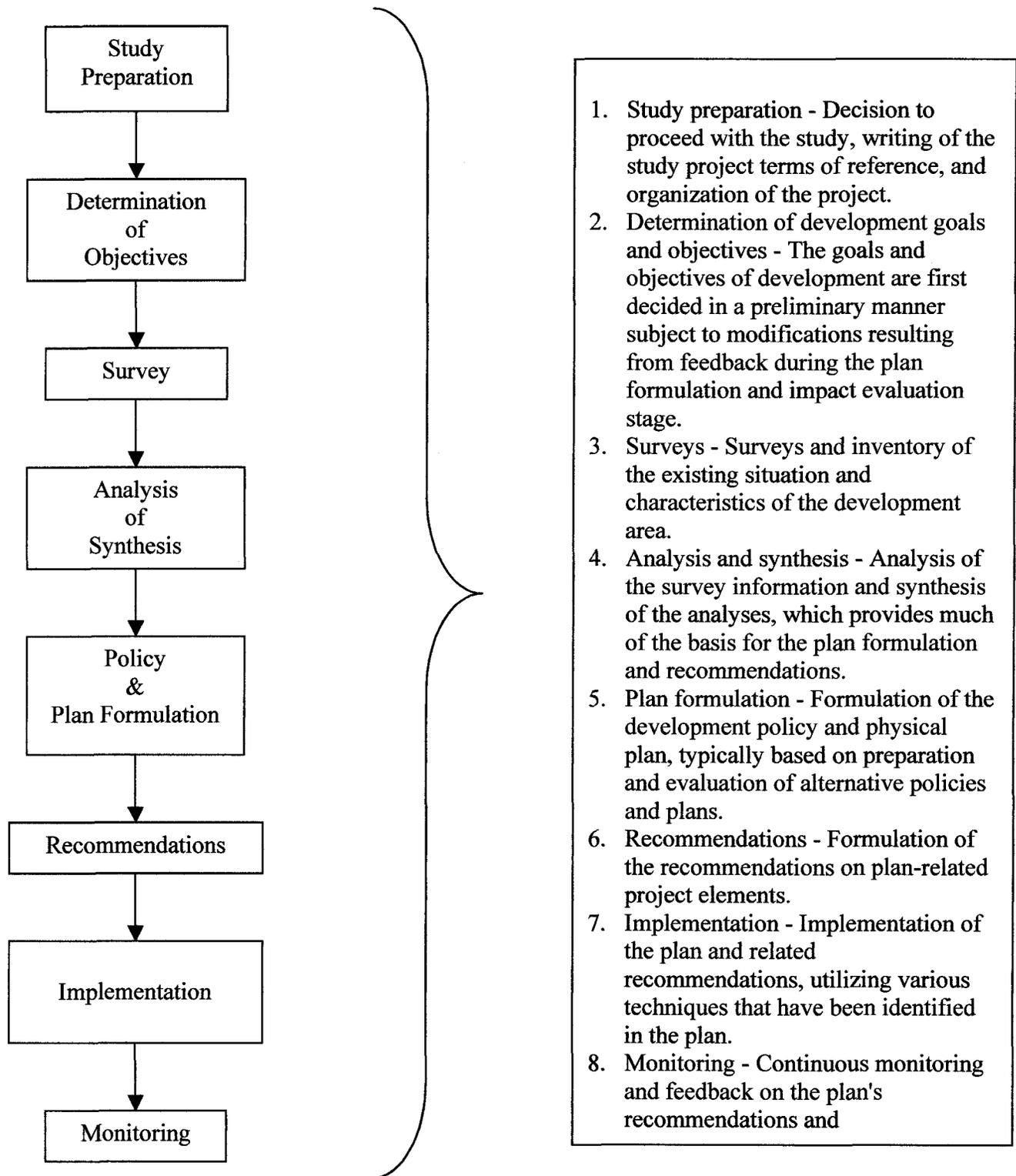


Figure 3. Basic Planning Process

Source: adapted from Inskeep, 1991: 28

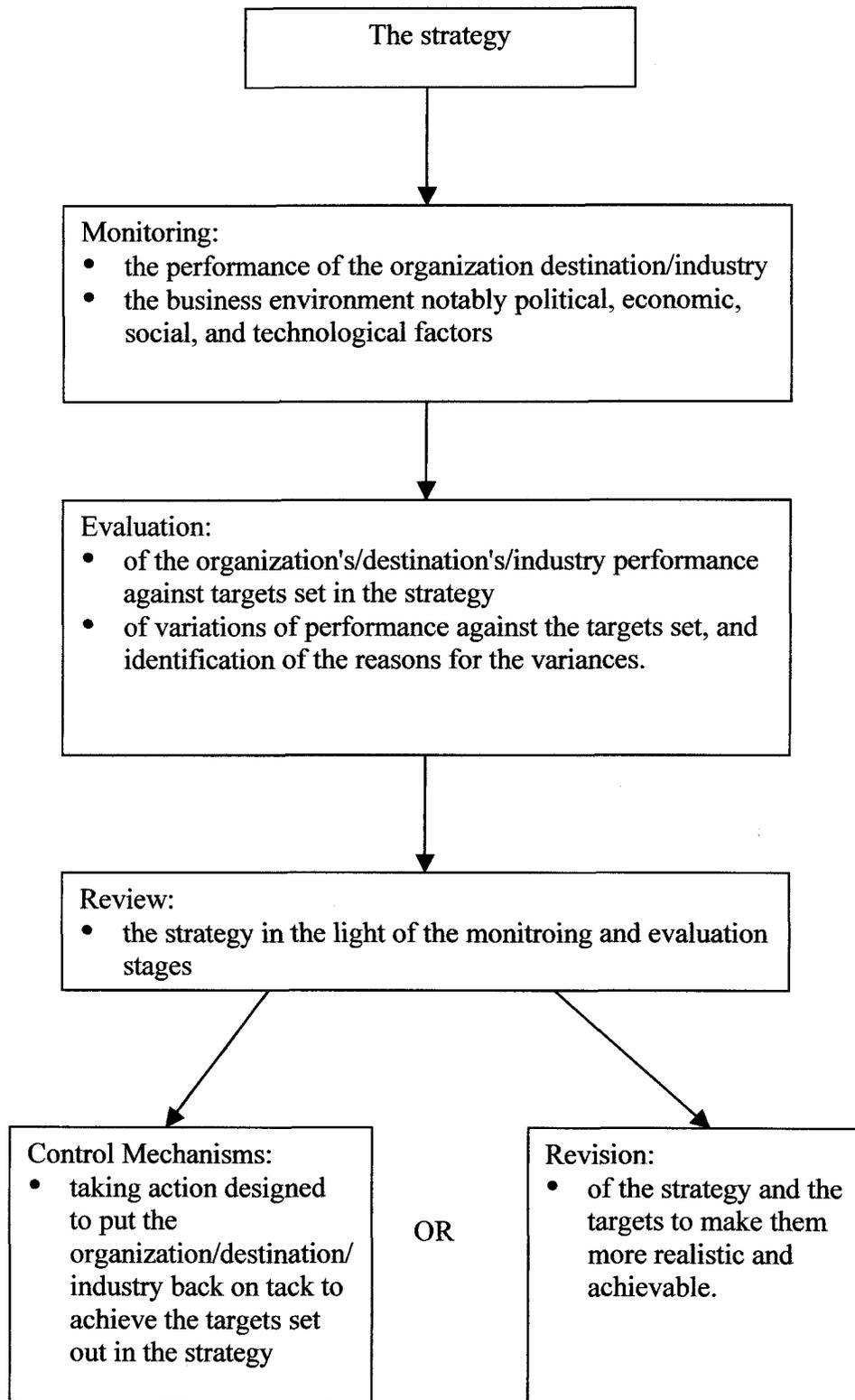


Figure 4. The Strategy Implementation Process

Source: Swarbrooke, 1999: 355

Sustainable Tourism Development Models

Various models have been developed to address sustainable tourism development. Inskeep (1991) developed a Basic Planning Process (see Figure 3), which is a conceptual framework that could be applied to tourism planning. By utilizing this basic planning approach, tourism planners could effectively focus efforts towards achieving sustainable development by fully realizing the benefits of tourism while preventing or mitigating the problems created by tourism (Inskeep, 1991).

The basic planning approach can be applied to all forms of tourism however different considerations may be made depending on the specific type of tourism being planned. Inskeep (1991) discusses that adventure tourism planning requires considerable thought to the environmental and social impacts that tourism activities cause since oftentimes, adventure tourism activities take place in less-developed, remote areas. In addition, conservation and control measures must be determined and applied to ensure the sustainability of tourism resources (Inskeep, 1991). An example would be a surf tour operator that keeps small group sizes in order to prevent overcrowding when visiting surfbreaks.

Swarbrooke's (1999) sustainable tourism strategy model adds to Inskeep's (1991) model by further developing the last two points: implementation and monitoring (see Figure 4). Swarbrooke (1999) stated that there is "too much emphasis placed on strategy generation rather than strategy implementation"(p. 355). Monitoring is an essential part of strategy implementation, and should not be generalized across the board since every destination is different, therefore requiring a monitoring system specific to that tourism

situation (Swarbrooke, 1999). Chapter 4 discusses some current monitoring systems that are useful for Costa Rica surf destinations.

After monitoring, an evaluation and review is done to determine whether current strategies need revising. Tourism destinations are constantly evolving and the well-planned sustainable tourism development strategies are flexible in adapting to changes (Inskeep, 1991). Some control or corrective measures that can be implemented for re-strategizing include modifying pricing, marketing, or existing tourism products and services to be more sustainable (Swarbrooke, 1999).

Another sustainable tourism development model worth noting is Liu's (1994) public policy and ecotourism planning guide for Pacific Islands. This guide focuses on the government's role and the importance of public policy regarding ecotourism development. Liu (1994) discusses the need to do an economic impact study to determine ecotourism's economic contribution to justify its expansion. The issue of "leakages" is particularly important because income from tourism is "leaking out" of the national economy, such as through imported goods and services. One way to prevent leakages would be to encourage small-scale local tourism businesses, since the income stays in the local economy rather than leaking out with overseas operators.

To determine justification for developing ecotourism through its economic value, Liu (1994) recommends that government examine the yield of income and jobs per tourism dollar spent, by suggesting that "ecotourism will provide relatively more income and jobs per visitor dollar when compared with mass tourism" (p. 31). Therefore, government should be supporting ecotourism by conducting market studies, providing

overseas marketing and promotion, generating tourism revenue from park fees, and supporting national projects (Liu, 1994).

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) incorporates sustainable development principles into its recreation and coastal tourism policy framework stating that the "sustainable development of coastal tourism is dependent on: 1) good coastal management practices; 2) clean water and air, and healthy coastal ecosystems; 3) maintaining a safe and secure recreational environment through the management of coastal hazards (such as erosion, storms, floods), and the provision of adequate levels of safety...for water users; 4) beach restoration efforts; and 5) sound policies for wildlife and habitat protection" (http://yoto98.noaa.gov/yoto/meeting/tour_rec_316.html).

NOAA's coastal management practices include approving appropriate facilities for coastal development, improving public beach access, regulating activities that could negatively impact the coastal environment and setting up marine preserve areas, and develop beach restoration programs (NOAA, 1998). Surf tourism is greatly affected by coastal tourism management since the condition of the surf destination directly impacts surfing. For example, a seawall erected to protect a coastal development could impede proper beach sand replenishment, which eventually affects the shape of the shoreline and the surfbreak. If the surfbreak is not maintained, the specific tourism resource that makes a surf destination will disappear and so will the surf tourism industry there.

The Role of Tour Operators in Sustainable Tourism

Tour operators are an important link to sustainable tourism development because they play an important role in influencing tourism demand by being the link between the tourist and the destination (Carey, Gountas, & Gilbert 1997; Sirakaya, 1997; Swarbrooke, 1999; Miller, 2001). Tour operators promote a destination through planning and marketing, and they can even control the tourism experience by offering packaged tours (Carey, Gountas, & Gilbert, 1997; Place, 1998). Lumsdon and Swift (1998) also confirmed the tour operators' influential role in being the middleman between tourists and tourism policymakers, referring to them as "the gatekeepers of tourism development" (p. 170).

Tour operators in nature-based settings are critical to managing sustainable tourism because the environment that their tours rely on is threatened by overuse and misuse caused by tourism. As the natural environment becomes degraded, nature as a tourism resource becomes degraded as well. Buultjens and Davis (2001) examined the impacts that adventure-based recreational activities can have on natural resources, pointing out that unlike other tourist attractions, nature does not always charge user fees and can have few or no user restrictions. As a result, natural resources can quickly become crowded and spoiled. Preserving nature as a tourism resource serves as good motivation for tour operators to practice sustainable tourism.

A number of small specialist tour operators embrace sustainable tourism as a core element of their business. It could be argued that the emphasis on sustainable tourism differentiates them from mass tour operators (Swarbrooke, 1999). Miller (2001)

concluded that consumer demand shapes tour operators' behavior to operate in a responsible manner. For example, when clients become more conscious and select more environmentally-friendly tour operators, the other companies must in turn act in an environmentally responsible manner just to remain competitive within the tourism industry. The capitalization of these responsible-minded clients in turn motivates the tour operator to apply sustainable tourism principles into their operations.

Tourism Codes

A conservation ethic has arisen in the tourism industry, largely led by the ecotourism movement (Mowforth & Munt, 1998). As a result of this ethic, codes of conducts have appeared to encourage the practice of sustainable tourism, one being the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (see Appendix A for various codes). This code was developed by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in 1999, and recognized by the United Nations in 2001, which later led to the creation of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics (WTO, 2001). Believed to be an essential tool for sustainable tourism development, the Global Code of Ethics comprises ten Articles defining ethical behavior that all tourism stakeholders should follow.

There are four Articles from the Global Code of Ethics, in particular, to be noted for application specifically to surf tourism. Article one addresses the necessity for tourism industry's objectives to coincide with the host community, and Article five further elaborates the obligation for tourism activity to benefit its host communities (WTO, 2001). Sections from these Articles discuss how tourism development should

integrate the local population within the tourism industry by creating jobs, raising the standard of living, and including the local communities' concerns in planning.

Article three addresses tourism's role in sustainable development (WTO, 2001). Surf tour operators could pay particular attention to designing tour packages that minimize crowding issues, waste production, and pressure on the natural, ocean and coastal environment. Article six discusses tour operators' obligations for providing accurate information to their clients about tourism services and the surf destination, for cooperating with the public sector regarding tourism safety and regulations, and for enhancing the tourism experience for visitors and residents (WTO, 2001).

One study examining the ethical behavior of tour operators in various sectors of the tourism industry: ecotourism, adventure, fishing, golf, and cruiseline showed that the ecotourism and adventure tour operators answered similarly on all ethical scenarios, demonstrating they have a “more heightened sense of ethical conduct than do their peers in other ventures” (Fennell and Malloy, 1999, p. 938). The study revealed that the fishing, golf, and cruiseline operators answered least ethically in scenarios concerning social and ecological issues, and 95% of the ecotour operators adhere to some form of code of ethics in their business practice. Because ecotourism and adventure tour companies are more apt to apply ethical behavior in their business practices, self-regulation of sustainable practices may not be a difficult request of them.

The instruments being used so far to measure the tour industry's compliance with sustainable development principles have been mostly self-regulating and taken the forms of ecolabels, certifications, accreditations, codes of practice, and voluntary initiatives (Honey & Rome, 2001; Font & Buckley, 2001). One example is a cooperative of

concerned tour operators that created in 2000 the Tour Operators' Initiative (TOI) for Sustainable Tourism Development to address the sustainable tourism issues affecting their sector of the tourism industry. Similar to following a code of ethics or a code of responsible conduct, TOI encourages tour operators to join a common goal for sustainable tourism and accept a Statement of Commitment to adopt sustainable development practices in all areas of its company's management, implement the principles through corporate policy, and report progress in reaching these goals (<http://www.toinitiative.org>).

The industry appears to have taken more action in sustainable tourism development than the governments however their reasons may be more self-serving rather than truly trying to ensure sustainability. One reason discussed is that tour operators mainly use the idea of sustainability as a way to self-promote their activities to the media, who in turn have an effect on consumer behavior, (Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Swarbrooke, 1999). A study done by Sirakaya (1997) found that ecotour operators were willing to comply with sustainable codes of conduct they received benefits or incentives, such as awards or good publicity. However, with several certification programs out in the industry already, the legitimacy of being awarded with some form of ecolabel is undermined because tourism businesses can "buy" their accreditation (Epler Wood & Halpenny, 2001). Therefore, many suggest the need for an international system of certification that would be monitored by a reputable international organization to give credibility to awarded ecolabels (Honey & Rome, 2001; Epler Wood & Halpenny, 2001; Sirakaya & McLellan, 1998).

Voluntary initiatives and certification systems also tend to be favored because they allow the tour industry to self-regulate rather than have governments control their activities, as Swarbrooke (1999) states, “Tour operators are largely footloose, and if a destination tries to control their activities they may simply move on to somewhere where they will not face similar constraints”(p. 34). However, whatever the real motives behind tour operators’ compliance with sustainability principles, self-regulatory and voluntary measures can eventually evolve into statutory regulations through commitment and lobbying of the truly concerned industry members (Wilson, 2003).

The Implications of Sustainable Tourism Development for LDCs

As the number of visitors and tourism receipts to less developed countries (LDC) increases, tourism continues to become the primary industry in these nations. Tourism is often viewed as less environmentally destructive than other industries such as logging, cattle raising, oil extraction, or agriculture (Honey, 1999). Also, tourism is praised for bringing in money through foreign exchange earnings and investment that bring development and revitalization to areas (Weaver, 1999). LDCs are attractive to visit because of the richness in tourism resources that may exist there: friendly people, pristine environment, cheaper goods and services, exotic settings, and cultural diversity (Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Weaver, 1999).

Although the impacts listed in Table 1 are prevalent to tourism worldwide, Weaver (1998) points out, “there is substantial evidence that the interrelated economic, sociocultural, and environmental problems associated with the rapid development of tourism are more ubiquitous, severe, and consequential within peripheral areas, such as

LDCs” (p. 63). Therefore, LDCs are quite vulnerable to long-term negative effects if their tourism development only focuses on short-term economic gain.

Another implication that LDCs must face with tourism development is politics. Who is in charge of tourism development in LDCs? Swarbrooke (1999) noted that in LDCs, the national government often takes responsibility for the nation's tourism planning and development, favoring foreign investment rather than concentrating its efforts on developing its own local tourism businesses. Corruption of government officials may also exist in LDCs, where sustainable tourism development policies may be overlooked in return for financial gain (Swarbrooke, 1999).

The effects of corruption can be seen in "approved" tourism development projects that are clearly inconsistent with national laws. The Barceló Tambor Hotel in Costa Rica is an example of a tourism project inconsistent with national sustainable development strategies (Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Honey, 1999). The hotel, which is owned by a foreign company, managed to be built in violation of the maritime zone (see Chapter 4 for description of Maritime Zone Law) and without proper building permits.

LDCs use tourism as a tool for conservation, but the industry may use the term, *sustainable tourism*, to “green” different types of tourist activities, sustainable or not (Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Honey, 1999). For example, ecotourism has the potential to benefit local and national economies as a sustainable tourism option, however, self-proclaimed ecotours should not automatically be assumed to be sustainable. Swarbrooke (1999) makes the point: “If ecotourism were to grow in an area, without regulation, it could easily become as harmful as other forms of mainstream tourism. Indeed because it

tends to take place in areas with rare and fragile ecosystems, it could be even more harmful” (p. 29).

Surf Tourism Development

Although there are few studies written on the topic of surf travel in academic tourism literature, there have been numerous articles on the topic in surf-related magazines and periodicals. Surf journalists often write about their first-hand experiences in traveling to surf destinations and some have gone as far to address the number of sustainability issues they encounter on their trips.

Surfers have a “word of mouth” network that prevents any newly discovered surf spot from remaining a secret and makes development around the area inevitable (Barilotti, 2002; George, 2003). Media images of “perfect waves” also attract the surfers and contribute to the development of new surf locations (Ponting & Wearing, 2003). Barilotti (2002) explains this concept as the “Surfing Macroeconomic Theory: Waves attract surfers. Surfing attracts energy. Energy attracts people. People attract capital. Investment attracts development. And so it goes. A quick survey from outer space would likely show an inordinate number of major coastal cities expanding outwards in concentric waves from a quality surf break” (p. 92).

Surf travel first began as independent surf travelers exploring and searching for new surf spots. Now a commercial tourism industry exists around the activity, complete with surf-specializing travel agents, pre-packaged surf tours, and surf resorts. Buckley (2002a) defined commercial surf tourism to be “purchasable holiday packages where clients travel more than 40 km from home, stay overnight, and intend to devote their

active leisure time principally to surfing” (p. 407-408). Although surfers cannot be placed within any specific demographic--they are old and young, male and female, rich and poor--many surf travelers can be described as "older, cash-rich time-poor surfers" (Buckley, 2002a: 408) since they make up the majority of the international surf tour vacation sector.

Surf destinations are formed as a result of numerous surfers flocking to that location to surf the area’s main attraction: its waves. Although the actual activity of surfing is done exclusively in the water, the reality is that surfers have an impact on the coastal environment, both on and offshore. The negative impacts created by surf tourism are the same as those impacts listed in Table 1, however, adapted specifically to coastal environments where surfbreaks exist. Management of surf destinations is difficult to assign since the tourism resource--the ocean--is an open-access resource with no defined owner. This lack of responsibility for any specific user group can be problematic when tourism development occurs in surf areas, which can create impacts such as crowding, trash, sewage, water pollution, erosion, resource depletion, environmental degradation, and user conflicts (Barilotti, 2002; Buckley, 2002a). Therefore, surf tourism should be examined within sustainable development principles and planned within a sustainable tourism framework. (Ponting, 2001; Buckley, 2002a).

Summary

This chapter reviewed literature based on the surf tourism sector, sustainable tourism development, sustainability issues for tourism in LDCs, and the role of tour

operators in sustainable tourism. This study draws from all these concepts and applies them to Costa Rica's surf tourism destination and industry.

Surfing is an internationally popular travel motivator, which justifies the need to further study this market sector. Surfers have been traveling the world for decades, yet little academic research has been done on surfing as a specific tourism niche sector. The few authors that examined and written about the surf tourism market in published and unpublished papers all agree that there is a need for more research in this topic area (Buckley, 2002a; Fluker, 2003; Ponting, 2001).

Numerous examples of environmental, socio-cultural, and economic impacts of surf tourism have already become apparent in surf destinations. Because there is an attraction to exotic surf locations within many LDCs, the issues surrounding sustainability cannot be ignored when conducting examinations of this market. In addition, because the tour operator can play such an integral role connecting tourists to the destinations and in influencing tourist behavior, this study focused on the sustainable activities and behavior of this particular tourism stakeholder.

CHAPTER 3 METHODS

This study explored surf tourism in Costa Rica from an industry perspective based on qualitative research. The study sought to determine the different kinds of surf tourism suppliers existing in Costa Rica, whether the surf travel operators practice sustainable tourism principles or get involved with tourism policy planning, and to identify those key players that are responsible for sustaining Costa Rica as a surf destination.

Study Design

The methods are based on purposeful sampling techniques that included a written questionnaire and open-ended semi-structured interviews with surf travel suppliers, and interviews with industry organizations.

In order to first identify a study population and get an idea of the Costa Rican surf market size and makeup, an information search was done via surfing-related websites, surf magazines, and Costa Rica guidebooks. The study population was identified to be 38 surf tourism suppliers in Costa Rica; 26 based in Costa Rica and 12 based overseas; then further categorized as 13 surf camps, 12 surf tour operators, 9 surf travel agencies, and 4 surf schools (see Appendix B).

Questionnaire

To complete the first study objective, a questionnaire was developed to profile the surf businesses by asking questions pertaining to company background, operations, and product offerings. Due to the small sample size of the study population, a survey of all

companies was attempted. The questionnaire was sent with a cover letter via fax or e-mail, and out of 38 companies contacted, 26 returned the questionnaire (see Appendix C).

The questionnaire had pre-listed responses and asked participants to circle all answers that could apply and also gave them the option to write in a response that may not have been previously listed. Because surf tourism is still a recent concept for Costa Rica and not well-defined, the intention of the questionnaire was to elicit the surf operators' views and not rule out any responses that were not pre-listed.

The first three questions were used to profile the respondents by asking how long their company has been operating in Costa Rica, how many employees they had, and what type of company they considered themselves (Ecotourism, Adventure tour, travel agency).

The remaining questions examined the surf tour product being offered: average tour group size, means of marketing (Internet, magazine advertisements, brochures, travel agents, special publications, or others), modes of transportation (company-owned vehicle, chartered van/bus, public bus), beaches and surfbreaks visited (see Figure 3 Surf Map of Costa Rica), and other activities offered along with their surf tour packages.

Interviews

The interviewees selected were Costa Rica-based surf tour operators that responded to the questionnaire. The study wanted to examine those businesses located in Costa Rica that offered surf tour packages that included a surf guide or instructor who escorted the surf clients to the various beaches throughout the country. The reason for this selection was that these operators would be able to respond to the national

sustainable tourism strategies and be aware of the tourism impacts felt at surf destinations.

The nature of the questions focused more on issues pertaining to local communities and residents because local businesses are more directly affected by Government-implemented tourism policy than foreign-based operators. Out of the 20 respondents based in Costa Rica (see Table 2), 11 agreed to do a follow-up interview face-to-face or by telephone. Interviews lasted between 40-60 minutes and were recorded through written notes and audiocassette.

The open-ended structured interviews focused on identifying sustainability issues that the surf tour operators encounter in operating in Costa Rica. The questions addressed the guides' awareness of sustainable development issues and sustainable tourism principles by asking them to comment on their environmental business practices and what they felt their role was in surf tourism planning for Costa Rica (see Appendix D).

In addition to the interviews with the surf tourism operators, the study gathered information from discussions with other surf and tourism related organizations. This portion of the study comprised of primary data gathered from informal interviews with representatives from the Costa Rica Tourist Board (ICT), the Surfrider Foundation, and the Costa Rica Surf Association (CNS). The study also utilized secondary data gathered from an interview with MINAE done by the Surfrider Foundation. These discussions focused on that specific organization's role in the Costa Rica surf tourism sector.

Respondents

The Surf Tour Operators

The 26 respondents to the questionnaire were owners/managers of surf travel enterprises comprising surf travel agencies, surf camps, surf guides, and surf schools operating in Costa Rica (See Appendix E). Table 2 presents where each respondent's business is based. Of the 26 respondents, 20 companies are based in Costa Rica: 7 from Tamarindo, 4 from Jacó, 2 from San José, 2 from Nosara, 2 from Dominical, 1 from Esterillos, 1 from Playa Grande, and 1 from Playa Hermosa. The other six respondents are overseas-based operators that bring surf groups to Costa Rica: 3 based in California, 2 in Florida, and 1 from the United Kingdom.

Table 2. Company Location

	Location	Number of Respondents
Costa Rica-based	Tamarindo	7
	Jacó	4
	San José	2
	Nosara	2
	Dominical	2
	Esterillos	1
	Playa Grande	1
	Playa Hermosa	1
	Overseas -based	California (USA)
Florida (USA)		2
United Kingdom		1

The surf travel agencies are similar to traditional travel agencies, but their clients are surfers and products are surf-related. The surf travel agencies found via the information search were mostly foreign-based companies offering vacation packages to surf destinations worldwide in addition to Costa Rica.

A surf camp is usually a beachfront lodge located at a surf destination and a short walk to prime surfbreaks. Surf camps vary from offering surfers a place to sleep and eat to arranging guided trips and surf instruction. The camps can serve as simply base camps for experienced surfers taking day trips along the coast searching independently for the best waves, or the surf camps may incorporate surf school instruction into their operations for the beginning surfer. Because of the meshing of surf-related tourism offerings, it is difficult to make a clear distinction between what specifically a surf camp offers, what a surf guide offers, and what a surf school offers. Some operators were a single entity (camp, guide, or school), however many comprised all three.

Surf or Tourism Related Organizations

The Costa Rica Tourist Board (ICT)

Developed in 1955, ICT is the government institution responsible for regulating tourism activities, such as hotels, travel agencies, car rental companies, and tour operators. According to its website, ICT's main objectives are "To encourage and retain the presence of foreign visitors in the country, to promote construction and maintenance of infrastructure for tourists, to make the necessary international promotion so that Costa Rica becomes a known destination, and to promote and watch over tourism activity from the private sector" (<http://www.visit-costarica.com>).

Currently, the ICT promotes surf tourism by displaying photos of surfbreaks and local surfers on their website and national marketing posters. The ICT also offers a surfing brochure with a map of surf spots, which can be downloaded from their website (<http://www.visitcostarica.com/ict/paginas/mapas/mapasurf.asp>).

Surfrider Foundation Costa Rica

The Surfrider Foundation is an international non-profit organization founded in 1984 by a group of surfers with the mission of being “dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's oceans, waves and beaches for all people, through conservation, activism, research and education” (<http://www.surfrider.org>). The organization's core strategies include becoming community leaders in coastal conservation, promoting the recognition and preservation of surf areas, improving water quality at surfbreaks, and expanding the organization and its mission worldwide.

Major coastal issues that Surfrider deals with are overfishing, sea walls and marina construction, wastewater treatment, ocean water quality, drinking water quality, land overdevelopment, beach erosion, clean beaches, mangrove protection, recycling, and drownings (Gordon, 2003, pers. comm.). The Costa Rica chapter, created in 2001, is the first Surfrider chapter located in Latin America, and is comprised of local community groups in Dominical, Jacó/Hermosa, Tamarindo, and San José.

Costa Rica National Surf Circuit (CNS)

The CNS is the representative ISA governing body from Costa Rica. CNS hosts surfing contests at Playa Negra, Jacó, Quepos, Puerto Viejo, Playa Hermosa, and

Dominical. The contests are for amateur surfers hoping to make the Costa Rican National Surf Team or those wanting exposure to enter the Professional Surfing Circuit. The CNS sponsors its top surfers to compete in International Surfing competitions (<http://www.surfigcr.com>). Some of the surf tour operators that were interviewed were also members or sponsors of the CNS.

The Costa Rican National Team surfers perceive themselves as unofficial “ambassadors” for Costa Rica when they compete at international venues, and therefore would like to see more support from the ICT to boost surfing for Costa Rica. Currently, CNS depends on its local community support and surf company sponsorships for funding.

Ministry of the Environment and Energy (MINAE)

MINAE oversees environmental matters and its accordance to the national goal of sustainable development. MINAE is committed to a national strategy for conservation and protection of the national parks and sustainable use of biodiversity and forests, also known as the “green agenda”. Their mission statement says, “The Costa Rican State, through MINAE, will coordinate the efforts of the different social and economic sectors to achieve the national objectives related to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, promoting joint actions and strategic alliances at local, regional, national, and international level” (MINAE, 2003).

Regarding surf tourism, MINAE protects the coastal and marine resources which surf tourism is dependent on. As part of a conservation plan for Santa Rosa National Park, MINAE implemented a boat permit plan that controls the number of surf tours

allowed to go to two of the most popular surfbreaks in Costa Rica, Witch's Rock and Ollie's Point (further discussed in Chapter 4).

Non-respondents

Out of 38 surf tour operators contacted, 12 did not respond to participate in the study. A cover letter was sent with the questionnaire indicating the purpose of the study with a brief questionnaire eliciting participation (see Appendix C). The study sample was found through an Internet and magazine search. Consequently all those contacted utilized similar means of advertising and therefore had similarities in soliciting their client base.

Those that chose to not participate did not respond back to give a reason for their nonparticipation. Non-respondents were comprised of six Costa Rica-based surf operators and six foreign-based surf operators. Based on the descriptions from their websites, five are surf camps, four are surf travel agencies, and three are guided surf tours.

Possible reasons for non-response could be the surf operator was simply not interested in the purpose of the study, the e-mail address or fax number could be incorrect, or the business may not exist anymore. In addition, the non-respondents may not have a vested interest in the study. Implications of such could cause potential difficulty in gaining their buy-in to any recommendations put forth by this study.

The cover letter sent to the study sample clearly indicated interest in issues pertaining to sustainability of Costa Rican surf destinations. One possible conclusion about the non-respondents is they do not have interest in sustainability issues of Costa Rica; their interests may be based solely on selling surf travel.

In Chapter 4, there is a discussion about how most surf tour operators have only been operating within the last three years, showing the recent development of the surf tourism industry for Costa Rica. It is possible that some non-respondent businesses did not survive, but their websites remain. If this is the case, then the study population of 38 may be inaccurate as well since the sample was partly determined from an Internet search.

For the follow-up interviews, the 17 participants based in Costa Rica were contacted, however, only 11 interviews were conducted. The reason for the non-response for interviews was due to the author being unable to make direct contact with the six interview non-respondents while in Costa Rica, July 12-27, 2003 (see Limitations in Chapter 1). Attempts were first made by phone to set up the follow-up interview. Two participants were out of the country and the other four could not be contacted directly and they did not return messages. A second attempt was made to non-respondents via e-mail with the interview questions attached asking them to respond at their convenience. No response was returned by the e-mail method.

Due to the non-response of certain surf tour operators, the results do not reflect how the non-respondents would have responded. Therefore, there is a degree of bias in the findings, and generalizations of the results should not be made for the entire study population. Of the non-respondents, 50% were foreign-based operators, while only 23% of the respondents were foreign-based. Perhaps the majority of respondents were Costa Rica-based because they have a more personal interest in a study concerning the sustainability of their surf destination.

Additionally, there are potential implications in that government regulations, such as the Maritime Zone Law (see Chapter 4), would not apply to foreign-based operators

since they are not physically developing a surf tourism structure in Costa Rica. Rather, foreign-based surf tour operators may simply bring clients to Costa Rica only a few weeks out of the year. Therefore, making a national policy regarding sustainable surf tourism would clearly affect Costa Rica-based surf tour companies who are permanent residents of Costa Rica. However, foreign-based surf operators may choose to take their surf tours elsewhere if they do not want to comply with an implemented Costa Rican national policy regarding sustainable surf tourism. Swarbrooke (1999) confirmed this point by stating that foreign-based companies "may lack commitment to the destination and the host population" (p. 108).

In conclusion, generalizations from the study's results could possibly be made for Costa Rica-based surf tour operators, but caution should be used when using results to make conclusions about foreign-based operators' responses. Because non-respondents did not respond, the study was unable to gather basic information about them, including the company's size, how long they have been operating, or average group size (see Appendix C). Therefore, other similarities and/or differences between respondents and non-respondents are unknown. Currently the only differentiating feature gathered by the study is whether the operator is foreign-based or Costa Rica-based, as that information can be determined from the contact information from their website.

Respondent Linkages

The following diagrams, Figure 5 and Figure 6, were developed based on models shown in Chapter 2 (see Figures 1 & 2), with further changes taking into consideration the surf tourism context of this study. With regard to the Costa Rica surf tourism

industry, this study specifically focuses on three key players being government agencies, private sector, and non-government organizations, each having overlapping areas concerning the sustainable development of the surf destination and tourism.

Figure 5 demonstrates how the sustainable development of the surf destination and tourism depends on the integration of the various respondent sectors with one another. The private sector communicates their concerns with the national government agencies by gaining "strength in numbers" and finding a common voice through a tour association. NGOs lobby the national government to address their organizations' specific issues by incorporating the concerns within sustainable development policies. The private sector collaborates with NGOs to develop education and training programs that disseminate sustainability principles to their employees and clients. When the government, private sector, and NGOs collaborate effectively, the ultimate outcome would be the sustainable development of surf tourism for Costa Rica.

Figure 6 further shows the process of linkages of how each industry player influences the other's role in developing and maintaining a sustainable surf destination and surf tourism industry for Costa Rica. The government is able to implement sustainable tourism policies, market its strategies, and enforce regulation with the support of tour association members from the private sector and NGOs. The tour association joins together the private sector and government tourism agency to combine marketing efforts and develop a surf tourism industry code of conduct or guidelines. With the influence of NGOs, other tour association members, and the government, the individual private business practices responsible marketing, applies the industry guidelines to its business operating procedures, and provides surf tourism facilities and services that are

consistent with national sustainable development principles. With the support of the national government and private sector members, the CNS is able to showcase local surf talent at national and international surf contests, and the Surfrider Foundation is able to provide educational programs about the coastal environment issues that affect surf tourism.

Surf tourism needs to examine and apply sustainability models in its development and maintenance due to surfing's intimacy with the natural and open resource of the ocean and coastal environment. Clearly, both the public and private sector need to be invested in the sustainable development of surf tourism in order for it to thrive and continue into the future.

Data Analysis

The responses to each question on the questionnaire are displayed in tables while the interviews are presented qualitatively. The data were analyzed within the conceptual framework of Table 3. The conceptual framework was adapted from the issues summarized in Table 1 from Chapter 2 of this report. The final section discusses the current methods of assessment to Costa Rica's application of sustainable tourism principles to its surf destinations.

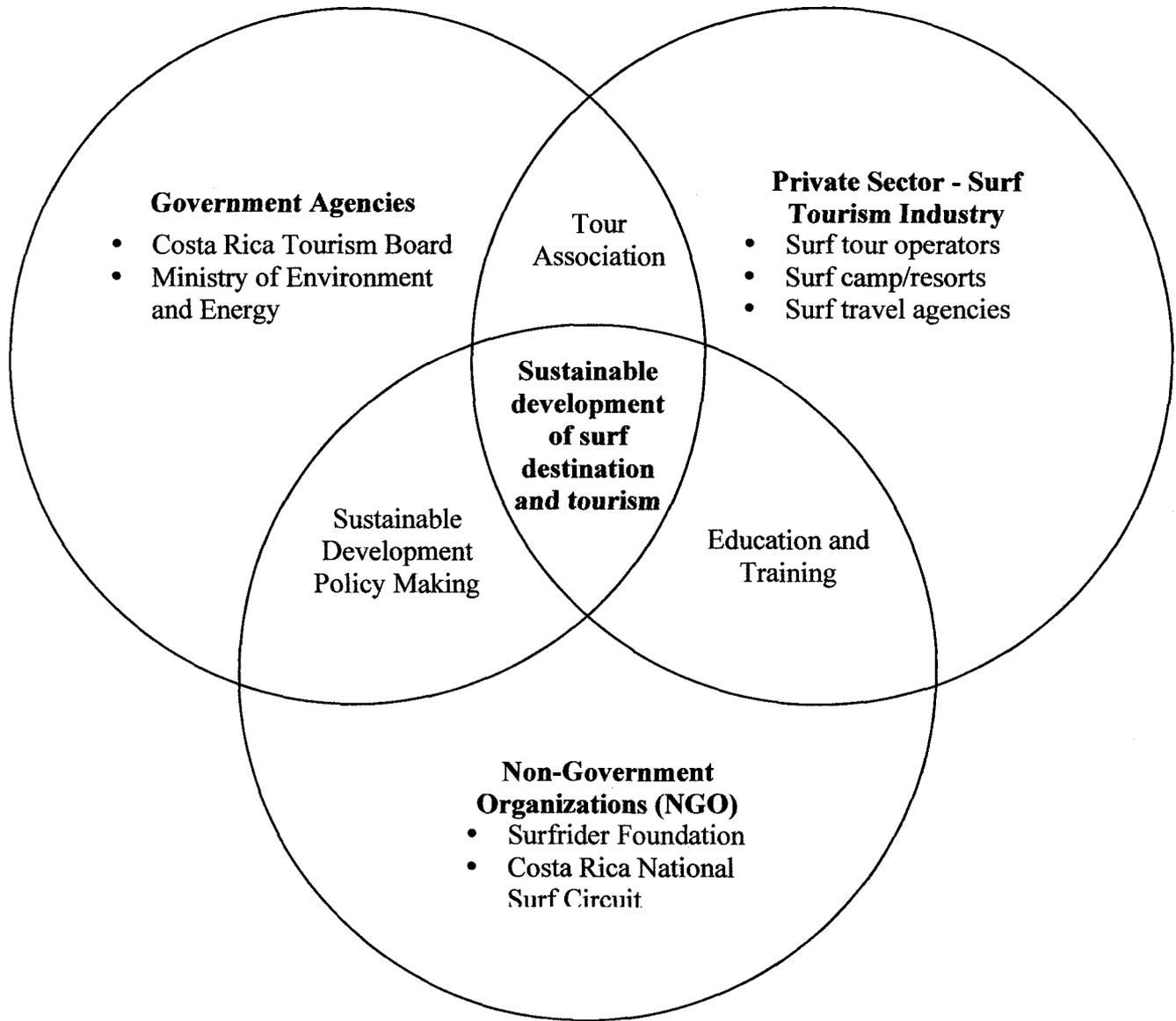


Figure 5. Integration of Surf Tourism Industry Sectors

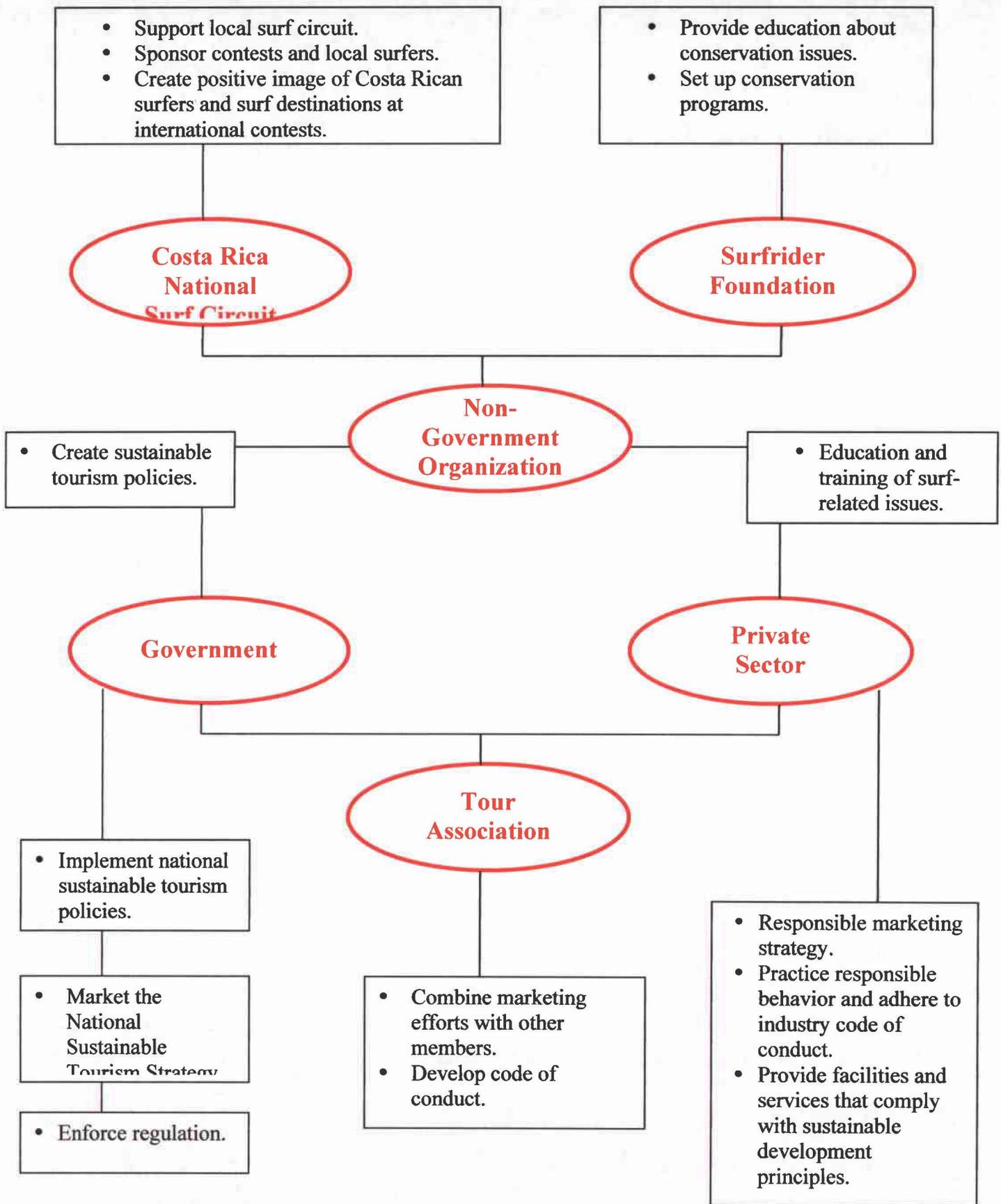


Figure 6. Model of Sustainable Surf Tourism in Costa Rica

Table 3. Conceptual Framework for Evaluating Surf Destination Sustainability

Concept	Definition	Environmental Issues	Socio-cultural Issues	Economic Issues	Method of Assessment
Infrastructure Development	Services created that meet the tourism and community demand	Overdevelopment; Resource depletion; Ecosystem interruption	Resource and land-use conflicts; cultural identity; ethical issues	Local businesses; jobs; foreign exchange; price inflation	Visitors accommodated; standard of living; roads; public services
Crowdedness	Destination is perceived as crowded by users	More visitor usage of natural environment; resource depletion	User conflicts; tourist/local interaction	Promotion; tourism spending	Wait times; Carrying Capacity;
Pollution	Destination becomes hazardous to the health of the environment and its users	Pollution of water, air, and land	Cultural deterioration; tourist/local clashes; health	Cleanup costs; preventive measures costs; visitor numbers	Cleanup Programs; Punishing polluters
Government Support	Government helps fund and regulates tourism development	Environmental laws and regulation; national park and preserves creation	Contributes to community growth	Tourist tax; foreign investment	Local community perception of government; government acts on promises
Local Community Involvement	Local community members are part of the tourism planning process	Conservation; alternative job opportunities	Employment; community feeling and bonding	Income levels; leakage issues; local businesses	Local community associations
Visitor Demand	Satisfactory visitor experience dependent on the destination meeting the demands of visitors	Higher environmental standards; education; accessibility	Staged authenticity; commodification; adaptation; cultural preservation	Packaged trips; price inflation; imported goods; tourism spending	Responsible tourist behavior demonstrated; First-time visitors; Repeat visitors

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results in three separate sections with summary charts and discussion following each section. The first section summarizes the findings from the 26 questionnaires returned out of the 38 companies originally contacted from the study population. The second section addresses the follow-up interviews that were conducted with 11 surf tour operators in Costa Rica from July 12-27, 2003. The final section examines current methods and programs in place that follow the principles of sustainable development for tourism.

Questionnaire Findings

The respondents were asked how long their company had been operating in Costa Rica. The answers ranged from one month to 16 years and Figure 7 combines the responses into a bar graph of four-year increments. Each bar is further broken down into specific years: 11 respondents have been operating for 3 or less years, 7 respondents have been operating between 4 to 7 years, 5 respondents have been operating between 8 to 11 years, and 3 have been operating for 12 or more years.

The majority of respondents had only started operating their business in Costa Rica within the last three years, indicating that Costa Rican surf tourism development has been fairly recent. Another interesting point is how the companies within the 0 to 3 years range responded to their company's length of operation in terms of months. Among the three respondents that make up the 1-year group, one responded that he has only been in operation for one month, another has been operating for 7 months, and the third

respondent said one year. Four other respondents chose to include the half-year lengths (3 said 2.5 years and 1 said 1.5 years) instead of choosing to round up or down to the nearest whole year.

A respondent that has been operating for more than 12 years mentioned during a follow-up interview that he commonly saw turnover of surf businesses in his town within the first few years of starting-up. Perhaps, the newer businesses track their business survival with each month that passes, and reaching the third year mark indicates their company is established.

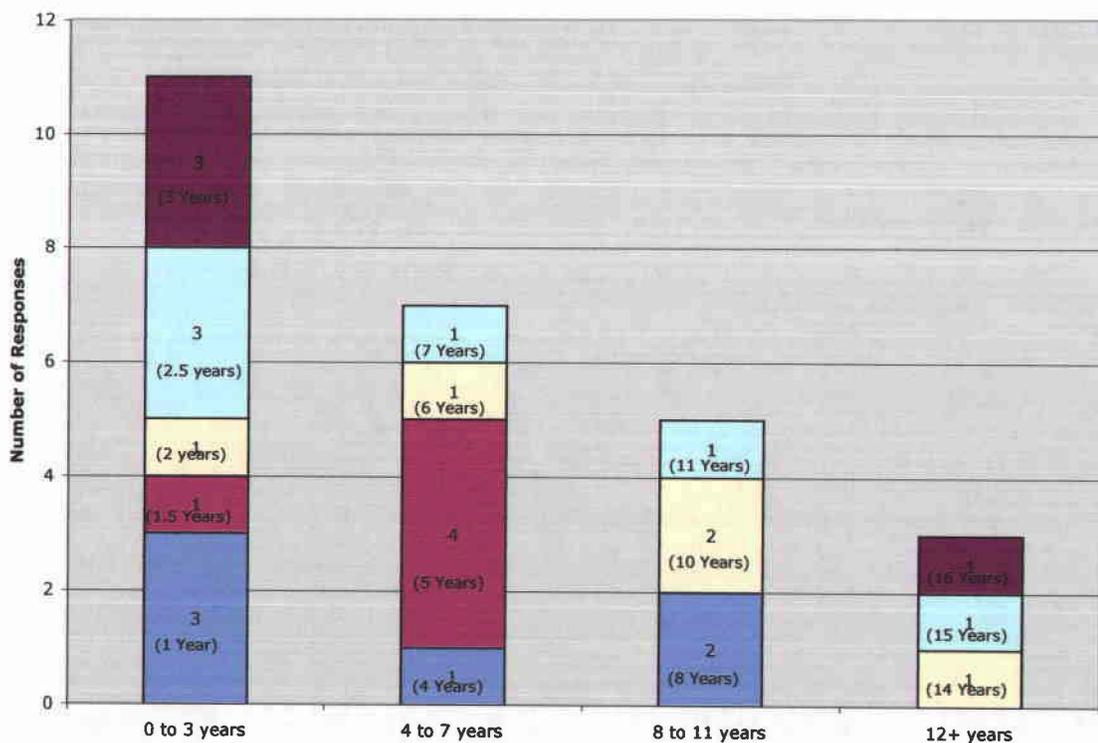


Figure 7. Years Operating

The next question asked for the size of the company. The results of the responses are displayed in Figure 8: 13 have only 1-5 employees, 5 have 5-10 employees, 2 have 10-15 employees, and 6 have 15 or more employees. The majority of the respondents' businesses employ a small staff. It should be noted as well that the respondents with 15 and more employees were larger businesses that were not only surf-focused. For example, two respondents are hotels that offer surf tours directly through their hotel, and therefore the company size number would include those employees not directly involved with the surf tour.

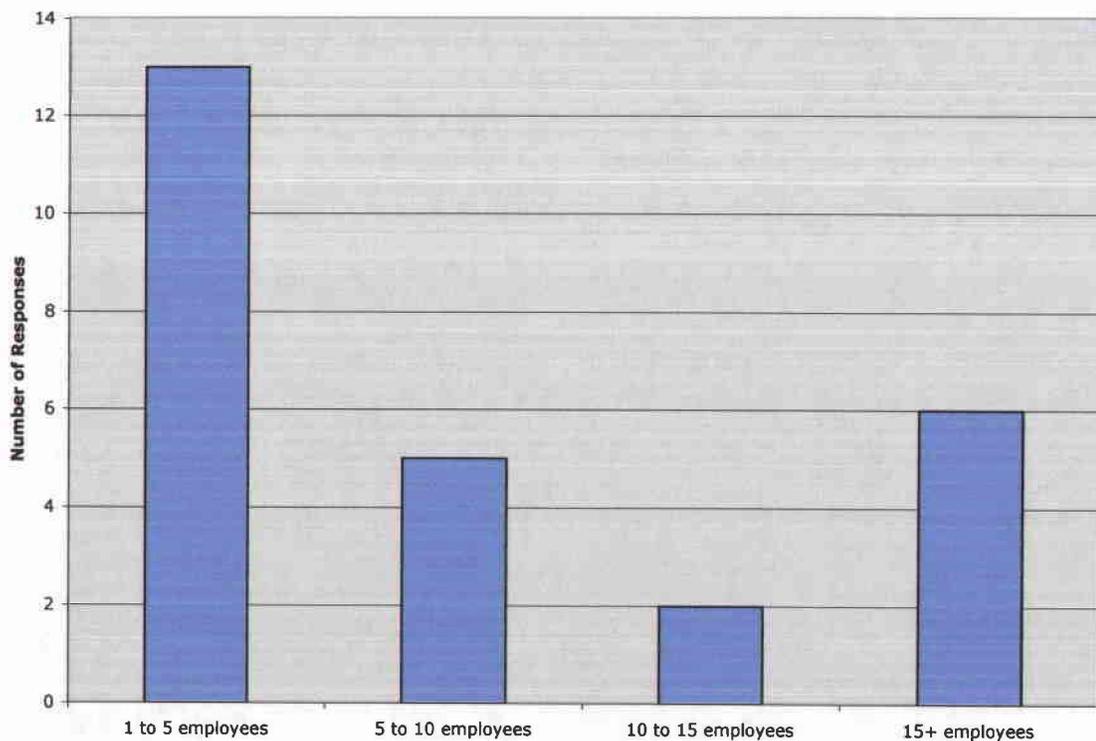


Figure 8. Company size

When asked to distinguish what type of company they considered themselves, the respondents were given the choices: Ecotourism, Adventure tour, travel agency, or other. As previously stated in Chapter 2, surf tourism remains unclassified within any specific tourism niche sector: sustainable tourism, marine tourism, sport tourism, and ecotourism. The author chose the categories of ecotourism, adventure tour, and travel agency because CANATUR classifies surfing as ecotourism, the ICT classifies it as adventure tourism, and the author noticed from an Internet search that some surf tourism companies acted more as travel agencies.

Respondents were not confined to one specific type and therefore some associated themselves with more than one type and also wrote-in responses that were not previously listed. The results are listed in rank order in Table 4: 11 answered Adventure tour only, 4 considered their company to be both ecotourism and adventure tourism (labeled eco-adventure on table), 2 Travel Agency only, 1 Ecotourism only, and 1 Eco-adventure travel agency. The write-in responses indicated 3 surf schools, 2 surf resorts or camp, 1 Adventure tour and surf school, 1 adventure tour and hotel.

The results of this question show a contrast between what the surf tour operators label as their business type and what national tourism organizations label surfing. Although CANATUR lists surfing as an ecotourism activity, only six of the respondents considered their surf business to be ecotourism. The majority of respondents actually associate surfing with adventure tourism, which corresponds with the ICT's classification.

Write-in responses mainly indicated the specific surf "product" that the company offers, such as surf school or surf camp. This finding shows that respondents may not be

familiar with classification terms (ecotourism, adventure tourism) used by the tourism industry and academics, and therefore, needed to write-in a response to specify their company is a "surf" business. The intended purpose of this question was to determine what sector the surf tourism market could be placed within the overall tourism industry. Unfortunately, the results from this question may not be valid for classification due to the confusion created by unfamiliar tourism definitions for the respondents. However, the findings do confirm that the defining surf tourism is not simple.

Table 4. Type of Company

Characteristic or Type	Responses
Adventure Tour	11
Eco-adventure	4
Surf school	3
Travel Agency	2
Surf resort/camp	2
Ecotourism	1
Eco-adventure travel agency	1
Adventure Tour & hotel	1
Adventure Tour & surf school	1

Table 5 shows the results for the average group size of surf tours. Over half of the companies maintain average group sizes of 1 to 5 surfers. The remaining respondents have average group sizes between 5 and 15 surfers, and none take out groups of more than 15. The desire by surf tour operators to keep group sizes small was further discussed during the follow-up interviews, which is presented in more detail in the following section under "Crowdedness".

Table 5. Average Tour Group Size

Average Group Size	Responses	Percentage
1 to 5 surfers	16	62%
5 to 10 surfers	7	27%
10 to 15 surfers	3	11%
15+ surfers	0	0

The results for the respondents' means for marketing is shown in Table 6: all 26 responded that they use the Internet for marketing, 17 advertise in Magazines, 15 in brochures, 11 utilize services from a travel agent, 9 advertise in special publications, and the write-in responses included 6 word-of-mouth, and 2 posted signs.

The Internet is the most popular means of promotion, which could be supported by studies done indicating the effectiveness using the Internet for marketing and selling travel services (Law & Leung, 2000; Tierney, 2000; Jung & Butler, 2001). Therefore, advertising on the Web, allows small businesses, such as the Costa Rican surf tour operators in this study, to reach out to a global market. In addition, the Costa Rican government has heavily supported the advancement of Internet technology since 1990 when Costa Rica became the first Central American country to go on-line (Montealegre, 1999).

The other means of marketing include printed materials, travel agents, word of mouth recommendations, and signs posted on the street. Magazine advertisements are also an effective way to reach a wide international market because there are numerous surf magazines in publication worldwide.

The marketing efforts by the respondents are quite broad and far-reaching. By advertising on the Internet, they market to the masses of web users. The advertisements in surf magazines are more directly aimed at surfers, and brochures are often tailored to the already interested client that wants more details and information about the surf tour.

Table 6. Marketing Methods

Type of Marketing	Responses	Percentage
Internet	26	100%
Magazine advertisements	17	65%
Brochures	15	58%
Travel Agent	11	42%
Special Publications	9	35%
Other-Word of Mouth	6	23%
Other-Posted Signs	2	8%

Table 7 lists the various types of transportation used for surf tours: 13 use their own vehicles to transport, 10 use charters, 3 use public transportation, and “Other” write-in answers included 6 rental cars, 2 boats, 1 commuter airplane, 1 all terrain vehicle (ATV), and 1 by foot.

Many of the roads to beaches are unpaved and off the main roads. Therefore, most surf tour operators prefer to use their own vehicles, hire a charter, or use the customers’ rental cars. The public transportation, which consists primarily of buses, is not a convenient option for surf tours since the public buses only drive paved roads and drop off in towns. Although buses serve some beach towns with popular surfbreaks, such as Jacó and Tamarindo, there are many beaches not on a bus route. Public buses are also

impersonal and the purpose of going on a guided surf tour is to have that “personal guide.”

Another type of transportation mentioned was boats. This can be the best option to get to surf spots that are difficult to drive to. For example, Witch’s Rock and Ollie’s Point are frequented daily by boat trips departing from Playa del Coco. There is no road to Ollie’s Point and the road to Witch’s Rock goes through Santa Rosa National Park and requires a 4X4 vehicle to maneuver a dirt road that is in extremely poor condition.

Table 7. Transportation Utilized

Type of Transportation	Responses	Percentage
Company-owned vehicle	13	50%
Chartered van/bus (inc. taxi)	10	38%
Other-Rental car	6	23%
Public transportation	3	12%
Other-boat	2	8%
Others-air,ATV,foot	1 each	4%

Table 8 lists the beaches or surfbreaks where the respondents take their tours. Respondents were asked to circle the names of the beaches and surfbreaks from a list on the questionnaire. If a particular beach or surfbreak was not listed, there was an option to write-in “other”. The table ranks by order of popularity. Please refer to the surf map in Figure 9 to see where the beaches and surfbreaks are located.

The top three beaches and surfbreaks (Tamarindo, Witch’s Rock/Santa Rosa, and Playa Negra/Avellanes) are all located in the Guanacaste Province on the Northern Pacific Coast. This region is popular with the surf tour operators because it consistently

has waves year-round, picking up south swells in the summer and north swells in the winter (Parise, 2002). The Guanacaste Province is also one of the fastest growing tourism regions in Costa Rica because of the international airport in Liberia and the recent construction of a bridge over the Tempisque River.

With the exception of Mal Pais located in the Nicoya Peninsula, the next popular surf region is the Central Pacific Coast where Jacó, Playa Hermosa, Puntarenas/Boca Barranca, and Dominical can be found. Since Jacó and Puntarenas are the closest beach towns to drive to, with paved road all the way from San José, the surf spots around these towns are known to get more crowded on weekends with many *Josefinos* (residents from San José and its surrounding communities) choosing to frequent the beaches there.

Pavones, which is located in the Southern Pacific Coast region, is world famous among surfers for having one of the longest left point breaks. However, the spot needs a south swell to break, so the best season to visit is the summer. In addition to its seasonality, Pavones is also located about nine hours away from San José, in the far south, and off dirt roads that can be flooded and undriveable during the rainy season (Parise, 2002). Due to the difficulty of getting there and unpredictability of the surf conditions, surf tour operators may not choose to frequent Pavones regularly with tours. However, because of the famed left point break, the operators will usually comply with requests for special guided surf trips there.

Among the write-in answers, four respondents wrote in “any” or “all”; four wrote in Playa Grande; two wrote in Ollie’s Point; and there was one write-in each for Playas Bejuco, Esterillos, Junquillal, El Rey, Ventanas, and Langosta.



Figure 9. Surf Map of Costa Rica

Table 8. Beaches and Surfbreaks Visited

Beach or Surfbreak	Frequency	Percentage
Tamarindo	14	54%
Witch's Rock/Santa Rosa	11	42%
Playa Negra/Avellanes	9	35%
Jaco	8	31%
Playa Hermosa	8	31%
Mal Pais	7	27%
Puntarenas/Boca Barranca	5	19%
Dominical	5	19%
Pavones	5	19%
Manuel Antonio	4	15%
Quepos	4	15%
Nosara/Guiones	4	15%
All listed (includes Salsa Brava and Cabo Matapalo)	4	15%
Other—Playa Grande	4	15%
Other—Ollie's Point	2	8%
Others (Bejuco, Esterillos, Junquillal, El Rey, Ventanas, Langosta)	1 each	4%

Table 9. Other Activities Offered

Other Activity Types	Frequency	Percentage
Horseback	20	77%
Fishing	19	73%
Massages	19	73%
Jungle Hikes	16	62%
Whitewater Raft/Kayak	16	62%
ATV	10	38%
Other—Canopy tour	7	27%
Other—Yoga	4	15%
Other—Sailing	3	12%
Other—Snorkeling	3	12%
Other—Salsa dancing	2	8%
Others listed Once (Golf, Zipline, Hang Gliding, Mountain Biking, Aerial Tram)	1	4%

The final question asked respondents to circle from a list the other activities they offered to clients besides surfing. Table 9 lists the responses in rank order of popularity. The write-in responses included: 7 canopy tour; 4 yoga; 3 sailing; 3 snorkeling; 2 salsa dancing; and 1 each for golf, zipline, hang gliding, mountain biking, and rainforest aerial tram.

The results for this question indicate that the surf tour operators offer more than just surfing to their clients. Most of the other activities listed are mainly other outdoor “adventure” types. Massages and yoga were the two non-adventure activities mentioned. Massages would be a logical extra service to provide since surfing involves physical activity that would tire a surfer’s muscles. Respondents also cited yoga to be a good complement to surfing because both activities require concentration, flexibility, and balance. By being offered a variety of other activities to do, surf visitors are able to experience as much of Costa Rica they can on land and sea.

Discussion

The findings from the questionnaire show that the Costa Rican surf tourism industry is mainly comprised of small tour operators that are based locally within Costa Rica. Half of the businesses have one to five employees and have been operating for less than four years. The barriers to entry to the surf tourism market do not appear to be difficult to penetrate since many small businesses entered the industry quite recently. The recent growth of businesses entering the industry also indicates that demand for surf tourism must have risen to allow for the ease of entering this market. Implications of this continued growth are further examined in the following section.

Categorizing surfing into one specific tourism niche sector remains uncertain. Although a majority of respondents characterize their business as an “adventure tour,” only 11 solely chose that description, while others described themselves as a combination of adventure with another characteristic. Determining what tourism sector surfing falls under affects its placement within the overall marketing and promotion of Costa Rica tourism. The tourism characterization that surf tour operators give themselves should correspond with how ICT and CANATUR categorize surf tourism, and currently the specific placement of surf tourism is unclear.

The majority of the tours are run with group sizes of one to five surfers and use private means of transportation. Packaged tours are popular options, offering guided surf tour, lodging, and even other activities to do besides surfing. The frequency of trips to the Northern Pacific region of the Guanacaste Province corresponds with the expansion of services to that area, which is further discussed in the following section under “Infrastructure Development.”

Table 10. Summary of Interviews

Concept	Environmental Issues	Socio-cultural Issues	Economic Issues
Infrastructure Development (buildings, road, bridge)	Beachfront development; Ecosystem degradation; disruption to wildlife and nature	Tourists outnumber Residents; surf culture and surf communities; more police; more drugs	More surf-related businesses; jobs; investment; more residents; price inflation; beach towns more accessible
Crowdedness	Surfers seek out other beaches to avoid crowds	“Tourist” beach designations; tourist/local interaction; small group sizes; perceptions of what is crowded by different users	More tours at more beaches; beach towns become surfer basecamps; negative/positive word of mouth as publicity
Pollution	Water pollution caused by leaking septic systems, pesticides, runoff, trash leaching; litter; health risks to humans and marine life	Problem for bigger towns; different viewpoints on littering	Costs to regulate polluters; polluting can be easier and cheaper
Role of Government	Environmental laws and regulation; maritime zone laws; national park and preserves creation; promote ecotourism	Road construction to promote town growth; road signs to beaches; corruption at local inspector level	Tourist tax; no direct help felt
Local Community Involvement	Conservation organizations; recycling program efforts	Sponsor local surfers and surf contests/events through CNS; patronize local businesses	Support tourism spending within community at local businesses
Visitor Experience	Enjoyment and respect for nature, beaches, and ocean	Friendly people; cultural education of Costa Rica	Packaged trips; surfer spending

Interviews with Surf Travel Operators

Out of 17 qualifying participants based in Costa Rica, 11 agreed to follow-up interviews face-to-face or by telephone (see Appendix F). Interviewees were asked to comment on the changes they have seen with the overall surf travel industry and market in Costa Rica. The results from the informal interviews have been presented qualitatively with common responses summarized in Table 10. The responses are grouped by concept and by environmental, socio-cultural, and economic issues.

Development

Every respondent commented that Costa Rica has become more developed every year since they began operating their business there. Road development and improvements have made a tremendous impact on the growth of surf destinations by making more beaches accessible by car. As a result, beach communities have gained more residents, property values and prices on goods have increased, and more tourism-related services have arrived to cater to the influx of tourists coming to visit. Respondents from the Guanacaste region have also attributed a lot of their region's tourism growth to the new bridge over the Tempisque River and the increase in direct flights to their international airport in Liberia.

Towns located near good surf breaks have seen rapid growth in infrastructure due to the popularity of its surf tourism. Various types of lodging, restaurants, and other service providers have appeared to accommodate surfers, who can be quite varied in their spending behavior as a market. One respondent, whose beachside hotel's average daily room rate for a double occupancy in high season runs about US\$100 per night, claims

that 90% of the hotel's occupancy is surfers. All over Costa Rica, surfers can be found staying at the full-range of higher-end hotels to the lower-budget youth hostels.

The tourism development at beaches has also created adverse effects to the natural environment and wildlife. There are some cases where lights from beachfront hotels can disorient turtles on the beach at night. Although some respondents mentioned that surfers do not directly harm sea turtles, the tourism infrastructure that caters to the visiting surfers can negatively impact the wildlife.

Costa Rica's developing tourism infrastructure brings mixed blessings among the respondents. They are pleased that public services have improved, such as more police and better roads, as well as telephone and electricity service in more areas. However, tourism growth in beach towns has seemed to increase the prevalence of drugs and crime, tourists outnumbering local residents, and environmental degradation caused by coastal developments.

Crowdedness

All the respondents agreed there is a desire from their clients to surf uncrowded surf breaks. However, many find that to be an impossible request at the most popular beaches. Certain beaches may unofficially be designated as "tourist" beaches so surfers should expect crowds there. Because most beginner surfers do not perceive crowdedness the same way experienced surfers do, the surf tour operators that teach beginners how to surf do not get many complaints about crowded conditions from their clients. However, the more experienced surf traveler desires to surf less crowded waves during their vacation and will ask their surf guide to take them to other less-populated beaches.

Some surf tour operators purposely avoid the popular beach towns, such as Tamarindo or Jacó, and go to surf breaks not always listed on maps, which they simply refer to as “secret spots”. Another alternative for surf tour operators that arrive to an already crowded break is to leave and seek out another spot. As a result, many neighboring breaks often become crowded too. For example, many surfers trek across an estuary to avoid the crowded breaks of Tamarindo only to create another crowded situation at the neighboring surfbreak in Playa Grande.

Crowded conditions can even create situations where local surfers resent visitors in the water. Two respondents said they stopped running tours with more than five people because they did not want to aggravate the “locals” by bringing a crowd with them.

Respondents operating in less-developed beach towns feel fortunate to not have to experience the crowding situation felt at the more developed Costa Rican beaches. For example, crowding is naturally controlled in Nosara simply by its geography; the beach is five km long with various surf breaks spread out along it. Therefore, there may be the same amount of surfers out in Nosara as Tamarindo, but it does not seem as crowded. The Nosara area also experiences many repeat surf visitors due to its typically uncrowded surf conditions.

Pollution

Overflowing, leaking, or improperly located septic sewage systems were the most cited pollution problems for Costa Rica’s surf destinations. In addition to sewage pollution, pesticides and trash leaching were mentioned as waterway polluters. There is

major concern about water pollution because it poses health risks for marine life and ocean users. The respondents believe the pollution problem only continues to worsen because of the lack of enforcement on environmental regulations concerning filtration systems in buildings and other tourism developments near the beach. Some mentioned that it is easier and cheaper to pollute than to pay to fix a faulty sewage system. One respondent added that a heavy rainy season contributed to more pollution being dispensed at the rivermouths.

Litter on the beaches was also noted as a pollution problem. Respondents overall felt that surfers are more environmentally conscious and make the effort to not throw trash on the beach. Two respondents specifically cited that there is a local mentality that littering is acceptable and therefore, the litter problem remains prevalent. Litter pollution is a bigger problem for larger towns that cater to many non-surfing tourists as well.

Perceptions of the Government's Role Regarding Surf Tourism

The respondents respect the national government's role of balancing business with environmental protection. Most praised the government's stance on conservation of putting aside 30% of the country into national parks and protected land status. Respondents also spoke positively about the maritime zone laws that regulate construction on the beach, and are satisfied with the positive economic growth that has resulted from the improvement and construction of roads to and through the beach towns. One respondent mentioned that he noticed more road signs appearing that point out lesser-known beaches that lack tourism infrastructure but are popular with surfers. This

could be the government's response to many visiting surfers getting lost while driving around looking for remote beaches.

Respondents, however, commented that problems with government regulations do exist, such as the lack of enforcement on environmental and zoning laws. They noted that corruption exists at the local inspection level with property inspectors being paid off to allow new developments to not have to comply with zoning laws.

Regarding the respondents' perception of the government's tourism agency, the ICT, most respondents felt that the ICT's job was to collect tourist taxes and promote tourism for Costa Rica. In terms of surf tourism, respondents felt that the ICT did not directly promote surfing in the national tourism strategy; instead ecotourism seemed to be the organization's main focus. Two respondents felt that promoting surf tourism was left up to the individual businesses and one respondent chose to take a "do-it-yourself" approach rather than expect any sort of help from the ICT. Three respondents pointed out that ICT may include surfing in some of its marketing efforts, but the organization does not help with funding surf events or contests.

Local Community Involvement

All the respondents try to be involved within their local community in some way. Environmental community efforts include starting recycling programs, organizing beach cleanups, participating in the Surfrider Foundation, and hosting events that benefit a local environmental cause, such as a surf contest to benefit the turtle refuges. Many respondents mentioned their involvement of helping youth by donating money to local schools or sponsoring young local surfers to compete in CNS surf contests.

There is also support for other local businesses within a community. One respondent encourages his clients to patronize different local restaurants. Many respondents utilize local friends' businesses when organizing non-surfing activities for their clients.

Visitor Experience

Although surfing may be the focus of the trip, the surf tour operators try to expose their clients to other Costa Rican experiences. They want their clients to enjoy the surfing while also learning to respect the ocean, the natural environment, the people, and the cultural differences. The respondents also ensure their employees are knowledgeable about Costa Rica so the information can be passed on to the visitors.

Surf clients often have the freedom to design their own surf tour, however, the tour operator will suggest surfbreaks to visit based on the client's surfing ability. The respondents are finding that surfers can be spenders: staying in mid-range and higher accommodations, renting cars, staying for many days, and participating in various activities.

Most respondents encourage clients to visit the rainforests, go horseback riding, or try yoga. A surf tourist may not know what else is offered in Costa Rica because his main focus is to surf, therefore, the tour operator has some influence on what other activities their clients do when not surfing. Table 9 shows the variety of activities that the surf tour operators offer in addition to the surf experience.

Discussion

This section summarized the environmental, socio-cultural, and economic issues that are apparent to surf tour operators in Costa Rica surf destinations. Overall, the issues concerning development, pollution, and crowding were similar among all the respondents. However, responses varied on some details between different groups within the sample: foreign vs. *tico*, old vs. new, and big beach town vs. small beach town.

A majority of this study's sample were foreigners that moved to Costa Rica, bought property, and started their own surf business. The influx of foreigners brings different expectations for services, sometimes requiring the Costa Rican government to measure up to the foreign standards. Evidence of these expectations are demonstrated when the operators' noted major concerns about development and pollution, which are the same issues addressed in the recently released report by the Pew Oceans Commission (2003) stating that pollution and sprawl are threats to America's coastal tourism.

The longer-standing foreign surf operators (those operating in Costa Rica for over 10 years) and *tico* surf operators (who grew up in Costa Rica) were more aware of the environmental degradation and local community impacts caused by the increasing surf tourism development. Those respondents cited that they have watched mangroves and tamarind trees disappear as a result of coastal development. Also, increased foreign investment of beach properties has priced *ticos* out of land ownership of those areas.

Surf operators in the larger beach towns, such as Tamarindo and Jacó, must contend more with the negative impacts of pollution and crowding than those operators in smaller beach towns. However, as more surf tourists explore Costa Rica, it can be expected that the small beach towns will eventually grow up to be its own big beach town

with similar problems. The respondents from older surf businesses remarked they remembered when Tamarindo and Jacó had only dirt roads and a handful of businesses.

With examples such as Tamarindo and Jacó, a pattern can be seen of how tourism development can consume a small beach town located at a popular surfbreak in Costa Rica. Therefore, to prevent small beach towns from meeting the same fate, proper planning of sustainable tourism development needs to be considered. The next section assesses the current methods and programs that contribute to the sustainability of surf tourism destinations in Costa Rica.

Assessment for Surf Destination Sustainability

This section examines current methods and programs of how to evaluate sustainability of surf destinations within the context of the national strategy of sustainable tourism development (discussed in Chapter 1). The results of this section were based on information gathered from representatives or members of surf and tourism related organizations: ICT, MINAE, Surfrider Foundation, and CNS. Some comments made by surf tour operators concerning these assessments may also appear in this section. Table 11 summarizes the current method or program being used to address each concept.

Table 11. Sustainability Assessment of the Concepts

Concept	Sustainability Method or Program
Infrastructure Development	Maritime Zone Regulations; Economic Growth for Beach communities
Crowdedness	User Fees; Limits on Usage
Pollution	Blue Flag (<i>Bandera Azul</i>) Program; Surfrider Foundation and other environmental group efforts
Role of Government	ICT surf brochure/map
Local Community Involvement	National Surf Circuit (CNS) contests and sponsorships
Visitor Experience	ICT visitor surveys

Maritime Zone Regulations and Beach Community Economic Growth

The Maritime Terrestrial Zone (*Zona Marítimo Terrestre*) encompasses the 200 meters of land up from the ocean's mean high tide line. The first 50 meters from the water is public zone and cannot be privately owned or developed. The remaining 150 meters is a restricted zone that the government may lease for development on terms of 5 to 20 years. Permission to develop within this zone is granted by the local municipal government and authorized by the ICT (US Dept of State, 2004; Roberts, 2003, pers. comm.).

Before a permit for beach tourism development can be granted, there needs to be a Regulatory Plan (*Plan Regulador*), dividing the beach into different land-use zones, such as residential, commercial, or recreational. Zoning of the Maritime Terrestrial Zone in the Regulatory Plan comes after an environmental impact assessment has been made of the area (Wold, Olson, & Quieros, 1998).

Although the Surfrider Foundation supports open access of the ocean and beaches for public use, which the public zone designation ensures, the organization worries that

the impacts of development close to beaches may still cause degradation of the natural coastal ecosystem (Gordon, 2003, pers. comm.).

The pattern of development affects how the community grows. For example, roads running parallel to the ocean encourage building along the beachfront, such as in Tamarindo. In contrast, roads that run inland from the beach keep development off the beach, such as in Nosara (Marsh, 2003, pers. comm.).

User Fees and Limited Usage

As part of a conservation plan for Santa Rosa National Park, MINAE implemented a permit plan to control crowding in the water at two of the most popular surfbreaks in Northern Costa Rica, Witch's Rock and Ollie's Point. Witch's Rock and Ollie's Point are unique surfspots because driving access to these breaks is difficult. Getting to Witch's Rock involves a 4X4 vehicle and dangerous roads, and Ollie's Point has no road access at all. Boats bringing surfers to the breaks must have a government-issued permit in order to enter Santa Rosa National Park from the ocean, and each surfing visitor has to pay the park entrance fee of US\$6 (Lyman, 2003, pers. comm.).

The boat captains in Playa del Coco all work together and own their own boats. They formed an association and gained the necessary permits to bring surfers to the Park. They coordinate how many boats go into the park at a time and spread out the groups along different peaks if the swell is big enough. All the boats must leave the park by 4pm to ensure a safe trip back to Playa del Coco during daylight hours (Gordon, 2003).

Economic measures, such as user fees, provide funding for the recreation managers to operate and maintain the services provided at the parks and outdoor

recreational areas. Implementing user fees also helps manage visitor usage by changing visitor patterns (NOAA, 2002). For example, increases in fees may change a visitor's willingness to pay to enter that park.

Blue Flag and Other Environmental Efforts

The Ecological Blue Flag beach program (*Bandera Azul Ecológico*) was created in 1996 by the Costa Rican Institute of Aqueducts and Sewers, ICT, MINAE, and CANATUR. It serves as an incentive program for beach communities to promote beach safety, maintain clean ocean water quality, educate tourists about protecting the natural marine environment, and reduce pollution.

Beaches are evaluated three times a year and the award is valid for one year. The criteria that the Blue Flag selection committee looks at in order of scoring importance are: 1) quality of ocean water; 2) quality of drinking water; 3) quality of sanitary conditions on the beach (treated sewage, garbage, industrial runoff); 4) environmental education; and 5) security and administration (ICT, 2002).

In addition to the Blue Flag beach program, local community groups led by concerned residents have organized efforts to cleanup beaches and protect their natural environment. However, with the arrival of an international conservation organization, such as the Surfrider Foundation, surf tourists that easily recognize the group and its policies for coastal preservation can also contribute to an area's conservation by applying their environmental consciousness to their traveling behavior.

The ICT and Promoting Surf Tourism

In the previous section, surf tour operators remarked that the ICT seemed more focused on ecotourism and did not show much support for surf tourism. When asked to respond to these comments, the ICT emphasized that its marketing efforts get visitors to come to Costa Rica by promoting the entire nation and all tourism activities offered throughout the country. The ICT cannot favor individual communities in its marketing, instead that responsibility is left up to the town associations and private businesses in their own individual communities (Roberts, 2003, pers. comm.). The ICT does offer a surfing brochure with a map of surf spots, which can be downloaded from their website (<http://www.visitcostarica.com/ict/paginas/mapas/mapasurf.asp>).

The ICT regards surfing as an adventure tourism activity, which it defines as trips that entail physical participation with physical risks for the participants. Other activities in this tourism market sector include horseback riding, sea and whitewater rafting or kayaking, canopy tours, and hiking. As of October 2003, all “adventure tourism” designated businesses are required to comply with minimum safety standards and emergency procedures outlined in the Adventure Tourism Activity Operation Regulations (http://www.visitcostarica.com/ict/paginas/es_leyes.asp).

As of July 2003, when an interview with the ICT was conducted, a member of the marketing department had recently been assigned to begin examining the surf tourism sector. The only information that could be made available at this time was a membership list for the *Costa Rican Association of Tour Operators*, of which none of the surf tour operators in this study’s sample population is a member.

National Surf Circuit (CNS)

The National Surf Circuit (*Circuito Nacional de Surf*) holds local and national surf contests throughout the year. Talented local surfers compete to earn a spot on the Costa Rica National Surf Team that goes on to compete internationally in International Surfing Association (ISA)-sponsored contests. The Costa Rican National Team surfers perceive themselves as unofficial “ambassadors” for Costa Rica when they compete at international venues, and therefore would like to see more support from the ICT to boost surfing for Costa Rica. Currently, CNS depends on its local community support and surf company sponsorships for funding. Local CNS supporters and members cited a lack of support from ICT when requesting help. For example, traveling to international surf contests can be expensive and the CNS would appreciate having the high airport departure fees waived or covered by ICT (Diaz, 2003, pers. comm.).

ICT Surveys

The Statistics Department of the ICT gathers data about their visitors and posts the results on its website. Although annual visitor statistics go back to 1997, the poll and survey statistics, which ask visitors about the activities they participate in while visiting Costa Rica, are only listed from 2000. The percentage of visitors that surfed in Costa Rica rose from 12% to 15% from 2000 to 2001 (<http://www.visitcostarica.com/ict/paginas/estadistica.asp>). Currently, this is the only official “surfing tourist” statistic available from ICT.

Summary

This chapter presented results gathered from questionnaires and interviews from surf tour operators and related surf tourism organizations in Costa Rica. Clearly, there has been recent growth in the number of surf visitors, surf tourism development to accommodate the visitors, and surf visitors turned residents. The negative impacts of *surfer colonialism* (Barilotti, 2002) have already become apparent, with pollution, development, and crowding, being the most commonly cited problems.

Fortunately, there are programs in place that help minimize negative effects of increasing surf tourism growth and development, such as the Maritime Zone Laws and Blue Flag Ecological Program, as well as programs to promote the beneficial aspects of surf tourism, such as local CNS surf contests and surf town economic growth. However, these programs have their share of problems. Surf tour operators cited lack of regulation for environmental laws and lack of support for CNS events. The ICT cited lack of cooperation from surf tour operators to be recognized in a national tour operators' association.

Evidently, there needs to be better collaboration among the various groups within the surf tourism industry. The next chapter will address recommendations for how the public and private sectors of the surf tourism industry can help each other with sustaining Costa Rican surf destinations.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

The first study objective was to review the existing surf tour supply industry in Costa Rica. The operators that make up the Costa Rican surf tourism industry are not a homogeneous group. Most of the surf tour operators are based in Costa Rica, but some are based overseas. The surf tour operators also vary in company size and in description of their type of business: adventure, eco-adventure, travel agency, surf school, and surf resort. The majority of the surf tours average small group sizes of up to five surfers and use private means for transportation to get to surf spots. The most popular region for surf tours is in the Guanacaste region of the Pacific North. The Internet is the most popular method for marketing. The operators also offer various activities other than surfing for their clients, such as horseback riding and fishing.

The second study objective was to identify the sustainable tourism development issues that face Costa Rican surf destinations. Table 10 gives a summary of issues and impacts brought up during the interviews. The study found that the surf tour operators were most concerned with the environmental impacts caused by pollution and the socio-cultural impacts created by crowding. Certain beach towns located at popular surfbreaks became more developed as a result of surf tourism, and the surrounding community continues to cater and rely on business from visiting surfers.

Surf tour operators are not directly involved with national sustainable development planning for tourism, and the government agencies are not very involved with surf tourism. However, the surf operators are conscious of their actions and the

implications their business have on sustaining surf destinations, and the government agencies are realizing the significance of surf tourism for Costa Rica.

Most of the surf tour operators are conscious of their ethical obligations and apply sustainability principles in their operations for the sake of preserving their tourism resource—the surf destination. Therefore, they already incorporate sustainable development principles into their business operations through self-regulation, community activism, and tour package planning.

Limitations

This study was limited to surf travel companies operating tours within Costa Rica, with interviews being further limited to surf travel companies located in Costa Rica, and conducted only from July 12-27, 2003. Although all Costa Rica-based respondents to the questionnaire were asked to do a follow-up interview, not all were available during the dates the study was conducted in Costa Rica. Had the study allowed for more time in Costa Rica, perhaps, more follow-up interviews could have been completed.

This study is the first to be done about sustainability of Costa Rica's surf tourism industry, therefore, all data for this study was collected directly. Secondary statistical data for numbers of surf visitors or businesses were not available. The results of this study are based only on the responses from those within the Costa Rican surf tourism industry that chose to participate, and therefore, findings should not be generalized to apply to surf tourism industries at other international destinations.

Recommendations

The third study objective was to develop recommendations for how the Costa Rican surf tourism industry can improve its sustainability and maintain its surf tourism destination. Table 11 listed the various methods and programs that are already being used to assess surf tourism's sustainability. This section discusses further recommendations that can contribute to the sustainable development of surf tourism in Costa Rica. The recommendations are presented by each issue and then separately as they pertain to the public and private sectors within the Costa Rican surf tourism industry (see Table 12). However, in order to ensure sustainability of the surf destinations, cooperation between the different sectors is imperative. Therefore, the overall recommendation is for the collaboration of private and public sectors in understanding the other's role and working in conjunction rather than in opposition with the one other.

Table 12. Summary of Recommendations

Concepts	Public Sector	Private Sector
Infrastructure Development	Enforce maritime zone regulations	Cooperation with enforcement officials
Crowdedness	User fees and/or limit usage of public resources; zoning of recreational areas	self-impose limits on group sizes; pay fees for maintenance of public areas
Pollution	Enforce environmental protection laws	Act responsibly and educate clients about not littering; join local conservation efforts
Role of Government	Improve the ICT's surf map/brochure; encourage and support local ownership and participation in surf tourism industry	Collaborate with the ICT to promote surf tourism at the national marketing level
Local Community Involvement	Sponsor CNS events and surfers	Join tour association or establish own
Visitor Experience	Obtain more specific statistics of surf tourists; segment marketing strategy to account for surf tourists	Establish safety standards and adhere to them; keep statistics of surfers

Infrastructure Development

As the number of surf visitors to Costa Rica increases, the number of surf tourism businesses will also increase to accommodate them. The results of this study revealed that most of the current businesses have only begun operating within the last three years. The respondents anticipate even more surf tourism infrastructure development as the activity of surfing grows more popular.

New coastal developments, such as beachside surf camps or resorts, are already required to have a Regulatory Plan that complies with the national Maritime Terrestrial Zone laws (see Chapter 4). Some respondents, however, commented on the prevalence of improperly constructed buildings that are not in compliance with the maritime zone regulations. They cited that local municipal building inspectors get paid off to overlook building infractions. This type of corruptive behavior only undermines any policy that exists which is not being enforced. Therefore, the public sector needs to address this issue by holding their inspectors accountable for the proper enforcement of the maritime zone laws.

The National Government is based in San José, which is at least two hours from the nearest beach. Some respondents commented that this distance sometimes leaves the government out of touch with what is happening in the beach communities. Therefore, if the private sector wants to see the government enforce its policies, they need to be more helpful in cooperating with the Government by reporting illegal activities happening and also not participating in such activities themselves.

Crowdedness

When looking at crowding issues regarding surf destinations, the coastal resource managers may use the carrying capacity concept to determine the sustainable number of surfers that can visit a surf location before the capacity limit is reached. The ecological carrying capacity is reached when environmental degradation occurs because it can no longer withstand the crowdedness of surfers using the coastal resources. Numerous groups of surfers driving over vegetation to get to the beach is an example of potential environmental damage. Social carrying capacity gets exceeded when crowding at the surfbreaks becomes so congested that local and visiting surfers' satisfaction decreases. Overcrowding can have negative consequences for surf tour operators that promise clients uncrowded surf conditions in their advertising.

A method to alleviate crowding problems is to limit number of users at a surfspot by enacting a fee system or implementing recreational zone boundaries. An individual user fee system is already in place at the national parks, however, a further recommendation to this method would be to implement a separate resource user fee specifically for commercial surf tour operators. The boat permits for Witch's Rock and Ollie's Point is an example of this type of policy (see Chapter 4). The boat permit system was established because commercial boats carrying half a dozen surfers each would drop off surfers directly in the water at surfbreaks located within National Park boundaries. Because boats did not enter the National Park the traditional way of driving through the front gate entrance, park fees were not being collected from the surfers that were clearly using the Park's ocean resources.

The boat permit system in place for Witch's Rock and Ollie's Point should be extended to other surf regions of Costa Rica and also include land-based commercial surf tour operators. A commercial permit system would help the government keep track of commercial usage of recreational coastal resources at specific surf areas, and the fees collected from issuing permits would contribute to the maintenance of the areas. A public-private partnership can be created similar to the Na Ala Hele program in Hawaii, which requires commercial tour operators to have liability insurance, all appropriate licenses and permits, no driving violations, and to pay an activity fee that contributes to the access road and trail management (<http://www.hawaiitrails.org/>).

Another recommendation is to apply recreational zoning to coastal areas used for different recreational activities. The current, informal "tourist" designation for the more populated beaches is a crude form of recreational zoning. In Tamarindo, the coastal area directly in front of the lifeguard stand is the "beginner/tourist" area because most of the surf lessons are given in the small, gentle waves that break near the beach there. At any given time that surf lessons are being taught, there could be more than 30 people in that specific part of the beach learning how to surf, swimming, or just wading in the water near shore. The regular Tamarindo surfbreak further north of the "tourist" zone can also get very crowded with visiting and resident surfers vying for the same waves. When the waves break close to shore, the surfers, swimmers, and waders are all using the same zone for their different recreational purposes, which creates user conflicts and dangerous situations of people colliding into each other.

As the popular surf beaches become more crowded with surfers and non-surfers, a formal recreational zoning plan will need to be developed to reduce the user conflicts of

the ocean resources. Certain areas of the beach have to be zoned for the various recreational purposes. One zoning regulation used in Newport Beach, California is the "blackball" method. When a yellow flag with a black circle is placed atop a lifeguard tower, surfing is not allowed at that particular beach. The "blackball" zoning method is mainly used in the summertime from 12pm--4pm as a crowd control and safety measure for the busiest months in the summer season, and only certain sections are "blackballed" at a time. Therefore, surfers are not forced off the beach completely during the "blackball" times; they just need to surf at the region of the beach where the "blackball" flag is not up. All other times when the "blackball" flag is not flying, the non-surfing restriction is lifted at that spot and the ocean is open to all recreational users (author, pers. obs., 1991-2003).

The "blackball" method is a flexible form of zoning because restrictions are placed on the recreational area only when it is necessary to alleviate the crowding issue. The lifeguard of the area determines whether safety is compromised by user conflicts and designates part of the beach for non-surfer use and the other part of the beach for surfing. This could be an effective solution to crowding in the larger Costa Rican beach towns, such as Tamarindo and Jacó, which have many surfer and non-surfer ocean users.

The private sector can further help control the crowding of surfspots by imposing limits on their group sizes. The majority of respondents said their average group size is one to five surfers. As a single group, one to five surfers, is small. However, if there are numerous surf groups plus individuals at one particular surfbreak, the area quickly becomes crowded and visitor satisfaction decreases. Surf tour operators can educate their clients ahead of time about the potentially crowded conditions at the most popular

surfbreaks, such as at Witch's Rock. Therefore, if the surf tour encounters crowded conditions, the visitors already anticipated it, and if the spot is uncrowded, the visitors feel fortunate to have caught the surf all to themselves and leave with an even better impression of surfing in Costa Rica.

Pollution

Surfing and other recreational marine activities are constrained by the environmental quality of the ocean, and tourism activities around this environment can create negative impacts that decrease the ability to use the ocean for recreational purposes (Orams, 1999). The most obvious environmental effect on the ocean environment from increased human activities is water pollution, which most respondents cited to be caused by the faulty sewage disposal systems at beachfront properties. It is the public sector's responsibility to enforce environmental regulations and impose fines on polluters. Water pollution not only affects the beauty of the marine environment, but also the health of recreational ocean users, such as surfers.

Surf tour operators, in turn, have a responsibility to be good stewards for the coastal environment since they derive their income from the ocean resource. Their behavior influences their clients and other community members, therefore, surf tour operators must act responsibly in their own business operations by not polluting and educating their clients to do the same. The private sector can also get directly involved in cleaning up their beaches by participating in local cleanup efforts and joining conservation organizations that work to alleviate pollution problems at the source.

Role of Government

Respondents said their contact with the national government's tourism arm, the ICT, is minimal; the ICT collects tourist taxes. However, the ICT has begun to show interest in surf tourism, recently appointing a staff member to examine the surf tourism market. The ICT also has a webpage description about surfing in Costa Rica and a downloadable brochure and map of surf spots on their website (<http://www.visitcostarica.com>).

The ICT surf brochure is quite thorough, listing 37 different surf spots each with brief descriptions. However, improvements need to be made to the downloaded version of the brochure. It currently downloads from the website as an eight-page brochure reduced to two separately scanned pictures of four brochure pages each. The PDF format which the brochure can be viewed and printed from is not user-friendly because the text is too small to read and the PDF file does not allow for changes to the file settings for printing (see Appendix G for example brochure printout).

It is reasonable that the ICT does not want to show favoritism to certain surf locations over others, thereby listing all known surfspots in the brochure. However, perhaps the ICT's brochure should be more selective in which surf locations to promote. There are still many surf spots that are difficult to reach without a 4-wheel drive vehicle, and the repeated driving over dirt roads degrades the condition of the road through erosion, which eventually damages the surrounding natural environment. As a tourism organization, the ICT should help promote those surf locations that have the tourism facilities and services to accommodate surf tourists. By endorsing remote beaches with

no means to accommodate surf tourism, the ICT is being irresponsible in sustaining the area surrounding those surf locations.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 1, the Tourism Development Incentives Law passed in 1985 provided foreign investors with incentives and tax exemptions on tourism development projects. Swarbrooke (1999) suggests that to make tourism more sustainable in LDCs, the concept of "fair trade" should be applied to tourism, "whereby local communities and developing countries as a whole, gain a fair share of the benefits of tourism. This implies a more direct role for communities and governments in dealing with tourists directly rather than using intermediaries such as foreign tour operators who take a share of the benefits" (p.207).

The government needs to play a greater role in supporting local surf tourism businesses. Although the following suggestions by Liu (1994) were made regarding ecotourism development, surf tourism could also benefit from the recommendations that governments "assist indigenous entrepreneurs by ensuring that: financing is made more readily available for the establishment of indigenous enterprise...; adequate development and operational support for ecotourism be available through coordination, or government agency for small business; and implementation of intensive training programs that are designed to provide practical knowledge of ecotourism business development and operations" (p. 26).

Nearly 20 years after the tourism incentives law aimed at foreign investors was established, *ticos* (Costa Rica- born citizens) would also like to establish their own tourism businesses. However, many *ticos* find it difficult to compete financially with foreign investors for prime coastal real estate and start-up business costs. Therefore, an

incentive law should be developed to encourage the local ownership and investment in surf tourism development. The national government could provide tax exemptions, subsidies, or grants to local *tico* small business owners hoping to establish a surf tourism service. Local business owners could apply for funding by submitting a business plan that points out how their specific surf tourism service will comply with the overall national sustainable tourism development strategy.

The private sector should actively collaborate with the ICT--perhaps with the newly appointed staff member examining the surf tourism sector--in the promotion of Costa Rica surfing at the national tourism marketing level. The ICT is not located near the coast and does not experience firsthand the surf tourism issues and impacts of the beach communities. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the private sector to keep the ICT updated on the surf tourism industry and related coastal issues. If surf tour operators hope for better ICT support for surf tourism, they need to be equally as helpful to keep the ICT informed about the significant market sector that is surf tourism.

Local Community Involvement

The ICT could further support the growing surf tourism industry by helping to sponsor CNS surf events and contests. Although the CNS is comprised of local surfers and sponsors, as opposed to surf tourists, CNS surfers are representatives of Costa Rica's surf destinations at the international surf contests. ICT may not be able to show favoritism by supporting specific surf regions or surfers over others throughout Costa Rica. However, once the national surf team is determined and ready to compete internationally, the ICT could support the national team. A CNS member mentioned that

the ICT could help them by subsidizing some of their travel costs. One suggestion was to waive the departure tax for Costa Rican nationals, which is currently US\$43 each. The departure tax for tourists is US\$26 (ICT, 2003). Supporting the CNS would ultimately benefit the ICT and Costa Rica's surf tourism industry because when *tico* surfers do well in the international surf contests, Costa Rica is validated as a great surf destination.

In order for the ICT to fully support the surf tourism industry, the surf tour operators must make themselves known and accountable. Therefore, surf tour operators should join a tourism association or form their own. Recently, an Adventure Tour Operator Association was formed, but no surf tour operators are members. Associations can act as a common voice for the surf tour operators wanting to gain more support from the ICT. Joining a tour association can also help with networking within the adventure tourism market and collaborating in promoting various adventure activities that can overlap. For example, many respondents mentioned they wanted their clients to experience other aspects of Costa Rica besides surfing, so they book other activities such as jungle canopy tours or horseback riding.

Visitor Experience

ICT surveys from 2000 and 2001 revealed that surfers make up a significant percentage of the visitors coming to Costa Rica. The ICT should put in more effort to researching this market to determine more specific information on surfers' travel spending behavior, length of stays, motivations to specifically choose Costa Rica over other international surf destinations, and other information that could help the ICT develop an effective marketing strategy for the surf market segment. Much of this

specific information could be gathered directly from the surf tour operators, given that there can be mutual cooperation between the public and private sector. In return for gaining information on surf clients' travel behavior, the ICT could address surf tour operators' concerns directly within its national tourism development strategies.

The ICT voiced concern about needing to regulate minimum safety standards with surf tourism because of the risk involved to tourists participating in the activity, meaning that surf tour operators need to address the safety issues inherent with surfing. Because very few beaches in Costa Rica have lifeguards, the surf tour operators must ensure their instructors and guides are trained in lifesaving skills for the safety of their clients. Respondents mentioned the importance of teaching clients about ocean safety; how waves break differently at each beach, what to do if caught in a current, how to read tides, and what marine life exists in Costa Rican waters. The safety of surf clients should be the top priority for every surf tour operator. Currently, there is no regulation requiring that surf operators be certified in lifesaving procedures. However, just one accident involving a surf tourist could change that lack of policy. Therefore, it is in the best interest for the private sector to be proactive and self-regulate safety standards in order to anticipate all potential risk that could fall upon surfers participating in surf tours.

Recommendations for Further Study

This was the first study to be done on surf tourism and sustainability in Costa Rica. There are still other topics within Costa Rican surf tourism that can be explored, such as examining surf tourists' motivation in choosing Costa Rica over other surf destinations or more in-depth examinations of each specific surf location for visitor use.

A survey of surf visitors could be done to determine the most effective promotion strategies. The respondents mentioned they would be interested in seeing studies done on various other surf-related topics: the growing popularity of surfing among females and children, the universality of surf culture, and finding easier and cheaper means of transportation for surfers to get to different beaches in Costa Rica.

Final Remarks

All the respondents agreed that the popularity of surfing continues to grow, bringing more surfers and surf businesses to Costa Rica every year. Evidence of this growth can be seen in the increase of flights to Costa Rica and the increasing amounts of surfboards coming off those planes. Other coastlines of Central America are also being mapped out and explored by surfers (Panama, El Salvador, Nicaragua), therefore, Costa Rica can lead by example in maintaining itself as a sustainable surf destination.

Surf tourism is a significant niche market that can positively incorporate sustainable development principles. Surfing's intimacy with nature makes it a leading activity in promoting more responsible travel by its tourists. As most of the tourism industry seeks to implement sustainable tourism strategies, the growing niche market of surf tourism should be further focusing on the specific issues pertaining to the maintenance of sustainable surf destinations.

As the surf tourism industry expands, so does the necessity to assess its impacts on surf destinations. Surf tour operators have to commit to incorporating sustainable tourism principles into their operations to ensure long-term success of their business and the surf destination, such as by establishing responsible surf tour operator guidelines.

The following is a set of guidelines created for Costa Rica surf tour operators, adapted from principles of the Surfrider Foundation (Gordon, 2003, pers. comm.), The International Ecotourism Society (<http://www.ecotourism.org>), Tour Operators' Initiative (<http://toinitiative.org>), and the Eco Certification Program from Australia (<http://www.ecotourism.org.au/neap.asp>):

Sustainable Tourism Guidelines for Surf Tour Operators

1. For each visitor experience, integrate opportunities to understand the natural ocean environment and conditions.
2. Minimize surf tourism's negative impacts through education, training, and leading by example.
3. Maintain small enough groups to ensure minimum group impact on the surf destination, and avoid those surfbreaks that are undermanaged and overvisited.
4. Contribute to the conservation of surf areas being visited.
5. Participate in programs for reducing waste, recycling, and disposing waste in a safe and responsible manner.
6. Contribute constructively to the local beach communities.
7. Strive to minimize risks to employees, community, and visitors by supplying safe equipment, tour guides trained in lifesaving skills, and always being prepared for emergencies by having medical services available to treat surf-related injuries.
8. Market surf tours accurately and responsibly that lead to realistic expectations, and consistently meet client expectations.

Because the Surfrider Foundation's principles are recognizable to surfers and the principles of the other three organizations are widely accepted by the nature-based tourism industry, this surf tourism set of guidelines could serve as a starting point to establish a formal surf tourism industry code.

As Costa Rican surf locations become popular, settlements will appear to cater to the burgeoning surf destination. The long-term implications for surf tourism development may still not be known because many of the services are still new. However, this study reveals that cooperation between the various surf tourism industry members and programs that mitigate negative tourism development impacts now will help to ensure the sustainability of Costa Rican surf destinations for the increasing growth and future of the overall international surf tourism market.

Appendix A. Various Codes for the Tourism Industry

WTO's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

(source: <http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/wssd/actions-agenda21.htm>)

Article 1

Tourism's contribution to mutual understanding and respect
between peoples and societies

(1) The understanding and promotion of the ethical values common to humanity, with an attitude of tolerance and respect for the diversity of religious, philosophical and moral beliefs, are both the foundation and the consequence of responsible tourism; stakeholders in tourism development and tourists themselves should observe the social and cultural traditions and practices of all peoples, including those of minorities and indigenous peoples and recognize their worth.

(2) Tourism activities should be conducted in harmony with the attributes and traditions of the host regions and countries and in respect for their laws, practices and customs.

(3) The host communities, on the one hand, and local professionals, on the other, should acquaint themselves with and respect the tourists who visit them and find out about their lifestyles, tastes and expectations; the education and training imparted to professionals contribute to a hospitable welcome.

(4) It is the task of the public authorities to provide protection for tourists and visitors and their belongings; they must pay particular attention to the safety of foreign tourists owing to the particular vulnerability they may have; they should facilitate the introduction of specific means of information, prevention, security, insurance and assistance consistent with their needs; any attacks, assaults, kidnappings or threats against tourists or workers in the tourism industry, as

well as the wilful destruction of tourism facilities or of elements of cultural or natural heritage should be severely condemned and punished in accordance with their respective national laws.

(5) When travelling, tourists and visitors should not commit any criminal act or any act considered criminal by the laws of the country visited and abstain from any conduct felt to be offensive or injurious by the local populations, or likely to damage the local environment; they should refrain from all trafficking in illicit drugs, arms, antiques, protected species and products and substances that are dangerous or prohibited by national regulations.

(6) Tourists and visitors have the responsibility to acquaint themselves, even before their departure, with the characteristics of the countries they are preparing to visit; they must be aware of the health and security risks inherent in any travel outside their usual environment and behave in such a way as to minimize those risks.

Article 2

Tourism as a vehicle for individual and collective fulfilment

(1) Tourism, the activity most frequently associated with rest and relaxation, sport and access to culture and nature, should be planned and practised as a privileged means of individual and collective fulfilment; when practised with a sufficiently open mind, it is an irreplaceable factor of self-education, mutual tolerance and for learning about the legitimate differences between peoples and cultures and their diversity.

(2) Tourism activities should respect the equality of men and women; they should promote human rights and, more particularly, the individual rights of the most vulnerable groups, notably children, the elderly, the handicapped, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples.

(3) The exploitation of human beings in any form, particularly sexual, especially when applied to children, conflicts with the fundamental aims of tourism and is the negation of tourism; as such, in accordance with international law, it should be energetically combated with the cooperation of all the States concerned and penalized without concession by the national

legislation of both the countries visited and the countries of the perpetrators of these acts, even when they are carried out abroad.

(4) Travel for purposes of religion, health, education and cultural or linguistic exchanges are particularly beneficial forms of tourism, which deserve encouragement.

(5) The introduction into curricula of education about the value of tourist exchanges, their economic, social and cultural benefits, and also their risks, should be encouraged.

Article 3

Tourism, a factor of sustainable development

(1) All the stakeholders in tourism development should safeguard the natural environment with a view to achieving sound, continuous and sustainable economic growth geared to satisfying equitably the needs and aspirations of present and future generations.

(2) All forms of tourism development that are conducive to saving rare and precious resources, in particular water and energy, as well as avoiding so far as possible waste production, should be given priority and encouraged by national, regional and local public authorities.

(3) The staggering in time and space of tourist and visitor flows, particularly those resulting from paid leave and school holidays, and a more even distribution of holidays should be sought so as to reduce the pressure of tourism activity on the environment and enhance its beneficial impact on the tourism industry and the local economy.

(4) Tourism infrastructure should be designed and tourism activities programmed in such a way as to protect the natural heritage composed of ecosystems and biodiversity and to preserve endangered species of wildlife; the stakeholders in tourism development, and especially professionals, should agree to the imposition of limitations or constraints on their activities when these are exercised in particularly sensitive areas: desert, polar or high mountain regions, coastal areas, tropical forests or wetlands, propitious to the creation of nature reserves or protected areas.

(5) Nature tourism and ecotourism are recognized as being particularly conducive to enriching and enhancing the standing of tourism, provided they respect the natural heritage and local populations and are in keeping with the carrying capacity of the sites.

Article 4

Tourism, a user of the cultural heritage of mankind and a contributor to its enhancement

(1) Tourism resources belong to the common heritage of mankind; the communities in whose territories they are situated have particular rights and obligations to them.

(2) Tourism policies and activities should be conducted with respect for the artistic, archaeological and cultural heritage, which they should protect and pass on to future generations; particular care should be devoted to preserving and upgrading monuments, shrines and museums as well as archaeological and historic sites which must be widely open to tourist visits; encouragement should be given to public access to privately-owned cultural property and monuments, with respect for the rights of their owners, as well as to religious buildings, without prejudice to normal needs of worship.

(3) Financial resources derived from visits to cultural sites and monuments should, at least in part, be used for the upkeep, safeguard, development and embellishment of this heritage.

(4) Tourism activity should be planned in such a way as to allow traditional cultural products, crafts and folklore to survive and flourish, rather than causing them to degenerate and become standardized.

Article 5

Tourism, a beneficial activity for host countries and communities

(1) Local populations should be associated with tourism activities and share equitably in the economic, social and cultural benefits they generate, and particularly in the creation of direct and indirect jobs resulting from them.

(2) Tourism policies should be applied in such a way as to help to raise the standard of living of the populations of the regions visited and meet their needs; the planning and architectural approach to and operation of tourism resorts and accommodation should aim to integrate them, to the extent possible, in the local economic and social fabric; where skills are equal, priority should be given to local manpower.

(3) Special attention should be paid to the specific problems of coastal areas and island territories and to vulnerable rural or mountain regions, for which tourism often represents a rare opportunity for development in the face of the decline of traditional economic activities.

(4) Tourism professionals, particularly investors, governed by the regulations laid down by the public authorities, should carry out studies of the impact of their development projects on the environment and natural surroundings; they should also deliver, with the greatest transparency and objectivity, information on their future programmes and their foreseeable repercussions and foster dialogue on their contents with the populations concerned.

Article 6

Obligations of stakeholders in tourism development

(1) Tourism professionals have an obligation to provide tourists with objective and honest information on their places of destination and on the conditions of travel, hospitality and stays; they should ensure that the contractual clauses proposed to their customers are readily understandable as to the nature, price and quality of the services they commit themselves to providing and the financial compensation payable by them in the event of a unilateral breach of contract on their part.

(2) Tourism professionals, insofar as it depends on them, should show concern, in co-operation with the public authorities, for the security and safety, accident prevention, health protection and food safety of those who seek their services; likewise, they should ensure the existence of suitable systems of insurance and assistance; they should accept the reporting

obligations prescribed by national regulations and pay fair compensation in the event of failure to observe their contractual obligations.

(3) Tourism professionals, so far as this depends on them, should contribute to the cultural and spiritual fulfilment of tourists and allow them, during their travels, to practise their religions.

(4) The public authorities of the generating States and the host countries, in cooperation with the professionals concerned and their associations, should ensure that the necessary mechanisms are in place for the repatriation of tourists in the event of the bankruptcy of the enterprise that organized their travel.

(5) Governments have the right – and the duty - especially in a crisis, to inform their nationals of the difficult circumstances, or even the dangers they may encounter during their travels abroad; it is their responsibility however to issue such information without prejudicing in an unjustified or exaggerated manner the tourism industry of the host countries and the interests of their own operators; the contents of travel advisories should therefore be discussed beforehand with the authorities of the host countries and the professionals concerned; recommendations formulated should be strictly proportionate to the gravity of the situations encountered and confined to the geographical areas where the insecurity has arisen; such advisories should be qualified or cancelled as soon as a return to normality permits.

(6) The press, and particularly the specialized travel press and the other media, including modern means of electronic communication, should issue honest and balanced information on events and situations that could influence the flow of tourists; they should also provide accurate and reliable information to the consumers of tourism services; the new communication and electronic commerce technologies should also be developed and used for this purpose; as is the case for the media, they should not in any way promote sex tourism.

Article 7

Right to tourism

(1) The prospect of direct and personal access to the discovery and enjoyment of the planet's resources constitutes a right equally open to all the world's inhabitants; the increasingly extensive participation in national and international tourism should be regarded as one of the best possible expressions of the sustained growth of free time, and obstacles should not be placed in its way.

(2) The universal right to tourism must be regarded as the corollary of the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay, guaranteed by Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 7.d of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

(3) Social tourism, and in particular associative tourism, which facilitates widespread access to leisure, travel and holidays, should be developed with the support of the public authorities.

(4) Family, youth, student and senior tourism and tourism for people with disabilities, should be encouraged and facilitated.

Article 8

Liberty of tourist movements

(1) Tourists and visitors should benefit, in compliance with international law and national legislation, from the liberty to move within their countries and from one State to another, in accordance with Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; they should have access to places of transit and stay and to tourism and cultural sites without being subject to excessive formalities or discrimination.

(2) Tourists and visitors should have access to all available forms of communication, internal or external; they should benefit from prompt and easy access to local administrative,

legal and health services; they should be free to contact the consular representatives of their countries of origin in compliance with the diplomatic conventions in force.

(3) Tourists and visitors should benefit from the same rights as the citizens of the country visited concerning the confidentiality of the personal data and information concerning them, especially when these are stored electronically.

(4) Administrative procedures relating to border crossings whether they fall within the competence of States or result from international agreements, such as visas or health and customs formalities, should be adapted, so far as possible, so as to facilitate to the maximum freedom of travel and widespread access to international tourism; agreements between groups of countries to harmonize and simplify these procedures should be encouraged; specific taxes and levies penalizing the tourism industry and undermining its competitiveness should be gradually phased out or corrected.

(5) So far as the economic situation of the countries from which they come permits, travellers should have access to allowances of convertible currencies needed for their travels.

Article 9

Rights of the workers and entrepreneurs in the tourism industry

(1) The fundamental rights of salaried and self-employed workers in the tourism industry and related activities, should be guaranteed under the supervision of the national and local administrations, both of their States of origin and of the host countries with particular care, given the specific constraints linked in particular to the seasonality of their activity, the global dimension of their industry and the flexibility often required of them by the nature of their work.

(2) Salaried and self-employed workers in the tourism industry and related activities have the right and the duty to acquire appropriate initial and continuous training; they should be given adequate social protection; job insecurity should be limited so far as possible; and a specific status, with particular regard to their social welfare, should be offered to seasonal workers in the sector.

(3) Any natural or legal person, provided he, she or it has the necessary abilities and skills, should be entitled to develop a professional activity in the field of tourism under existing national laws; entrepreneurs and investors - especially in the area of small and medium-sized enterprises - should be entitled to free access to the tourism sector with a minimum of legal or administrative restrictions.

(4) Exchanges of experience offered to executives and workers, whether salaried or not, from different countries, contributes to fostering the development of the world tourism industry; these movements should be facilitated so far as possible in compliance with the applicable national laws and international conventions.

(5) As an irreplaceable factor of solidarity in the development and dynamic growth of international exchanges, multinational enterprises of the tourism industry should not exploit the dominant positions they sometimes occupy; they should avoid becoming the vehicles of cultural and social models artificially imposed on the host communities; in exchange for their freedom to invest and trade which should be fully recognized, they should involve themselves in local development, avoiding, by the excessive repatriation of their profits or their induced imports, a reduction of their contribution to the economies in which they are established.

(6) Partnership and the establishment of balanced relations between enterprises of generating and receiving countries contribute to the sustainable development of tourism and an equitable distribution of the benefits of its growth.

Article 10

Implementation of the principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

(1) The public and private stakeholders in tourism development should cooperate in the implementation of these principles and monitor their effective application.

(2) The stakeholders in tourism development should recognize the role of international institutions, among which the World Tourism Organization ranks first, and non-governmental organizations with competence in the field of tourism promotion and development, the protection of human rights, the environment or health, with due respect for the general principles of international law.

(3) The same stakeholders should demonstrate their intention to refer any disputes concerning the application or interpretation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism for conciliation to an impartial third body known as the World Committee on Tourism Ethics.

APEC/PATA Code for Sustainable Tourism

(source: <http://www.pata.org/oecpage.cfm?pageid=3>)

This code urges PATA Association and Chapter members and APEC Member Economies to:

Conserve the natural environment, ecosystems and biodiversity

- **CONTRIBUTE** to the conservation of any habitat of flora and fauna, affected by tourism
- **ENCOURAGE** relevant authorities to identify areas worthy of conservation and to determine the level of development, if any, which would be compatible in or adjacent to those areas
- **INCLUDE** enhancement and corrective actions at tourism sites to conserve wildlife and natural ecosystems

Respect and support local traditions, cultures and communities

- **ENSURE** that community attitudes, local customs and cultural values, and the role of women and children, are understood in the planning and implementation of all tourism related projects

- PROVIDE opportunities for the wider community to take part in discussions on tourism planning issues where these affect the tourism industry and the community
- ENCOURAGE relevant authorities to identify cultural heritage worthy of conservation and to determine the level of development if any which would be compatible in or adjacent to those areas
- CONTRIBUTE to the identity and pride of local communities through providing quality tourism products and services sensitive to those communities.

Maintain environmental management systems

- ENSURE that environmental assessment is an integral step in planning for a tourism project
- ENCOURAGE regular environmental audits of practices throughout the tourism industry and to promote desirable changes to those practices
- ESTABLISH detailed environmental policies and indicators, and/or guidelines for the various sectors of the tourism industry
- INCORPORATE environmentally sensitive design and construction solutions in any building or landscaping for tourism purposes.

Conserve and reduce energy, waste, and pollutants

- FOSTER environmentally responsible practices for:
 - reducing pollutants and greenhouse gases,
 - conserving water and protecting water quality
 - managing efficiently waste and energy,
 - controlling noise levels and
 - promoting the use of recyclable and biodegradable materials

Encourage a tourism commitment to environments and cultures

- ENCOURAGE those involved in tourism to comply with local, regional and national planning policies and to participate in the planning process
- FOSTER, in both management and staff of all tourism projects and activities, an awareness of environmental and cultural values
- ENCOURAGE all those who provide services to tourism enterprises to participate through environmentally and socially responsible actions
- SUPPORT environmental and cultural awareness through tourism marketing

Educate and inform others about local environments and cultures

- SUPPORT the inclusion of environmental and cultural values in tourism education, training, and planning
- ENHANCE the appreciation and understanding by tourists of natural environments and cultural sensitivities through the provision of accurate information and appropriate interpretation
- ENCOURAGE, and support research on the environmental and cultural impacts of tourism.

Cooperate with others to sustain environments and cultures

- COOPERATE with other individuals and organizations to advance environmental improvements and sustainable development practices, including establishing indicators and monitoring
- COMPLY with all international conventions and national, state, and local laws which safeguard natural environments and cultural sensitivities.

Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry Towards Environmentally

Sustainable Development

(source: <http://www.wttc.org/stratdev/agenda21.asp>)

- Travel & Tourism should assist people in leading healthy and productive lives in harmony with nature
- Travel & Tourism should contribute to the conservation, protection and respiration of the earth's ecosystem
- Travel & Tourism should be based upon sustainable patterns of production and consumption
- Travel & Tourism, peace, development and environmental protection are independent
- Protectionism in trade in Travel & Tourism services should be halted or reversed
- Environmental protection should constitute an integral part of the tourism development process
- Tourism development issues should be handled with the participation of concerned citizens, with planning decisions being adopted at local level
- Nations shall warn one another of natural disasters that could affect tourists or tourist areas
- Travel & Tourism should use its capacity to create employment for women and indigenous peoples to the fullest extent
- Tourism development should recognize and support the identity, culture and interests of indigenous peoples
- International laws protecting the environment should be respected by the Travel & Tourism industry.

Appendix B. List of Surf Tour Operators Contacted

Alacran Surf Tours
Aventura Pelada Surfing Adventures
Coral Ranch Surf Camp
Corky Carroll's Surf School
Costa Rica America Surf tours
Costa Rica Excursions
Costa Rica Rainforest Outward Bound School
Endless Summer Surf Camp
Go with a Pro/Wingnut in Costa Rica
Green Iguana Surf Camp
Harbor Reef Lodge
Iguana Surf
Lohe Lani
Loma Del Mar Surf Camp
Lost Coast Adventures
Lou Maresca's Costa Rica Surf Camp
Mal Pais Surf Camp & Resort
Mareasias Surf Shop
Pura Vida Surf
Pura Vida Tours
Pure Vacations
Quiksilver Travel
Safari Surf School
Santa Teresa Surf Camp
School of the World
Sueno Del Mar Surf Camp
Surf Express
Surf Outfitters of Central America
Surf With Marco
Tamarindo Adventures/High Tide Surf Shop
Tamarindo Surf School
Third World Productions
Villas Rio Mar/Southern Expeditions
Vista Guapa Surf Camp
Water Ways Surf Adventures
Wavehunters
Wild Waters Surf Camp
Witch's Rock Surf Camp

Appendix C. Sample Cover Letter and Questionnaire for Surf Tour Operators

Dear [Surf Tour Operator's name]:

My name is Audrey and I am a graduate student at the School of Travel Industry Management, University of Hawaii, working on my thesis research project to complete a Master's degree. I would like to ask for your participation in the study I am doing on the topic of Surf Tourism in Costa Rica.

Although Surf Tourism has been around for decades, the tourism industry has not focused on it as a major tourist market. Costa Rica is already heralded as a premier surf destination within the surfing community, but the tourism industry has not fully recognized the importance surf travelers have on the tourism market and economy. Most efforts in Costa Rica have mainly been toward developing the Ecotourism market.

For my study, I am interested in getting your opinion and thoughts about the growing popularity of surf travel and issues concerning the sustainability of the surf location, such as overcrowding in the water or pollution of the beach environment. Your answers will be used only for research purposes and not distributed to others without your permission. In return for your cooperation with the study, I will send you the results once the project is completed. I believe the gathered insight to the surf tourism industry will be valuable to you as well.

Please indicate your willingness to participate by filling out and returning the brief questionnaire attached. I will also be in Costa Rica this summer and would possibly like to follow up with a face-to-face or phone interview with you for more information.

Please return the questionnaire by fax to 1-808-956-5378. Your kind assistance would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Audrey Tantamjarik

Sample Questionnaire

Your Name & position: _____

Contact info: _____

How long has your company been operating in Costa Rica? _____

Please circle your answers:

1. What is the size of your Company?

1-5 employees 5-10 employees 10-15 employees 15+ employees

2. What type of company do you consider yourself (Circle all that apply)?

Ecotourism Adventure Tour Travel Agency Other (please specify) _____

3. What is the Average tour group size that your company books (including surf guide)?

1-5 surfers 5-10 surfers 10-15 surfers 15+ surfers

4. What are your marketing means (circle all that apply)?

Internet Magazine Brochures Travel Agents Special Publications Other (please specify) _____

5. What type of transportation do you use for the surfers?

company owned vehicle chartered van/bus public bus other _____

6. What Beaches/surfbreaks do your groups go to (circle all that apply)?

Jaco Playa Hermosa Puntarenas/ Boca Barranca

Dominical Manuel Antonio Quepos

Tamarindo Playa Negra/Avellanes Nosara/Guiones

Mal Pais Witches Rock (Santa Rosa) Pavones

Cabo Matapalo Salsa Brava Other _____

7. Other activities offered during tours (circle all that apply)?

Jungle hikes Whitewater Rafting/Kayak Fishing

Massages Horseback riding ATV Other _____

8. Are there other surf tour suppliers you can suggest I talk to? _____

Appendix D. Sample Interview Questions for Surf Operators

1. Since you started operating in Costa Rica, what changes have you seen with the overall surf travel industry/market here? Would you say it is moving in a healthy direction?
2. What changes or new things do you feel need to be done to ensure Costa Rica is a sustainable surf destination that continues to benefit surfers, the local community, and has minimal impact on the environment? What would you suggest to control overcrowding, pollution, and more coastal development?
3. How do you feel about ICT? Do you think they are doing a good job with supporting surf tourism here? What could they do better for you?
4. How do you directly contribute to your surf community/town?
5. Are you familiar with the Surfrider Foundation chapter here in Costa Rica? Would you support (become a member, donate money) a program like those to be the “watchdogs” of the coastal environment?
6. What knowledge do you hope your surfer customers leave here learning from you about Costa Rica?
7. Last, are there any other surf-related studies or topics you would be interested to see more information about?

Appendix E. List of Questionnaire Respondents

Alacran Surf Tours
Coral Ranch Surf Camp
Costa Rica Excursions
Costa Rica Rainforest Outward Bound School
Endless Summer Surf Camp
Go with a Pro/Wingnut in Costa Rica
Green Iguana Surf Camp
Harbor Reef Lodge
Iguana Surf
Lou Maresca's Costa Rica Surf Camp
Mareasias Surf Shop
Pura Vida Surf
Pura Vida Tours
Pure Vacations
Quiksilver Travel
Safari Surf School
School of the World
Sueno Del Mar Surf Camp
Surf Outfitters of Central America
Surf With Marco
Tamarindo Adventures/High Tide Surf Shop
Tamarindo Surf School
Third World Productions
Villas Rio Mar Hotel
Vista Guapa Surf Camp
Witch's Rock Surf Camp

Appendix F. Interviews

- J. Albritton (personal communication, July 12, 2003)
- T. Bernsdorf (personal communication, July 27, 2003)
- R. Bombard (personal communication, July 24, 2003)
- A. Centenaro (personal communication, July 19, 2003)
- A. Diaz (personal communication, July 26, 2003)
- C. Gaston (personal communication, July 20, 2003)
- G. Gordon (personal communication, September 7, 2003)
- C. Herwig (personal communication, July 14, 2004)
- T. Marsh (personal communication, July 21, 2003)
- M. Pacheco (personal communication, July 18, 2003)
- B. Roberts (personal communication, July 23, 2003)
- N. Rojas (personal communication, July 19, 2003)
- J. Rowe (personal communication, July 15, 2003)
- L. Wilson (personal communication, July 18, 2003)

Appendix G. Surf Brochures from Costa Rica Tourist Board

COSTA RICA

115

THE CARIBBEAN

7 Manzanillo

8 Puerto Viejo

9 Jiriquilla Beach

10 Herradura

11 Salsa Island

12 Arenalito Beach

13 Siquirre Grande

14 Santa Rosa

15 Santa Rosa

16 Santa Rosa

17 Santa Rosa

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100 Santa Rosa

THE CARIBBEAN

7 Manzanillo

8 Puerto Viejo

9 Jiriquilla Beach

10 Herradura

11 Salsa Island

12 Arenalito Beach

13 Siquirre Grande

14 Santa Rosa

15 Santa Rosa

16 Santa Rosa

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Appendix H. Comments from Interviews

INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES

"We've got more cops. We've got more people watching. We've got more money on the main road, so that people that have more money invested in the middle of town have to take better care of the middle of town."

"There's a lot more infrastructure at the different good surf breaks. There's also a little bit more understanding by service providers, like hotels and restaurants, that surfers are an important part of their income. There's a lot more catering to surfers. And it can be as simple as walking into a restaurant near the beach and they have surf videos going. Or they have music that surfers like as opposed to just ranchera music."

"When they do the construction, be mindful of the mangroves and the ecosystem all along the coast. Lots of time it's more appropriate to build away from the beach."

"When I was younger, I used to come here (Tamarindo) with my family and you could see monkeys and Tamarind trees. Now you don't see any of that."

"The building is nonstop. It's moving towards progress, but at the same time these are hidden little paradises that you don't want to see get commercialized. And you gotta cater to the amount of tourists, and as that grows, more businesses come."

"On the growth part, I don't want to see the road get too developed. They may pave the road and if that happens, that would definitely change Nosara. The whole coastline would change."

"Dramatic increases in number of room nights and number of surfers here. Over 90% of the Lodge's clientele is surfers. Only a small percentage is there to learn surfing. Most have been surfing for years, and are there to find good waves. The growth he has seen is already 28% over last year's."

"The biggest thing that happened was the completion of the bridge over Rio Tempisque. That opened up Guanacaste for so much more."

"We need to keep development small. This year, so many new houses were built in Playa Hermosa. We have a turtle refuge next door, but development keeps popping up, even on the wetlands."

CROWDEDNESS

"I try to avoid the crowds if I can and I never take a crowd with me. I do a maximum of three people per driver car—same for surf lesson. I don't want to show up with a crowd somewhere. I lose my friends that way...Most times people don't even know I'm doing a tour. They just think I'm cruising around with some friends. It's better that way."

"I think with overcrowding, surfers will find another spot to surf if they come upon an overcrowded situation. I think if the effects get so bad, localism will kick in. It works. If you keep bringing vans of people and drop them off at a spot, the locals will respond. How does Hawaii do it? We should learn from the big Hawaiian guys. Too bad Costa Ricans are smaller."

"As a surfer down here, it's frustrating to go out to your local spot fighting for the same wave with 50 other people. You gotta know where to go. More or less, probably like it is in Hawaii, you've got your niches for the locals. The thing that aggravates a lot of locals down here, and something [my company] won't do, is run a tour to a local spot...Tamarindo Beach is more or less been designated as the tourist surfing spot, we give all our lessons there. And we keep them all in that area, which is actually the worst break around Tamarindo. And that's more or less why we designate it for the tourists."

"The surf gets worse. It's crowded and polluted and not for locals anymore."

"Nosara is not crowded for surfing. The beach is 5km long and breaks all along it with consistent surf. There could be 50 people out, but it's so spread out that it never seems crowded. We have guests that stay here and then go to Tamarindo. They call back from Tamarindo and ask if there is availability because they want to come back here. They hate Tamarindo. Also, we get surfers from Tamarindo that drive all the way down here too to get away from crowded breaks."

"I see overcrowdedness personally at my camp. Vans will park at my place and unload their tourists to surf in front of my camp. They come down from Jaco because it was too crowded there. But, then they bring a crowd here. ...I hate that surfers just come to surf my spot and leave. They don't put any money into this area."

POLLUTION

"A lot of the reason it's so bad right now is because we're having a heavier rainy season for the last three years and the rains washing rivers into the oceans and it is 100% brown."

"From my standpoint, I think the most important thing is that the septic systems for a community need to follow the guideline so that the sewage going into the ocean, which is not necessarily raw sewage, but the sewage has enough filtering through so it ends up becoming pure water or at least safe enough so it's not gonna pose any health risks to surfers and the animals in the ocean."

"As ecological, we definitely pick up trash we see on the beach. We promote 'no littering' but as for anything else, there's really not much else that we can do that can make a direct effect on the people to stop polluting the water. They're using the pesticides that are illegal in the States, but not illegal down here."

"Yes, there's pollution. But the pollution problem is the ticos not teaching their kids to not litter. Also the construction runoff into the stream that contaminates the water."

"Environment issue—I think everyone needs to be inspected better, especially the hotels with more than 10 rooms. Water inspection is important. They need better water treatment systems with filtration. Regulation just requires septic systems, but we need filtration systems. There are lots of uneducated people that don't understand that ocean pollution can be caused by trash leaching into the water when it rains. Most people pollute because it's easier and saves them money. In Hermosa, raw sewage tubes empty right into the ocean, right where the contests are held. They mask the smell by adding chlorine to it."

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

"The government has now placed signs that five or ten years ago you would never have seen in Santa Cruz pointing to Playa Avellanes. The gov't has realized that surfers, when driving around in their vehicles, tend to get lost if there are no signs. And the signs aren't just for resorts that are built up like Tamarindo, but also some relatively remote beaches that are almost 80 to 90 percent of the people who go there are surfers, like Playa Negra. And the government does realize that [surfing] is an important source of income."

"It says something that just the fact that 25 to 28 percent of the land mass is set aside for conservation. It doesn't mean that there isn't illegal deforestation happening in

those areas, but just having the areas set aside and preserved is way leaps and bounds ahead of what some of the neighboring countries have with their situation. So I would say that Costa Rica tends to tout that but Costa Rica doesn't completely live up to the way it wants to position itself in the market. But it's doing a lot better than a lot of countries are. And so, I would say some areas that end up getting brushed aside are not from the national level, but more from the local level.

For example, we do have strict regulation on how far a septic system needs to be from a river source or a creek, but it's very hard to make sure everyone is following those regulations. So then you end up contaminating streams and rivers that flow into the ocean, but it's kind of a macro thing because the law says this but the law is difficult to enforce because building inspectors are paid off and many times they don't even know where the new septic systems are going in. So there are problems, but Costa Rica is doing its best as much as it can in a way, especially from a central system from San Jose and the laws that exist. But I guess it's more of an issue of enforcement which is an issue all over the world."

"Sometimes hotels will go in and pay off the municipal inspector so they can end up building in a place they really should not be building and then they end up destroying more of the natural resources and natural environment and they end up being too close to the ocean having bad filtration."

"No, I don't think ICT helps surf tourism... We organized Billabong Pro 2002 and we had TV coming in and ICT was supposed to help us with flight tickets for the

members of TV and the last minute they told us “no”, so I had a bad experience with them. Actually, I know that they are working on it...I think they are doing things. Like local surfer, Federico Pilurzu, is already featured on big posters and promotional materials they send all over the world and to big embassies. So, they promote Costa Rica and they mention the surf, which I really like."

"I'd say yes [surf tourism] is progressing well because more or less the government has a lot of regulations on keeping the scenery and everything looking beautiful. People would say the governmentt slack on everything. But, with your third world country, you're dealing with a third world government. The fact they even have national parks all over the place and laws prohibiting building over two stories on the beach and building on the beach is a big step for a third world country. If you compare it to the US, then you could say they're lazy, they don't do anything, they never follow up. But, the laws are there and they are preventing this place from turning into Miami and have big old pink multistory hotels right on the beach."

"This country could be so much more well-promoted and it's not. A lot of it is left up to the private business owners instead. I deal with travel agents in the US constantly, sending them information about [my beach town] period, not even about us."

"I think the Government should come in and stop illegal people from living here and there should be more ticos employed."

"ICT has never contacted me or helped us. There's not really help from any direction. You don't need it though... The attitude is that you have to make things work here yourself because no one else will."

"Development is gonna happen as the country tries to create more jobs for its people. I think the government has been doing a good job though of mixing and balancing the development with the environmental protection. When I was looking for a place to start my business, I wanted an evolving market. I think Costa Rica is a long way from becoming a mature destination. Yet Costa Rica is uniquely ahead on many issues. They always have to resist the temptation of the dollar with balancing issues on their environment. But, since it's in their consciousness, an environmental plan, they are way ahead of other countries."

"I don't think the ICT focuses on surfing that much. I don't think they are aware of the volume of surfers that come. Their primary focus seems to be on canopy tours, birdwatching, Arenal, and Monteverde. They haven't grasped the size of the beach draw and surf market. All they have to do is talk to the airlines and find out how many surfboards are coming off the airplanes everyday."

"The Costa Rica government has rules in place for conservation and the environment, but the problem is the cost to regulate. There is no enforcement or implementation of their strategies. Before building, you need to get a plan/blueprint approved, but people will sneak in an extra story or rooms and just pay off the inspector. That is just

the way business is done here. I wouldn't call it "illegal" –just the norm. In Costa Rica, people know the rules, but nobody follows them. Everyone has a very lax attitude, "The laws are there, but they don't apply to me." With regulation, all you have to do is pay off the inspector and they turn their head the other way."

LOCAL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

"We take care of all the locals. Sponsor all the schools around the area, donate money to all the programs. Take care of the clothes drives. The former owner was really good about donating a lot of money to the local towns, the local schools, and the local people. We're foreigners in this country making money, so it's only right to turn around and take care of the people around you. I try to maintain that same thing."

"I take all the guests to different restaurants every night for dinner."

"The Costa Rica surfing association is supposed to boost Costa Rican youth into the ASP, but their strategies are off track. They should be sending them to Hawaii in the winter because that is where you have to surf to get noticed. Instead, they're sending them to Ecuador and South Africa, where there's less media coverage."

"Everyone needs to give back to their communities. How do we tax the small operators not paying? They're not giving back anything if they're not paying taxes."

VISITOR DEMAND/EXPERIENCE

"We want to produce surfers. Know about ocean awareness, about safety, simple things like handling their board, board care...Also yoga is big down here, so do that for 10 to 15 minutes too everyday."

"I do what I can to help them enjoy it. Maybe one or two out of those hundred will continue to do it 10 years from now and be lifetime customers/friends of mine. I try to help them experience, take them out, put them on a wave they need, try to help them out with the right equipment too, not put them on the wrong thing. Some of it's gonna stick. Some of those guys and girls are gonna continue to surf. Little kids whom I helped surf in the past are now young adults and they're here every year still. Now they don't come as part of a surf camp package. Now they come, they rent a car, do their own thing but I like to think that maybe I had some influence on those guys."

"Instructors are not just supposed to take people to a good surf break and show them a good time surfing, but also to teach them about what makes a wave, what creates waves, what creates beaches, what creates the intercoastal environment, why the trees are different close to the ocean as opposed to inland a couple of kilometers. So, they view themselves more as educators so everything the group does should have the opportunity for personal development, technical skill, as well as learning something academically."

"We have a program starting up where all our guides have to go to school: Our surf instructors, kayaking guides, snorkel guides. We want them to be able to teach the people all the treasures of this country. I know that sounds hokey and all, but I've done a lot of traveling and it's probably been the best education I've ever gotten. You know, to experience different cultures, a different way of thinking and that's just invaluable. The guides are all *ticos*, they know the lay of the land, they know the customs and culture. And so we try to give the clients an experience in Costa Rica, experience the surf, just show them an overall good time. Provide customers with a good vacation."

"I want my students to be safe and learn 'wave-ology' or basic water knowledge, how to be safe in the ocean, surf etiquette, surf lingo, etc...I want them to live the Costa Rica experience. Ours is not like surf camps in the USA. We live the Costa Rican life. We love our country, we love nature, other people and peace. We understand the meaning of 'pura vida'."

SURFER DEMOGRAPHIC

"[Our beach town] gets an older crowd of surfers, mainly 35-55 year range. They're professionals with careers just spending their vacations surfing. It's a longboarding beach, which makes it popular with the older surfer crowd. I've seen a resurgence of surfing amongst the older crowds that used to surf when they were kids, but gave it up and now are picking it up again. Now they are coming back to the sport and doing their vacations around it. I hear guys come here and say, "I haven't surfed in 10

years." And now they're back to it. The accommodations are a little more expensive too. No \$5-7 a night cabins can really be found in the area. [My hotel] is an upper end hotel. Get people that return two to three times a year. People laughed when I said I was building a hotel for surfers because they didn't believe the market was there, but I knew. Now the surfers are the ones coming down here buying homes and renting the accommodations."

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