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Responsible Tourism in Samoa:

An Exploration of Attitudes in Samoa Towards Responsibility in Tourism

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S.I.T. Samoa

Spring 2012

Abstract

The goal of this research was to determine what tourists, Samoans working in the tourism industry, and employees of the Samoa Tourism Authority believe the impacts of tourism on Samoa are, and what responsibilities tourists have as visitors. After establishing a definition of responsible tourism according to each group studied, the STA's tourism goals and risk assessment were analyzed to determine how well they relate to these definitions. The actions of both tourists and employees in the tourism industry impact the effects tourism has on Samoa, and understanding what the perceived responsibilities of tourists are can help mediate the effects of tourism on Samoa. This project was based on surveys and interviews with tourists, employees of hotels/beach *fale*/resorts, and employees of the STA, as well as various secondary sources including scholarly publications on tourism anthropology, ISPs on tourism in Samoa, and STA publications. This research found that although there are differences between the definitions of responsible tourism from tourists, employees in the tourism industry, and STA employees, all three groups recognize shared responsibility between hosts and guests, suggesting that responsible tourism in Samoa means a tourist and an industry that is educated, respectful, and conscientious of its impact. The STA's stance towards tourism as revealed in its publications fulfills the expectations set forth by these definitions. Keeping these definitions in mind as tourism continues to grow in Samoa can help mitigate the negative effects of tourism.

For my little brother, because he's the coolest.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank all the tourists and employees who let me harass them with surveys, and all the STA staff who took time out of their busy schedules to talk with me. Without them, this project could never have been completed. I would also like to thank Warren Jopling for taking the time to talk with me in Savai'i, driving me to my beach *fale* so I didn't have to take a bus, and giving me an impromptu geology lesson! And thanks to the anonymous woman on the bus ride back to campus after Namu'a Island who paid for my and Judy's bus fare, just because she enjoyed our conversation. If only everyone were as friendly as Samoans.

I would also like to thank Tupaemanaia Dr. Steve Brown for being my advisor, and of course Jackie Fa'asisila and Acacia Cochise for making this an unforgettable semester. And thanks to this semester's SIT Samoa students for making this semester crazy, memorable, educational, fun, and a great experience. We'll always be the best nineteen ever!

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Introduction

Tourism is a rapidly growing industry in Samoa, and the speed and size of its growth means it has profound effects on Samoa, which must be monitored. As anthropologists C. Michael Hall and Stephen Page recognize, tourism is an industry embraced by many Pacific Island Countries (PICs), despite concerns about its possible cultural, social, economic, and environmental consequences (Hall and Page 1996:3). Samoa markets itself as a Pacific paradise, and many have recognized Samoa's "cultural assets as an integral component of the island's tourism product" (Hall and Page 1996:297). According to the Samoa Tourism Authority (STA), "Samoa is a postcard of natural beauty offering very diverse and different environments and activities for visitors to explore and undertake" (Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:5). By marketing its idyllic landscapes and friendly culture, Samoa has become a popular tourist destination.

Tourism in Samoa has increased markedly in the last decade, with a 56.8% increase in the number of tourists between 1998 and 2008, from 77,926 to 122,163 visitors (Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:19). The industry is one of the "major foreign exchange earner[s]," with an income of $201 million in 2005, $236 million in 2006, $263 million in 2007, and $288 million in 2008 (Samoa Tourism Authority Annual Report 2009:3). According to the 2009-2013 Samoa Tourism Development Plan (TDP), "the future of tourism in Samoa will be strategically focused on promoting and delivering the truly unique and distinctive 'Samoan experience,'" which is:

> Underpinned by strong themes of pristine nature, soft adventure, cultural appreciation, personal rejuvenation, indulgence and self discovery, safety and security whilst also enjoying truly warm and genuine community welcome and exceptional and world renowned Samoan hospitality. (Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:5, 23)

Key areas of resource management focus identified in the TDP include creating a safe and sustainable tourism industry by increasing operator and community awareness as well as forging educational programs for tourists detailing the possible effects of tourism on Samoan culture (Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:8).

Before delving into an examination of tourism in Samoa, however, it is important to define the term "tourist." The TDP gives the following definition of tourism:

> Tourism is the temporary short term movement of people to destinations outside the place where they would normally live and work; together with their activities and experiences during those trips which include pleasure, entertainment, culture, business, conferences, visiting friends and relatives, adventure, shopping, dining, sports, education, health, challenge and self development, or a combination of these reasons. (Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:11)

For the purposes of this research, however, anthropologist Valene Smith's definition of a tourist as "a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change" has been utilized, as all the tourists surveyed for this project are "temporarily leisured" *palagi* who were specifically travelling for pleasure (Smith 1990:1). The anthropological definition of a tourist for the use of this paper is therefore much more specific than the parameters given by the TDP.

The Jasons.com Samoa Visitor Guide, available in hotels and the STA's Visitor Information Fale, contains the Responsible Tourism Code for the Pacific, which was created by an education NGO called Global Focus Aotearoa in 2002, and asks tourists to:

- learn about the country and its culture
- minimise environmental impact
- protect the coral
- support local initiatives
- pay a fair price
- think about your impact (Responsible Tourism Code ; Jasons.com:6).

These suggestions place responsibility on the tourist for his or her impact on the Pacific. The goal for this project is to examine what responsible tourism means in the context of Samoa and determine the respective responsibilities and attitudes of the tourism industry and tourists, from the perspective of tourists, Samoans working in the tourism industry, and the STA. The research question which this paper will answer, therefore, is "what does responsible tourism mean to tourists, Samoans in the tourism industry, and the STA?" This paper will first discuss the positive and negative effects of tourism according to surveys and interviews done with tourists and employees of the tourism industry, and will establish the wide reaching effects of tourism in Samoa.

Responsible tourism will then be defined according to the two groups studied, and the Samoa Tourism Authority's published plans and goals for tourism development will be examined to see how they relate to the definition of responsible tourism from the tourists' and employees' perspectives. It is important, however, to make clear that this paper will be addressing the plans and risk assessments outlined in STA publications, and will not attempt to address the actual efficacy of STA programs. Although such research is extremely worthwhile, it is another area of focus, and the time frame of this research did not allow for a thorough examination of this issue.

The actions and attitudes of both tourists and employees in the tourism industry impact the effects tourism has on Samoa, and determining the perceived responsibilities of tourists can therefore help control the effects of tourism on Samoa, as well as promote awareness of tourism's impact locally, thus making responsible tourism an important subject to study. As Hall states, a common issue that arises with tourism is a "lack of appreciation that tourism is dynamic, and causes change as well as responds to change" (Hall and Page 1996:12).

This paper is an example of a growing field of study known as "applied tourism," which essentially combines applied anthropology and tourism studies (Smith 1990:263, Lanzano 2007:81). This field uses "theory to study and implement tourist development, and to mitigate sociocultural problems which arise from its existence" (Smith 1990:263). As Smith says, "contemporary social scientists believe that knowledge of the theoretical components of a discipline, such as tourism, provides the tools for its better expansion or development, and for its wise application" (Smith 1990:263). This study of tourism in Samoa is a perfect example of this burgeoning field, as the anthropological examination of responsible tourism will provide guidelines to help mitigate the negative impact tourism has on Samoa.

Methodology

Interviews, observations, and surveys with tourists, STA employees, and employees of hotels, restaurants, and beach *fale* made up the bulk of the research for this project. A distinction

was made between STA employees and other tourism employees, because although both work within the tourism industry, the duties and focuses of their jobs are very different. Surveys were conducted at various locations on Upolu and Savai'i, although the majority was done in and around Apia at hotels such as Aggie Grey's Hotel and Tanoa Tusitala Hotel and restaurants and bars such as Paddles and Cocktails on the Rocks. Although the goal was to do twenty surveys for each group, resulting in a total of sixty surveys, this number was not met. The final survey count was nineteen tourist surveys, sixteen from employees, and none from the STA, as no surveys were returned despite repeated visits. Each population surveyed presented different challenges and advantages.

Although it was occasionally difficult to approach tourists, as many were unwilling to fill out a survey depending on where they were – on the beach, walking down the street, etc. – there were also occasions when tourists were easily surveyed, such as while they were waiting for transportation in hotel lobbies. When a cruise ship docked in Apia's harbor for a day, surveys were easily completed at McDonald's and Cocktails on the Rocks, where many tourists were relaxing. Occasionally, places that were expected to have a sizable number of tourists, such as beach *fale* in Savai'i, were not as crowded as anticipated, largely because the tourist season has yet to start in earnest.

Hotel and restaurant employees tended to be more willing than tourists to fill out surveys, but often did not have the time to do so while working. The best solution to this issue was to leave surveys with the receptionists in hotels, to allow employees to fill them out during lulls in the workday. While this strategy helped to increase the number of surveys that were completed, it is likely it also influenced the answers given, because employees may have felt pressured to give an answer their employer would want since the surveys were being completed at their place of work. Employees may also have filled the surveys out as a group, instead of independently, as many of the surveys returned from the same hotel had very similar responses.

Surveys were also brought to the STA main office in the government building and to the STA's Visitor Information *Fale*, although no finished STA surveys were ever received. This was due to

the fact that the STA Planning and Development Division was out of the office for the duration on the ISP period and the receptionist who received the surveys at the main office in the government building did not leave the surveys in the office.

In addition to the surveys, five interviews, both formal and informal, were conducted with STA employees, hotel employees, and *palagi* expatriates with experience in or knowledge of the tourism industry in Samoa. The interviews with STA employees focused on understanding the responsibility the STA places both on tourists and itself, while the expatriates provided additional background information on the tourism industry in Samoa.

Secondary research was also conducted, utilizing anthropological texts on tourism, publications from the STA, and ISPs on tourism. The STA publications provided all the data for perceptions of the effects of tourism and definitions of responsible tourism for the STA, as no surveys were completed. ISPs from previous semesters supplied more background information, and publications on the anthropology of tourism helped provide a theoretical basis for this research. It is also important to acknowledge the fact that the analysis and interpretation of data presented in this paper may be influenced according to the author's biases, as it is impossible for any researcher to approach a research question completely objectively.

As briefly mentioned in the introduction, this research focused primarily on perceptions of responsible tourism and analyzed the STA's published plans for tourism and risk assessments based on these definitions. Not examined was how effective STA programs actually are. This was omitted for several reasons. Firstly, much of the information regarding this issue was received from Tupaemanaia Dr. Steve Brown one day before the paper was printed, creating an obvious time constraint. Furthermore, a study of the efficacy of STA programs requires much more time than allotted in the ISP period to fairly analyze. Despite these time constraints, the presence of this issue is briefly discussed in order to provide a holistic approach to responsible tourism in Samoa, acknowledging that this research reveals only one side of the extremely complex issue.

Perceived effects of tourism

The effects of tourism in Samoa are wide-ranging, and, like any other country or community with such a focus on tourism, Samoa must balance the negative and positive consequences. As anthropologist Valene Smith states, "to a host population, tourism is often a mixed blessing: the tourist industry creates jobs and increases cash flow but the tourists themselves can become a physical as well as a social burden, especially as their numbers increase" (Smith 1990:11). The ideal tourism industry maximizes positive effects such as economic gain while minimizing negative effects such as environmental and cultural degradation. In many ways, the surveys and interviews support this position, recognizing both positive and negative effects of tourism, and the responses of tourists and of employees in the tourism industry were often similar.

Tourists identified chiefly positive effects of the tourism industry. In response to the question "what effects might tourism have on Samoa," the most common response was that tourism would result in an increase in jobs and revenue, therefore benefitting the economy. Negative effects, however, were also mentioned, such as an increased strain on infrastructure in the form of more rubbish and traffic. When asked whether the effects of tourism are primarily positive or negative, 83% of respondents answered positive. Thus, to the tourist population surveyed, the pros heavily outweigh the cons when it comes to tourism in Samoa, and the most obvious advantage of the tourism industry is its economic benefit for Samoa.

The employees of the tourism industry responded similarly, but it is possible their survey answers were influenced by the fact that they were all surveyed in the hotel, restaurant, or beach *fale* in which they work. Surveying employees away from their places of employment would have helped skirt this issue. The author always asked for permission to hand out surveys, so the management was aware their employees were answering these questions. This is a possible bias that should be considered when analysing the data from the employees' surveys.

When asked what effects tourism could have on Samoa,[1] 69% of employees cited the increased possibility to earn money as a positive effect. The continuity of this response shows that tourists and employees agree that one of the main positive effects of tourism in Samoa is its economic benefit. Although eleven out of sixteen employees noted positive economic gain as an effect, most of the other possible effects listed were negative, such as the spreading of disease, Westernization or loss of Samoan culture, and negative influences from tourists' inappropriate clothing and/or behaviour. Thus, like the tourists, the employees saw economic gain as the main positive effect of tourism, but were more aware than tourists of the negative effects that can accompany these gains. The surveys do not suggest, however, that the employees believe the negative effects outweigh the positive, and when asked "do you enjoy working in the tourism industry," all sixteen responded yes, most very enthusiastically.

Similarly, STA publications recognize positive and negative impacts, and detail measures to counter issues related to tourism, emphasizing the positive effects over the negative. Since one of the STA's main goals is to develop the tourism industry in Samoa, "preserving existing markets, attracting new market segments and developing new products," it is not unexpected that these publications would make a point of identifying tourism's positive consequences (Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:1). According to a recent untitled publication from the STA Research and Statistics Division, the positive effects of tourism include foreign exchange earnings, employment opportunities, stimulation of infrastructure investment, and a revival of Samoan culture, among others (untitled STA brochure:2). Some of the positive effects of tourism listed in the TDP are: business and employment opportunities, environmental and cultural preservation, broader educational opportunities, improved transportation and facilities for residents, and economic diversification (Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:11-12). The TDP also mentions the "multiplier effect," in which money injected by tourists into the Samoan economy is spent and invested, effectively multiplying itself (Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:11).

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[1] This question was identically phrased on the tourist and the employee surveys.

Despite the emphasis on positive consequences, the STA also recognizes possible negative consequences of tourism and the need for mitigation. According to the STA Research and Statistics Division publication, negative effects include the degradation of reef resources, the need for more efficient waste management, the possibility of leakage from the increased number of water tanks in low lying areas, and the loss of Samoan culture (untitled STA brochure:2). Like the tourists and employees, therefore, the STA recognizes both positive and negative effects of tourism, but believes the industry's positive effects outweigh the negative, as shown in various STA publications and interviews with STA employees.

Definitions of responsible tourism

The STA interviews and publications reveal that the STA feels very responsible for the safety and actions of tourists. In an interview conducted at the STA's Visitor Information *Fale*, an STA Marketing Support Officer described his job as the "front line" of the industry (anonymous interview, March 19, 2012). According to him, the people who visit the Visitor Information *Fale* are generally backpackers and tourists who do not have accommodation or know their way around Samoa. According to this employee, a priority of the Visitor Information *Fale* is providing tourists with recommendations for accommodation and information about Samoa in general. This includes advising tourists how to act, such as asking permission before taking pictures and wearing appropriate clothing in villages. Both STA employees who were interviewed emphasized the STA's role in providing tourists with the information to enable them to make responsible decisions, which also puts responsibility on the tourists to take advantage of this information. The second STA employee interviewed, a Personnel Training and Education Officer in the STA's Planning and Development Division, also discussed what the STA does to educate Samoans to provide a better experience for tourists, such as creating a user-friendly manual for schools and a radio program that airs on Wednesdays and Thursdays advising the community to be mindful of littering, and to keep an eye on their dogs. These actions aimed towards improving the experience of visitors shows how

important the industry is to Samoa. The STA, therefore, takes responsibility in the tourism industry by providing information to both tourists and Samoans, to help each group act responsibly.

As previously stated, the provision of educational materials by the STA makes tourists responsible for taking advantage of those materials. Other responsibilities of tourists are also outlined in STA publications, such as keeping themselves safe and respecting the local culture. At the same time, the STA delineates responsibilities of the tourist industry – and, by extension, its employees – such as making accommodations more pleasing to tourists by not littering, keeping an eye on dogs, and providing tourism information. This is also evidenced by the Samoa Accommodation Listing provided by the Visitor Information *Fale*, which classifies all tourist properties as deluxe, superior standard, standard, holiday homes, beach *fale* overnight stays, beach *fale* day visits, accommodation properties not complying with accommodation standards, yet to be categorised, and beach *fale* yet to be rebuilt after the tsunami (Samoa Accommodation Listing). Tourist properties are evaluated yearly, and ratings are displayed at the Visitor Information *Fale*, online, and at Faleolo International Airport (Merket 2005:15).These classifications make the industry responsible for its accommodations. Thus, responsibility is shared between tourists and employees, and the STA takes responsibility for educating both groups.

The tourist surveys reveal a similar definition of responsible tourism as that from the perspective of the STA. Most of the tourists surveyed believe it is their own responsibility to make an effort to better understand Samoan culture, but that this responsibility is shared with the employees in Samoa's tourism industry. According to the tourists, a responsible tourist is one who is friendly, polite, and respectful, "[leaves] only footprints and [takes] only photographs," and "respects the traditions, customs, and culture of the local people without trying to impose their own way of life on them." Nine surveys mentioned the term "respect" or "respectful," and five of these nine used the phrase "respect the/their culture." When directly asked "are tourists responsible for the effects their actions and presence may have on Samoa," 63% answered yes, while 11% said it is a shared responsibility, and 11% said they are not responsible (the remaining 15% did not answer the

question). One respondent replied that "the tourist dollar has more advantages than disadvantages. It can pay for any disadvantages if channelled in the correct way." This response suggests that tourists are not responsible for their actions, because the money they bring into the country will offset any negative effects as long as the government handles the money efficiently. According to tourists, therefore, responsible tourism means that visitors are respectful of the culture, mindful of their impact, and take advantage of information provided by the STA. Tourists also place responsibility on the tourism industry, however, expecting the STA and the government to make assistance easily available to tourists and to properly handle economic gains that result from tourism in a way that will mitigate negative effects. Thus, like the STA, tourists believe responsibility is shared between the industry and themselves, although the tourists seem to place more of the emphasis on their own responsibility.

Information from employees in the tourism industry revealed a very similar definition of responsible tourism. In the employee surveys, each respondent named at least one action they would consider disrespectful for tourists to do, with the most common answer (ten surveys, or 63%) being wearing inappropriate clothing. According to the employees, a bad tourist is unfriendly or demanding, behaves inappropriately, and negatively influences Samoan youth. A good tourist, on the other hand, is friendly and willing to talk, tells others about Samoa, and is respectful of and willing to learn about Samoan culture. The restaurant and hotel employees, therefore, believe it is the responsibility of tourists to be mindful of their actions and respectful to Samoans, as well as to have a basic understanding of the *fa'aSamoa.*

Another perspective of the employees' definition of responsible tourism was provided by the response of a beach *fale* owner in Savai'i when the author was robbed.[2] The owner of the *fale* was shocked, and said that this had never happened there before. She questioned the author to get

[2] On the first night of a three-night stay in Savai'i with another student, someone entered the *fale* between 1am and 5:30am and opened both students' bags, without waking them up. Although the author's bag had a lock on it, the thief was still able to open it enough to find the wallet inside, and pull out the money it contained.

all the details, and said she would talk to her husband and find out who took the money. The owner's reaction indicated that she felt her responsibility was to provide a safe sleeping place and to respond as best she can when that safety is violated. She appeared, however, unprepared to deal with the situation, uncertain what steps to take, and never mentioned the incident again. Although the owner's reaction showed she believes the tourism industry is at least partially responsible for protecting tourists, this particular case suggests that in reality, tourists should largely be responsible for their own safety and be smart about how they travel. Many beach *fale* and hotels do offer safe places to store valuables (although this particular beach *fale* did not), reiterating the protection workers in the tourism industry feel they owe tourists. Hence, this research shows that employees believe responsible tourism means both sides – the tourists and the tourism industry – take responsibility to protect both guests and hosts.

Although there are differing views on the responsibilities of both tourists and Samoans in the tourism industry, these three definitions of responsible tourism have clear similarities. According to this research, therefore, the responsible tourist – or responsible tourism industry – is an educated one that is respectful and limits its impact on the host culture as much as possible. Given these definitions of responsible tourism, the STA's plans and goals for responsible tourism development were examined to see how well they relate to the definitions of responsible tourism from the points of view of tourists, employees, and the STA itself. A comparative analysis of the STA's tourism goals versus the definitions of responsible tourism will show how united Samoa's tourism industry is in mediating the effects of tourism on Samoa.

Analysis of STA plans with respect to definitions of responsible tourism

The STA's economic, social, cultural, and economic goals for tourism, as well as an assessment of the industry's associated risks, can be found in the 2009-2013 Samoa Tourism Development Plan. These goals include "ensuring the integrity of the Samoan culture, traditions and

history is preserved and protected … promotion of greater awareness and … respect for people, culture, history, traditions, and environment," as well as the:

> Preservation and sustainable management of land and marine ecosystems of Samoa; minimization of environmental impacts of tourism; [and] adoption of environmentally sustainable and sensitive tourism infrastructure and design and operating standards. (Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:30)

The assessment of risk in the TDP follows the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) statement that risks can originate from four areas: "physical or environmental risks (natural, climatic, epidemic); the human and institutional environment outside the tourism sector; the tourism sector and related commercial sectors; [and] the individual traveler (personal risks)" (Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:78). According to the TDP, identified risks were evaluated and categorized as insignificant, minor, moderate, major, and catastrophic, following the *Generic Qualitative Measures of Consequence for Tourism* in the APEC *International Centre for Sustainable Tourism* guide to risk management (Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:78). These identified risks were then categorized as almost certain, likely, moderate, unlikely, and rare (Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:78).

This risk assessment and list of goals corresponds well with the definition of responsible tourism found through STA publications and interviews. As previously determined, the STA believes that responsibility in tourism is shared between tourists and Samoans, and takes responsibility for educating both groups. This includes protecting tourists – a role emphasized by both STA employees who were interviewed – and helping them protect themselves from "personal risks," such as "[becoming the] victim of crime" or the "accidental death, disability, or injury of visitor" as well as advising tourists in terms of how to conduct themselves, such as dressing appropriately in villages, which helps further the goal of increased knowledge of and respect for Samoan culture (anonymous interview, March 21, 2012; Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:30, 85). The STA's definition of responsible tourism is therefore consistent with the identified goals and concerns related to the tourism industry in Samoa.

Similarly, the STA's goals and risk assessments align nicely with the tourists' definition of responsible tourism, which states that visitors must be respectful of culture and traditions, aware of their impact on the culture, and take advantage of provided information to better fulfill expectations of responsibility. According to this definition, therefore, the provision of educational materials by the STA is crucial to facilitate respectful and considerate behavior from tourists, and the STA's decision to create "community tourism awareness programs and … tourist education programs [about] the potential impacts of tourism on the Samoan culture" fulfills the tourists' expectations that information will be provided by the STA (Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:8).

The goals and risks identified by the STA also fit well within the employees' perceptions of responsible tourism. The risk assessment outlined in the TDP takes into account concerns about the impact of tourism on Samoa, such as the loss of Samoan culture, influences on the younger generation, and the spread of disease. These risks, stated by employees in their survey responses, are included in the STA's list of "physical or environmental risks" and risks from "the individual traveler," which include "undesirable social behavior" (Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:80, 85). The TDP outlines strategies to mitigate these risks, such as "ensuring [the] identification of potential changes in physical environment" in response to disease and "[ensuring] appropriate visitor information and signage in relation to cultural customs and sensitivities and expected protocols of behaviour" (Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:80, 85). The STA also emphasizes the importance of forging a knowledgeable tourism industry in Samoa through the creation of educational programs for both tourists and operators (Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:8). The inclusion of these programs in the TDP aligns with the employees' emphasis on the responsibility of tourists for their actions.

Questions regarding the efficacy of STA programs

It is important to realize that this paper makes a distinction between the rhetoric of STA literature and the actual efficacy of STA programs. All analysis as to the role of the STA has been conducted by examining STA publications. Because of time constraints, it was not possible to assess whether STA programs actually meet either the expectations laid forth by definitions of responsible tourism or the goals stated in STA publications. To determine this, more research is needed, but it is worth acknowledging that doubts have been raised as to the responsibility of the STA's actions.

According to Tupaemanaia Dr. Steve Brown, a former tour operator in Samoa, the STA's marketing of its "pristine" landscape is deceptive, as extensive land degradation is already occurring, and it is "not responsible [for the] TDP to write such irresponsible info designed to deliberately mislead" (Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:5, personal communication, May 9, 2012). Brown cites the fact that 18 of 20 rivers in Savai'i are no longer functioning ecologically, and there is only one river in Upolu that does not have exotic fish species (personal communication, May 9, 2012). According to Samoa's National Action Programme (SNAP), the annual unregulated clearance rate of native forests in Samoa is 3%, which is one of the world's highest, and "deforestation respectively has impacted severely on wood supply, water supplies, biological diversity and on livelihoods" (Government of Samoa 2006:20). Brown also argues that the logging of Samoan rainforests by Americans from the 1960s to the 1980s has resulted in an explosion of invasive tree species (personal communication, May 9, 2012). According to this argument, therefore, the STA's marketing of Samoa's landscape as "pristine" is "deliberately [misleading]" (personal communication, May 9, 2012).

Regarding the STA's emphasis on educating both tourists and employees in Samoa's tourism industry, Brown argues that "there is little to [no] professional responsible adoption of 'responsible tourism' tools such as the Indicator Handbook PhD Thesis" created ten years ago by then PhD student Louise Twining-Ward (personal communication, May 9, 2012). This handbook provided "a set of practical and user-friendly indicators for monitoring sustainable tourism development" in Samoa, but was never utilized by the STA "despite a very competent committee selected of TOP

tourism stakeholders" (Twining-Ward 2002:iv; personal communication, May 9, 2012). Brown also argues that positions in the Visitor Information *Fale* are the most important in the STA, but that the staff are "often [the] least trained" and thus cannot provide "accurate experiential information" (personal communication, May 9, 2012). It is questionable, therefore, how well the STA is fulfilling its professed dedication to educating tourists and employees in the tourism industry.

In terms of ensuring tourists' safety, Brown claims that statistics on issues such as dog bites, theft, and rapes are hidden because they would give "a negative slant to tourism" (personal communication, May 9, 2012). This means that "young visitors are ill-prepared [and] ill-informed," which limits their ability to make educated travel decisions concerning their personal safety (personal communication, May 9, 2012). A doctor speaking to a Samoa Observer reporter stated that four dig bite patients per day is not unusual, which averages out to almost 1500 bites per year without counting Savai'i or attack victims who do not go to the hospital (Lesa). Brown states that the STA "has refused to adopt the Dog Registration Bill and solve this problem" which, according to statistics collected by the STA, is getting progressively worse (personal communication, May 9, 2012). Brown claims that the only action taken to address this problem has been the banning of dogs by Manase, Faala, and Manono Island villages (personal communication, May 9, 2012). Thus, these claims put into question how well the STA protects tourists from "personal risks" (Samoa Tourism Development Plan 2009:85).

Brown's argument is that the STA has not been monitoring responsible tourism in Samoa, because it has failed to consider any of the 30 indicators outlined in Twining-Ward's Tourism Indicator Handbook (personal communication, May 9, 2012). Thus, the STA cannot know "exactly what the risks are" (personal communication, May 9, 2012). Determining whether these claims are true or not would require more time than was available. While it is important to recognize these questions, this paper has examined the plans and risk assessments in STA publications, not the efficacy of STA programs themselves.

Conclusion

It is extremely important to tourism in Samoa – both contemporary tourism and the future of the industry – that responsible tourism is considered in the face of tourism's effects on Samoa. The use of applied tourism can help mitigate the negative effects of tourism. Knowing, for example, that all three groups studied believe tourists are responsible for their actions and that tourists expect to be provided with the information to help them be conscientious visitors, the STA must make a point of making information easily accessible to tourists. Guides like the Jasons.com brochure, which contains the Responsible Tourism Code for the Pacific, should be made available anywhere a tourist might stay, such as beach *fale* throughout Samoa, not just in resorts and at the Visitor Information *Fale*. A similar guide to responsible tourism specific to Samoa would be very useful.

This research found that all three groups studied believe the responsible tourist – or responsible tourism industry – is an educated one that is respectful and limits its impact on the host culture as much as possible. According to the STA, responsibility is shared between tourists and Samoans, and takes responsibility for educating both groups. Tourists believe it is their own responsibility to make an effort to better understand Samoan culture, but that their responsibility is shared with the employees in Samoa's tourism industry, and with the STA, which is expected to provide educational information to facilitate tourists' responsible actions. The restaurant and hotel employees believe that it is the responsibility of tourists to be mindful of their actions and respectful to Samoans, as well as to have a basic understanding of the *fa'aSamoa*, but that the tourism industry also has a responsibility to keep its guests safe. Understanding these definitions is extremely important for the future of tourism in Samoa, as they provide a glimpse at tourists' and employees' concerns about tourism in Samoa and expectations for a responsible tourism industry. The emphasis on education and respect found in the surveys and interviews shows that these are priorities according to the populations studied, which should be recognized by the STA.

In order to keep the definitions of responsible tourism up-to-date, it would be extremely worthwhile for the STA and independent assessors to conduct similar surveys every five to ten years to gain feedback from employees and tourists, as well as to monitor perceptions of the impact of tourism on Samoa. In addition, conducting this project on a larger scale (preferably during the height of tourist season) would be very useful as it would provide more conclusive results, given the greater size of the respondent population. A greater time span would also allow for more interviews and surveys, creating a more comprehensive collection of data.

As was demonstrated in the previous section, an understanding of definitions of responsible tourism will also provide the STA with a tool to analyze its own effectiveness. Comparing these definitions of responsible tourism with the STA's stated plans and goals for the industry will allow the STA to examine whether or not it is meeting the expectations of tourists and employees. For example, the emphasis on respect and education in employee and tourist responses should be mirrored in STA plans and goals. If, at some point in the future, the STA's goals and recognized risks do not match up with perceptions of responsible tourism, then there is clearly a divide in acknowledged issues of tourism between the STA and industry employees.

It is also important to recognize that this paper only analyzed STA publications, not the effectiveness of the published plans themselves. A thorough examination of this topic is the necessary next step of this research. It has already been established that the STA's published stance towards tourism in many ways fulfills the expectations set forth by these definitions of responsible tourism. This is, however, very far from saying that the STA's actions and programs effectively fulfill these expectations. The question regarding the efficacy of STA programs is an important extension of this research project, which the scope of this research cannot answer. The next logical step of this research is to determine whether or not the STA is following through with the statements and plans made in publications such as the TDP. This continued use of applied tourism will help ensure that the future of the tourism industry in Samoa is responsible.

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Glossary of terms

Fa'aSamoa: the Samoan way, Samoan culture

Fale: traditional Samoa structure with thatched roof and no walls

Palagi: foreigner, white person

Appendix

Employee survey

What is your job? *O le a lau galuega?*

At which hotel/beach fale/resort do you work? *O le a le igoa of le faletalimalo e te faigaluega ai?*

What is your weekly wage? *E fia lou totogi i le vaiaso?*

Do you enjoy working in the tourism industry? Why or why not? *E te fiafia e te faigaluega ma tulisi? Aisea?*

What effects might tourism have on Samoa? *Tusa o le a se a'afiaga lelei ma leaga o Samoa mai turisi?*

Are there actions that you would consider irresponsible for tourists/guests? Why? *O a ni faiga a turisi e te talitonu e le talafeagai? Aiseas e te manatu ai e le talafeagai ia aga?*

How would you describe a good tourist/guest and a bad tourist/guest? *O a ni mea e faia e se turisi e te ta'ua ai ia o se turisi lelei? O a ni mea e faia e se turisi e te ta'ua ai ia o se turisi leaga?*

What should tourists know before coming to Samoa? *O a ni mea e tatau ona iloa e turisi ae le'I o mai i Samoa?*

Fa'afetai lava!

STA employee survey

What is your job?

What do you do for your job?

Do you enjoy working in the tourism industry? Why or why not?

How long have you worked for the STA? Have you worked for any other businesses in the tourism industry?

What effects might tourism have on Samoa?

What responsibilities do tourists have?

What responsibilities does the STA have towards the tourism industry?

Do you think tourists research Samoa before they come?

What should tourists know before coming to Samoa?

Fa'afetai lava!

<center>Tourist survey</center>

Nationality:

Duration of visit in Samoa:

Why did you decide to visit Samoa?
     Vacation _____
     Visit family/friends _____
     Work _____
     Student/volunteer/missionary (please specify) _____
     Other _____

Please list any hotels, resorts, or beach fale where you have stayed during your visit.

During your stay, where have you spent the majority of your time?
     Apia area _____
     Rural areas _____
     Within a resort or hotel _____
     Other _____

What effects might tourism have on Samoa?

Are the effects of the tourism industry on Samoa positive or negative? Please elaborate.

Are tourists responsible for the effects their actions and presence may have on Samoa? Please explain.

What is a responsible tourist?

Thank you for your help, and enjoy the rest of your stay!