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**A 'javító' fenntarthatóság, a 'steady-state'  
fenntarthatóság és a strukturált ökoturizmus  
Enhance sustainability, steady-state sustainability,  
and the structured ecotourist**

Az ökoturizmusnak számos definíciója létezik, de számukra közös nevezőt jelent a környezeti fenntarthatóság fogalma, amit az ökoturizmust kutatók jellemzően két részre szegmentálnak: „javító” a „steady-state”-tel szemben. Az első esetben az ökoturizmus javítja a környezet állapotát, míg a második a környezeti tőkét változtatlanul hagyja, mind mennyiségi, mind minőségi tekintetben. A fenntarthatóság egymással versengő meghatározásai az idegenforgalmi piac heterogenitását tükrözik. Az elmúlt évtizedben a kutatók empirikusan is megerősítették a „puha” és „kemény” ökoturizmus típusok létezését. Míg az első a steady-state elveivel egyezik, az utóbbi a javító típusú attitűdökkel azonosítható. Érdekes módon a legújabb kutatások szerint létezik egy „strukturált” ökoturizmus típus is, ami mind „puha”, mind „kemény” jellemzőkkel is bír. Számos ok miatt, így részben azért is, mert javító attitűdöt és magatartásformákat is mutatnak a „strukturált” ökoturisták, a kevert meghatározás egy eddig alig vizsgált, mégis fontos piacszegmens létezésére utal. Tanulmányunk a „strukturált” ökoturistatípust vizsgálja az ökoturizmus spektrumában. és javaslatokat tesz a további kutatások irányára.

## **1. Introduction**

With the 1987 publication of **Our Common Future**, also known as the Brundtland Report, the now familiar definition of sustainable development entered the public policy lexicon: “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Unfortunately for policymakers, Brundtland’s dictum was essentially non-operational, since establishing economic values for succeeding generations, which requires knowing future consumer preferences, are an impractical task. To fill this vacuum, *operational* definitions of sustainability have been offered which consider the aggregate stock of physical capital (business investment) and natural capital (environmental

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assets) as a determinant of the ability of future generations to enjoy similar levels of consumption.

The basic idea is that non-declining capital stocks should yield non-declining production levels, but implicit in this outlook is the substitutability of physical capital for natural capital. That is, as environmental assets are depleted, the economic returns from liquidation should fuel capital replenishment through physical investment. Doubts about the effective substitutability of physical for natural capital have led to variations on the theme of non-declining aggregate capital stocks. These alternative definitions, as they become more restrictive, allow for decreasing levels of substitutability between man-made and environmental assets. The most restrictive definition, so-called environmental sustainability, prohibits the substitution of physical for natural capital and even requires that physical service flows from natural capital be maintained.<sup>1</sup> By way of illustration, this would entail sustaining catch levels for specific fisheries or water flows from specific water sources, and essentially negates intra-substitutions within the category of natural capital.

The more restrictive operational definitions of sustainability appear to be favored by policy advocates and the general public alike; moreover, these sustainability criteria are the drivers of a new outlook towards business and commerce which has ascended in corporate, academic, NGO, and governing bodies during the past twenty years. Referred to under the rubrics of corporate social responsibility, green business, and the triple bottom line, the ethos of sustainability is manifesting itself in profound ways. General Electric's new "Ecomagination" strategy, which among other things specifies an increase in clean technology R&D from USD 700 million to 1.5 billion by 2010 is one example, as is the company's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in 2012 by 40 percent from projected levels. Not to be outdone, the Goldman Sachs Group, a leading financial capital firm, donated some 680,000 acres it acquired via defaulted loans to the Wildlife Conservation Society. The acreage, mostly forest and peat bog, is located in Tierra del Fuego and the gift was made on behalf of the citizens of Chile. Goldman Sachs Chairman and CEO, Hank Paulson, has also promised a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from Goldman assets of 7 percent by 2012, and an investment of USD 1.0 billion in renewable energy projects.<sup>2</sup>

It is in the context of the travel and tourism (T&T) industry, however, that the discussion of sustainability is particularly relevant, and for an obvious reason: T&T represents the world's largest industry. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, in 2006 the direct and indirect effects associated with T&T comprise an economic impact of about USD 6.5 trillion and constitutes some 10.3 percent of world GDP. This supports some 235,000,000 jobs or about 8.7 percent of world

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<sup>1</sup> See Tietenberg (2006) for a thorough but concise discussion on weak, strong, and environmental sustainability.

<sup>2</sup> For more details on "Ecomagination" consult the December 10, 2005 edition of *The Economist*; similarly, the green strategies of Goldman Sachs are profiled in *Vanity Fair's* Green Issue published during summer 2006. Interestingly, editor Graydon Carter later stated that "...in all [the] years I have never experienced anything like the reception to our 'Green Issue'."

employment. As an example of national impact, in Hungary some 336,000 jobs are related to T&T, or about 8.6 percent of Hungarian employment.<sup>3</sup> In short, if the credo of sustainability is to be successful, sustainable tourism is central to that mission.

This essay explores the theme of sustainability through the tourism market segment known as ecotourism. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as „responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people” [[www.ecotourism.org](http://www.ecotourism.org)]. In truth, however, definitional uncertainty abounds, yielding speculative demarcations between ecotourism and other forms of nature and/or adventure tourism. And this, of course, renders assessments of ecotourism’s economic impact and visitor numbers problematic. What seems to be apparent is that an ecotourism continuum exists ranging from individuals who favor small group, physically demanding excursions into remote, undisturbed locales (hard ecotourists) to those with a bias towards passive, large group nature experiences facilitated by forms of mediation (soft ecotourists or eco-lites).

Indeed, ecotourism has many shades, and to add complexity, ecotourism researchers further delineate two types of sustainability: steady-state and enhanceive. The latter implies improvements to the stock of natural capital, while the former signifies maintenance with the existing status quo. The literature suggests that hard ecotourists are more likely to be enhanceive sustainers while soft ecotourists typically adhere to steady-state principles. But an interesting study by Weaver and Lawton (2002) offers evidence of a third “cluster” of ecotourists that hybridizes some characteristics of soft and hard ecotourists in a quite distinctive manner. Labeled structured ecotourists, this segment exhibits both soft and hard principles whose potency, in some cases, exceeds that found within the soft and hard clusters, respectively. Thus, the structured cluster is of a non-intermediate variety, displaying overall characteristics that are “as hard as hard” and “softer than soft.”

Since structured ecotourists overlap soft ecotourists in their desire for large group, service-intensive, multi-dimensional trips, we contend that structured ecotourists are oftentimes assumed to be soft ecotourists and are thus under-reported. As a consequence, this hybrid classification represents a vital and under-examined market segment within the academic literature, and more importantly, because structured ecotourists are enhanceive sustainers, this knowledge gap serves to understate the true commitment to enhanceive sustainability.

In light of this deficiency, this research effort seeks to fulfill two main objectives. First, it is likely that the structured ecotourist segment has driven leisure market demand in specific ways, and accordingly, T&T markets have responded by offering new and/or additional products that cater to this market niche. We argue that the expanding birding and wildlife festival movement in the U.S. provides one depiction

<sup>3</sup> These stats, and others, are available at [www.wttc.org](http://www.wttc.org). The World Tourism Organization ([www.unwto.org](http://www.unwto.org)) also publishes yearly statistics on a variety of international tourism indicators. In 2005, international tourism receipts amounted to USD 681.5 billion with slightly over 800 million international tourism arrivals. See UNWTO World Tourism Barometer (2006).

*of structured ecotourism, and provide a case assessment by utilizing as a template the leading birding and wildlife festival held in the state of Florida. In essence, section three of this paper serves as an informal proof of the festival as structured ecotourism proposition. Second, having asserted and informally proven the aforementioned proposition, we offer a few suggestions on how the academic literature can be extended with the structured ecotourist segment in mind. Thus, section four offers a research prospectus on structured ecotourism, which concludes this work.*

## 2. Background Literature

Conceptualizing definitions of ecotourism has occupied tourism researchers well into its second decade [Valentine (1993); Hvenegaard (1994); Blamey (1997); Acott et al. (1998); Wood (2002)]. Indeed, the maturation of this literature and its achievement of a certain critical mass is evidenced by several outstanding texts on the subject [Fennel (1999); Honey (1999); Weaver (2001)] as well as an encyclopedic entry edited by Weaver (2001). And while alternative definitions still abound, a convenient catch-all for the description of ecotourism is offered by Vamosi [Slotkin and Vamosi (2006)]: the **Tourism Triple-E** based on environmental, educational, and economic sustainability.

In short, ecotourism involves leisure experiences that are intimately tied to the natural world; moreover, these journeys are interpretive, contemplative, and of a cognitive nature that would readily distinguish eco-travel from the hedonistic experiences associated with adventure and/or surf-n-sun travel. The final pillar, economic sustainability, invokes the credo that ecotourism should benefit host populations and be conducted in a manner that maintains income-earning opportunities for future residents. This, of course, mandates responsible tourism practices and a significant degree of local ownership and control of tourism assets. It also entails a healthy respect for indigenous cultures, which should be left unaltered.<sup>4</sup>

Ecotourism's overriding concern, that environmental capital be preserved for future generations, is reinforced by the existence of feedback loops between these various planks. To illustrate, travel to undisturbed locales provides unparalleled pedagogical opportunities, and those learning experiences reinforce the notion of nature's strategic balance and the imperative to conserve. Similarly, eco-travel can generate sizable economic impacts for regional communities, and the association of income generation with healthy, vital ecosystems also inculcates an environmental mindset.<sup>5</sup>

The Triple-E is effective as a general framework; as a specific delineator of tourism market segments it is inadequate, which helps explain why estimates of global

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<sup>4</sup> Of course, it is likely that complete satisfaction of the Triple-E serves as a goal to aspire to rather than a practical outcome. Weaver and Lawton (2002) argue that "intent" is a reasonable criterion.

<sup>5</sup> Education and economics also reinforce one another. Economic success provides needed funds to enhance and expand interpretive capabilities which serve as a draw to entice additional ecotourists.

ecotourism expenditures, to the extent they exist, are presented with significant ranges. For example, Brown and Shogren (1998) cite Filion et al. (1994) for a 1988 estimate of \$90–200 billion. In a survey on T&T published by the British weekly *The Economist*, Roberts (1998) states that “the fastest-growing theme in tourism today is the environment.”<sup>6</sup> The extent of the market, however, is unstated, and the competing interests within the industry, from environmentalists to opportunistic *greenwashers*, provide ample evidence to the reality that ecotourism means different things to different people.

A few stylized facts have emerged from the literature. Large sample studies [Wight (1996a); Diamantis (1999)] suggest ecotourists are older, wealthier and better educated than the general population; moreover, gender differences exist when specific activities are taken into account [Wight (1996a)]. To illustrate, specific micro studies of birding festivals in the state of Florida reveal clear female majorities [Chambliss et al. (2003, 2006)] while birding in the U.K. is disproportionately male dominated [The Economist (2005)].

Another generally accepted notion, based on empirical typology research, is the existence of an ecotourism continuum. Weaver and Lawton (2002, hereafter **WL**), citing existing works [e.g., Palacio and McCool (1997); Diamantis (1999)], identify an ecotourism spectrum (see Figure 1) bounded by soft and hard ideal types which they empirically validate with a study of ecolodge patrons at an Australian National Park. Compared to soft ecotourists, hard ecotourists take longer, more specialized trips; are physically active; require few if any services; emphasize personal experience; and have a strong environmental commitment. Moreover, they are enhanceive sustainers.

*Figure 1: Characteristics of Hard and Soft Ecotourism as Ideal Types*

<b>HARD</b> (Active, Deep)	<b>SOFT</b> (Passive, Shallow)
<b>&lt;----- THE ECOTOURISM SPECTRUM -----&gt;</b>	
<b>Strong environmental commitment</b>	Moderate environmental commitment
<b>Enhanceive sustainability</b>	Steady state sustainability
Specialized trips	<b>Multi-purpose trips</b>
Long trips	<b>Short trips</b>
Small groups	<b>Larger groups</b>
<b>Physically active</b>	Physically passive
Physical challenge*	Physical comfort*
Few if any services expected	<b>Services expected</b>
Emphasis on personal experience	<b>Emphasis on interpretation</b>
Make own travel arrangements*	Rely on travel agents & tour operators*
<i>Source: Weaver and Lawton (2002), Journal of Travel Research</i>	

<sup>6</sup> Almost a decade later, the greening of T&T is so pronounced that eco-vacation primers such as Audubon’s Green Travel issue are ubiquitous.

In contrast, soft ecotourists take shorter multi-purpose trips, are physically passive, and desire a service-intensive, mediated experience. And unlike their counterparts, soft ecotourists are steady-state sustainers.<sup>7</sup> In the WL study the ecotourism continuum was supported through cluster analysis; soft and hard clusters revealed significantly different intensities for all characteristics detailed save the asterisked rows. But perhaps their most intriguing insight concerns the uncovering "of a large and distinctive cluster of **structured** (our emphasis) ecotourists" [WL, p. 278].

This third cluster, with respect to their commitment to the environment and enhance sustainability, as well as their physical activeness, is much like the hard ideal type (see the left-hand side bold items in Figure 1). However, with respect to their desire for service and mediation as well as their preference for short, large group, multi-purpose trips, structured ecotourists are similar to soft ecotourists (see the right-hand side bold items in Figure 1). In essence, the structured ecotourist cluster reveals a non-intermediate hybridized population that may express a soft ecotourism phenotype while carrying strong sustainability genotypes. Another way of stating this, which is central to the overall theme of this paper, is the following: *A large number of nature tourists engaged in what appears to be soft ecotourism activities are much more committed to environmental preservation than is commonly believed.*

This reality has profound implications for marketing, advocacy, and ultimately, sustainability [Singh et al. (*forthcoming*)]. And this point is perfectly consistent with what Weaver (2001) articulates when he opines that properly seen, ecotourism and mass tourism are not contradictory, but rather, offer mutually beneficial linkages. His underlying argument was that the impact of individuals engaged in ecotourism activity in either its soft form or as an offshoot of a mass tourism both numerically and financially dominates hard ecotourism activity.<sup>8</sup> But unlike others who view anything other than hard ecotourism in its purest form as a corrupting influence, Weaver views the large clientele of marginal ecotourists as a revenue generator, lobbying force, and facilitator of scale economies [(2001), p.109].<sup>9</sup> All promote

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<sup>7</sup> Doubts exist as to whether ecotourism can achieve any sort of sustainability. After all, the introduction of even the mildest impacts is likely to leave residual damage. By definition, however, ecotourism induces mitigating effects through educational legacies and redirected eco-dollars. See Lowman (2004) for interesting case studies on ecotourism's impact on forest conservation.

<sup>8</sup> Wight (1996b) supports this outlook with her emerging ecotourism market trends that project an increase in soft adventure as well as educational travel. Additionally, Meric and Hunt (1998), utilizing a typology due Lindberg (1991), studied 245 ecotourists with recent travel experiences in North Carolina. Less than half self-identified themselves as hard-core nature tourists (1.3%) or dedicated nature tourists (45%) while about 54 percent self-identified as mainstream nature tourists (6.1%) or casual nature tourists (47.6%).

<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, Hvenegaard (2002) found a marginal relationship between birder specialization level and conservation involvement. Using cluster analysis, birders were segmented into advanced-experienced, advanced-active, and novice groups, which entailed decreasing

sustainability, which reaffirms our italicized proposition. Additionally, it highlights the imperative of further examination of the structured cluster.

With respect to this paper's aforementioned objectives, the data support the notion of large numbers of tourists interested in service-intensive, mediated ecotourism. In the absence of market failure, competitive markets should yield travel options which satisfy this niche. Rather than view this from the perspective of the individual, we seek to offer a flavor of what we believe exemplifies structured ecotourism: the blossoming birding and wildlife festival industry. In particular, we examine the oldest and most significant festival held in the State of Florida. Thus, section three seeks to prove, in an informal but connotative way, the notion of wildlife festivals as a sub-category of structured ecotourism.

### 3. Structured Ecotourism

Birding and wildlife festivals (BWFs) have blossomed in the United States during the past decade [DeCray et al. (1998); Kim et al. (1998); DiGregorio (2002)] and manifest many of the characteristics that would be associated with structured ecotourism. BWFs are typically three to five day celebrations of birds, indigenous plants, and wildlife. Organizers utilize National Wildlife Refuges, National Parks, State Parks, and other protected lands, seeking to educate visitors about specie and habitat conservation as well as generate an economic impact for the local community. Activities typically include seminars on various species of birds and wildlife, field trips to parks and refuges, workshops on birding and photography, participatory events such as kayaking, horseback riding, and birding competitions, and activities which showcase much of the local flavor. In practice, BWFs combine elements of nature tourism as well as cultural and heritage aspects.

As stated in section two, WL's seminal piece identifies eight areas that overlap the sub-spectra of harder and softer ecotourists. Structured ecotourists share three characteristics with harder ecotourists: (1) strong environmental commitment; (2) an interest in events that promote enhance sustainability; and, (3) events that are physically active. The five preferences that equate with or exceed the softer end of the ecotourism continuum are: (4) multi-purpose trips; (5) short trips; (6) larger groups; (7) services expected; and, (8) emphasis on interpretation.

In the conclusion to their paper, WL seek to determine, "How can the preference for observing nature in a wild and unrestricted setting, for example, be harmonized with the desire for facilities, services, escorted tours, and social stimulation?" [WL, p. 279] The source of WL's sample was a pair of Australian ecolodges. We assert and seek to informally prove that Florida-style BWFs, the first of which emerged in 1997, are synonymous with structured ecotourism. The Space Coast Birding &

Wildlife Festival (SCBWF), the most significant BWF held in the State of Florida, will serve as a template.<sup>10</sup>

Brevard County, home of the SCBWF, is also home to the Kennedy Space Center and NASA—a unique combination to satisfy those who are interested in multi-purpose trips. Dubbed the Space Coast of Florida, Brevard County has the distinction of an unparalleled collection of endangered plants and wildlife. The 2005 SCBWF offered 196 events with 624 persons registered for participation in one or more events. Overall, more than two thousand individuals participated in some aspect of the festival. Focusing on the crossover attributes cited above, we match each outcome identified by WL to the structure of activities for the SCBWF.

### *3.1 BWFs and the Hard Spectrum Bound*

From the hard spectrum bound, WL determined that structured ecotourists possess a strong environmental commitment, support enhance sustainability, and prefer physically active events.

- Strong environmental commitment – Singh et al. (*forthcoming*) determined that festival attendees “were overwhelmingly positive about the need to protect and sustain the natural environment.”<sup>11</sup>

Selected highlights of the SCBWF provide further evidence of the appreciation and appeal of endangered species to festival attendees. The Florida panther, which once roamed vast areas of central and south Florida, is classified endangered and is struggling to survive as a species in the dwindling habitat that is protected from development. As an example of the SCBWF's environmental commitment, one festival exhibitor, The Wildlife Care Center of Florida, displayed a young female panther which was born in captivity, providing guests a rare opportunity to see this magnificent creature. Another illustration is offered by The Raptor Project, a traveling collection of twenty or so diverse raptors. Many of the birds are handicapped; they were donated to The Raptor Project and serve as educational birds. A star performer, a young Arctic falcon, flew around the Brevard Community College-Titusville campus, the host site of the SCBWF, demonstrating species flight skills to attendees.

- Support enhance sustainability – Singh et al. report “a large and significant segment of the ecotourist market that is engaged in conservation efforts and whose attitudes about the environment influence their behavior towards environmental preservation,” supporting enhance sustainability.

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<sup>10</sup> The SCBWF will be celebrating its 10th anniversary in January 2007. According to independent birding expert Pete Dunne who is the director of the Cape May Bird Observatory, the SCBWF was ranked the 3rd best birding festival in the U.S. in 2004.

<sup>11</sup> The Singh et al. results are based on data collected from registrants at two Florida BWFs.



The avid interest of SCBWF attendees in enhancing sustainability is evidenced by the presence and interest in The Owl Research Institute, a festival keynote. The Owl Research Institute is a non-profit set up to primarily study owls and their habitat. Another key note lecturer presented underwater and nature photography from around the world and emphasized Florida's connection to the rest of the world's oceans and waterways. Discussion centered on "shifting baselines," or how expectations of what we view as normal for an ecosystem is determined by when we see it. Moreover, a renowned documentary filmmaker presented two videos on the enormous impact that developing environmentally-sensitive areas has on the state's natural systems. As one example, excessive road-building accelerates rural land development, promoting urban sprawl at the expense of ecosystems.

- Preference of structured ecotourists to be physically active

The SCBWF spanned five days in November 2005 and included 31 field trips that ranged from passive wildlife observation boat tours to field trips requiring participants to hike for several miles, sometimes through mud and standing water, to observe birds and wildlife. For example, participants were led on a diverse habitat tour in and around Brevard County to see semi-tropical forests, pine flatwoods, freshwater marshes, and coastal dunes. Another group of 30 registrants traversed the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary, Titusville's 423-acre flagship property for the Brevard County Environmentally Endangered Lands Program. A less physically-demanding activity was the Pelagic Birding Tour offshore Cape Canaveral. Led by ten birding experts, the boat sailed a group of 80 registrants to "The Steeples," a productive location of underwater cliffs and seamounts that cause upwellings and current edges, especially along the western edge of the Gulf Stream. Occasionally the endangered northern right whale is spotted as it heads to the wintertime calving grounds. As a final example, SCBWF participants hiked the Lake Proctor Wilderness Area, a six-mile trail system through a 475-acre tract of Central Florida ecosystems ranging from sand pine scrub and bayhead to sandhills, pine flatwoods and wetlands.

### *3.2 BWFs and the Soft Spectrum Bound*

As documented by WL, structured ecotourists share a preference with softer ecotourists for multi-purpose trips of short duration.

- Preference for multi-purpose trips

A sampling of activities available at the SCBWF are the field trips discussed above as well as an art competition, historical walks and seminars, a bird banding demonstration, paddling adventures, and seminars on topics ranging from ocean issues, anthropology, archaeology, paleontology, international travel and adventure, butterflies, wildflowers, birds, and wildlife. Workshops focus on optics, the study of specific species, and birding techniques. A growing interest in nature photography is satisfied with 21 offerings that cover digiscoping, digital photography, basic bird photography, photography as art, and a photography field workshop. Leading

experts and photographers conduct the workshops, bringing together an impressive collection of talent.

- Desire for short trips

The time span for BWFs is typically three to five days. The SCBWF is structured so that ecotourists may attend for one day or extend their stay beyond the formal five-day period of the festival to further enjoy the area on their own. The festival brochure has become a year-round outdoor adventure guide for Florida's Space Coast, enabling visitors to choose from a wide array of activities.

Structured ecotourists also prefer larger groups, expect a higher level of services, and requisite interpretation.

- Larger groups

The 2005 SCBWF attracted more than 2,000 individuals. Activities such as the field trips, seminars, and workshops discussed above are supplemented with social activities, providing people the opportunity to interact with the highly respected key notes, trip leaders, interpreters, and like-minded individuals. The structure of the SCBWF is such that registrants can choose as much, or as little, social interaction as they desire.

- Services expected

The registration process, which can be completed online, provides registrants a user-friendly means of choosing the flavor of their trip to satisfy their desire for birding, wildlife viewing, historical and cultural tours and seminars, or a more scientific choice of activities. The organizers also enhance the ease of travel by recommending hotels, restaurants, and other service providers in the area. The Titusville campus of Brevard Community College serves as the SCBWF headquarters where, upon arrival, visitors check in to receive their registration packets and rendezvous for the seminars, workshops, key notes, and some social events. The campus is the departure point for many of the field trips as well.

- Requisite interpretation

The SCBWF excels in providing interpretation to festival attendees. Due largely to the efforts of the primary festival organizer and entrepreneur, Laurilee Thompson, world-renowned experts participate as keynote speakers as well as lead and provide interpretation in field events, seminars, and workshops. The areas provided are continuously expanded as exemplified by one of the most popular developments in recent years – digiscoping. Digiscoping combines the technology of the digital camera with binoculars to produce some breath-taking photographs that previously were the purview of dedicated professional photographers.

The SCBWF has evolved into an ecotourist attraction of international note due to the reputation and cache of the interpreters, appealing to the structured ecotourists' desire for service and mediation. This essay now concludes with an examination of three proposals to extend the emerging literature on structured ecotourism.

#### **4. Research Prospectus**

This section broadly outlines some proposed research extensions based on WL and an article written by Singh et al. (*forthcoming*) on environmental advocacy and sustainability. Two of these initiatives are intended to validate, from supply-side and demand-side perspectives, the ecotourist typologies established by WL. The objective of the third study is to uncover behavioral differences related to environmental advocacy and enhance sustainability, among these clusters. The latter study will also fully integrate, for the first time, the elements of the Tourism Triple-E into its modeling framework.

##### *4.1 Extension 1: A Case Study of Structured Ecotourism Events*

Because of its unique geographical location in the southernmost part of the eastern United States, Florida is endowed with the only tropical habitat (the Everglades) on the North American Continent. Florida's diverse habitats and favorable climate, together with the confluence of two flyways, attract many species of birds and provide spectacular settings for staging ecotourism festivals and events. More than twenty bird, wildlife, and nature viewing celebrations [Slotkin and Vamosi (2006)] combine the elements of the Tourism Triple-E (previously described) to attract ecotourists to their host communities and promote environmental sustainability. The relative newness of these festivals provides an ideal opportunity to study the ecotourism typologies identified by WL from a supply-side point of view.

The first study in the proposed agenda is to develop a case analysis centered on at least four BWFs hosted in the State of Florida. The purpose of the study would be to validate, from the supply-side, the existence of a structured ecotourism market, and to test the thesis that nature-based festivals and events reflect a market-driven response to the structured ecotourist typology. Each festival will be evaluated with respect to the 10 criteria listed by WL (see Figure 1). The information will be gathered using closed end Likert-scaled survey items, in conjunction with extensive interviews with festival organizers.

In choosing the events to investigate, consideration will be given to the strategic mission advanced by the festival's organizers. Doing so would provide an additional dimension on which to evaluate the festivals, thereby increasing the likelihood of reaching generalizable conclusions. The objective is to determine whether strategic missions manifest into significant differences in the types of activities and services offered at these festivals. We expect that they do.

The relevance of strategic mission is highlighted in a case analysis written by Chambliss et al. (2002), which compares economic performance and management

planning at the Florida Keys Birding & Wildlife Festival (FKBWF) and SCBWF. Although both festivals adhere to the tenets of the Tourism Triple-E, significant differences exist in the respective missions espoused by the festival organizers. The organizers of the FKBWF agreed on an education-based mission “to create awareness of the unique birds and wildlife of the Florida Keys, particularly amongst locals, through education and conservation.” In contrast, Ms. Laurilee Thompson, the chief architect of the SCBWF, espouses an economic-based mission that she believes fosters conservation efforts. So while both festivals champion the cause of environmental conservation and sustainability, the strategy used to promote this vision varies.

#### *4.2 Extension 2: Ecotourism Typologies at the SCBWF*

WL have provided a valuable contribution to the literature by identifying the structured ecotourist typology, a market segment that resembles soft ecotourists on some dimensions (trip type and services) and hard ecotourists on other dimensions (attitude and behavior). Analogous to citizens who identify their political beliefs as both “**fiscally**” conservative and “**socially**” liberal, the structured ecotourist displays behavior on the polar ends of the ecotourism spectrum: “**product-type**” soft on one pole and “**environmentally**” hard on the other pole. Structured ecotourists reveal a preference for short, multi-purpose trips, in larger groups, to destinations offering high levels of service and superior interpretation. Moreover, their attitudes and behaviors reveal a strong commitment to environmental conservation and the ideals of enhance sustainability.

WL caution against generalizing these findings without further corroboration, and suggest extending their survey to a broader array of ecolodges and to other “accommodation and non-accommodation settings.” The SCBWF presents an almost ideal event with which to validate the ecotourism typologies found by WL, and to examine cross-cultural differences in behavior, attitude, motivation, and activity preference between ecotourists residing in Australia and those residing in the United States. Given our proposition that BWFs are a market driven response to the structured ecotourist typology, our research hypothesis is that the SCBWF attracts a significantly higher proportion of structured ecotourists than softer or harder ecotourists.

WL crafted a simple methodology that avoids biasing the sample frame with people from the general traveling population. They did so by targeting the consumers of a common ecotourism service: overnight ecolodge accommodations at facilities that have achieved advanced ecotourism accreditation status and that are situated within a one-hour drive from the internationally acclaimed beaches of Australia’s Gold Coast. The reputation of these two ecolodges, combined with their fortuitous location near the Gold Coast, serves to draw, in total, about 35,000 visitors annually. From this large pool of known consumers, the authors mailed questionnaires to a randomly selected sample of 3,000 individuals (1,500 from each lodge).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> This is the only paper on ecotourism typology, to our knowledge, that employs a pure simple random sampling methodology.

The SCBWF parallels some key attributes that WL exploit in their sampling methodology. Foremost, the SCBWF is recognized as one of the premier BWFs in the United States, and is the industry benchmark for the more than twenty festivals held yearly in Florida. Second, the host city of Titusville is strategically located near the internationally acclaimed Cocoa Beach (home to Ron Jon's Surf Shop) and Kennedy Space Center, and is only a 45-minute drive from Disney World in Orlando. The close proximity to these venues makes Titusville an attractive, year-round destination for ecotourists of all types. In sum, the coalescing of these attributes, (renowned ecotourism event and favorable location) increases the likelihood of segmenting the ecotourism market into the three population clusters identified by WL.

Following the guidelines of WL, the sample frame for our proposed research will be drawn from a known pool of registered visitors at SCBWF during the past five years. In order to limit sample bias and to focus on the behavior of ecotourism consumers, festival participants who are attending the event primarily to offer some service (festival organizers, vendors, volunteers, tour guides, seminar leaders, etc.) will not be surveyed. A five-year window is chosen in order to increase the population pool of festival registrants from which to sample. Unlike the two Australian ecolodges, which draw thousands of visitors annually, the SCBWF is a short-lived event (five days) that attracts about 600 registered visitors per year.

In terms of validating their findings, there are three notable differences in the proposed sampling frame that should provide a valuable contrast to WL. *First, the ecotourism service consumed by the visitors differs between the two studies.* WL target consumers of an accommodation type, independent of the ecotourism activity consumed, while the proposed research targets consumers of an event type, independent of the accommodation type consumed. *Second, SCBWF draws primarily birders to the event, arguably the largest ecotourism activity in the United States.* Validating the ecotourism typologies to this important sub-group would be a significant contribution to the literature. *Third, the sampling frame will be limited to people residing in the United States.* Contrasting the cross-cultural differences in behavior, attitude, motivation, and activity preference between ecotourists from different countries (United States and Australia) adds a further, unique dimension to the study.

#### *4.3 Extension 3: Structured Ecotourism and Enhance Sustainability*

Whereas the first two extensions are intended to validate the *soft*, *hard*, and *structured* ecotourism market segments from both supply-side and demand-side perspectives, the third extension more fully explores the determinants of environmental commitment and enhance sustainability for the three ecotourist typologies. The proposed study will build on the work of Singh et al. (*forthcoming*) who use a marketing-oriented theoretical backdrop in modeling the relationship between attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs on environmental activism and enhance sustainability.

Conceptually, the term environmental activism reflects actions that demonstrate a significant (high) level of environmental commitment. The authors developed an operational construct, ACTIVISM, which includes a) educating others about the

relevance of environmental issues, b) volunteering at local wildlife and/or nature festivals, and c) revealing a preference to financially support organizations that address environmental issues.<sup>13</sup>

A principle component analysis, applied on a group of five-point Likert-scaled items, uncovered the following six factors, which encapsulate dimensions concerning environmental issues.

- Attitude Towards the Environment—personal attitude towards the preservation of the environment/wildlife
- Environmental Knowledge—knowledge and awareness of current environmental issues.
- Public Policy Outcomes—perceptions and opinions about environmental policy outcomes in the U.S.
- Stakeholder Responsibility—opinions about the role of the individual and role of the government in environmental preservation.
- Personal Relevance—relevance of environmental issues for self.
- Interrelationship—attitudes about the relationship between human and environmental well-being.

Estimates from a multiple regression show that all six factors significantly influence the ACTIVISM construct. Moreover, regressions on the individual and paired-items, which comprise the construct, confirm that the three most significant variables are personal attitude towards the environment, environmental knowledge, and public policy outcomes. Environmental activism is positively related to both personal attitude towards the environment and environmental knowledge, but is inversely related to perceptions (beliefs) about public policy outcomes.<sup>14</sup>

Turning to the issue of enhance sustainability, the authors estimate a series of binomial logistic regressions using, as dependent variables, Yes/No responses to the following three statements.

- Within the past two years, I have signed petitions urging government and other organizations to protect wildlife and/or nature.
- I am an active member of a wildlife or nature preservation organization.
- I provide contributions to wildlife or nature preservation organizations.

Consistent with the findings associated with activism, environmental knowledge strongly predicts affirmative responses for all three items. In comparison, personal attitude towards the environment influences contributions only, while public policy outcomes affect both contributions and the signing of petitions, but does not affect

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<sup>13</sup> The three items are each measured on a five-point Likert scale.

<sup>14</sup> The result associated with public policy outcomes is noteworthy. Negative perceptions and attitudes toward public policy outcomes generate a greater level of commitment to ACTIVISM. Stated differently, when respondents deem public policy initiatives to be inadequate, their commitment to actively engage in environmental preservation strengthens.

active membership. Stakeholder responsibility, not surprisingly, emerges as a significant determinant of enhanceive behavior, as reflected by active membership and monetary contributions to wildlife and nature preservation organizations.

The modeling framework used by Singh et al. can be enhanced in a number of ways. First, sorting the sampling frame according to *soft*, *hard*, and *structured* ecotourism clusters would allow for a richer analysis of environmental activism and behaviors that are reflective of enhanceive sustainability<sup>15</sup>, and perhaps uncover further differences among the three ecotourism typologies. Second, the list of survey items should be supplemented to include the economic element of the Tourism Triple-E. A fruitful approach, grounded in the tenets of the Tourism Triple-E, would be to design survey items that capture attitudes and perceptions of the interrelationship between environment and economy, and education and the economy. Quoting Ms. Thompson, "The only way you can preserve land is to show that the land, in its natural state, has an economic value." Third, since environmental knowledge appears to be the single most important determinant of environmental activism and sustainability, its relationship to the quantity and quality of interpretative services provided at ecotourism events (which is highly valued by both soft and structured ecotourists) needs to be more fully explored.

These research extensions would significantly contribute to our understanding of the multi-dimensional aspects of ecotourism. More importantly, the uncovering of the scale and scope of structured ecotourism greatly advances the quest for sustainability.

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<sup>15</sup> Additional elements relevant to enhanceive sustainability can also be addressed. For example, citizens of Brevard County, home to the SCBWF, voted to tax themselves up to \$55 million dollars to purchase environmentally endangered lands for conservation, passive recreation, and environmental education. The Environmentally Endangered Lands Program was established in 1990 and reaffirmed by the residents of Brevard County in 2004.

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