



Tourism and the demonstration effect: Empirical evidence

Turismo y efecto demostración: Evidencia empírica

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Abstract

The demonstration effect has become a well-established concept in the literature on tourism. It has been commonly reported as a consequence of tourism, focusing on the emulation of tourists' consumption patterns. However, there is very limited empirical evidence specifically focused on how tourist behaviour is actually or potentially emulated by locals. This study aims to fill this gap by presenting the findings of a research project looking at how women in a tourism destination in Mexico have adopted tourists' behavioural patterns either entirely or partially. Based on in-depth interviews and focus groups, this study reveals that tourist behaviours, attitudes, and certain ways of thinking can be and have been actually adopted by local women. Nevertheless, it also shows that local social groups do not copy tourist behaviour blindly; instead, residents are also critical in demonstration effect processes. They observe, analyse, compare, evaluate and decide on what and how tourists' specific behaviours are adopted.

Keywords: demonstration effect, tourism, women, sociocultural change, Mexico.

Resumen

El efecto demostración se ha convertido en un concepto bien establecido dentro de la literatura turística. Ha sido comúnmente reportado como una consecuencia del turismo, que se enfoca en la imitación de los patrones de consumo de los turistas. Sin embargo, existe muy poca evidencia empírica específicamente dirigida a cómo el comportamiento de los turistas es en realidad o potencialmente copiada por los locales. Este estudio busca contribuir a llenar este vacío presentando los resultados de un proyecto de investigación que analiza cómo las mujeres en un destino turístico en México han adoptado patrones de comportamiento de los turistas, ya sea de manera completa o parcial. Basado en entrevistas a profundidad y grupos focales, este estudio revela que algunos comportamientos, actitudes, y ciertas formas de pensamiento de los turistas han sido adoptados por mujeres locales. No obstante, también muestra que los grupos sociales locales no copian ciegamente el comportamiento de los turistas; por el contrario, los residentes también son críticos en los procesos del efecto demostración. Ellos observan, analizan, comparan, evalúan y deciden qué comportamientos específicos de los turistas son adoptados y cómo hacerlo.

Palabras clave: efecto demostración, turismo, mujeres, cambio sociocultural, México.

1. Introduction

The encounter between tourists and locals has been of profound significance for the understanding of tourism as a sociocultural phenomenon. Since the beginning of sociological and anthropological interest in tourism and until the 1990s, scholars focused their analysis on tourism as a product of Western society. Destinations were regarded as pleasure peripheries and a new form of colonialism. This notion restricted the understanding of destination dynamics to social and cultural processes in terms of resistance or assumption of what has been imposed through domination, imposition or manipulation (Nogues, 2011).

The concept of the demonstration effect was borrowed from economics within this traditional notion. Originally it aimed to describe local residents' interest in trying to emulate tourist consumption levels. By being in contact with lifestyles and different consumption patterns, local residents directly compare their standards of living with those of other people. This can lead residents to adopt tourists' demonstrated behaviour. For the demonstration effect to exist, three basic propositions are suggested: first, the behaviour of tourists and hosts is initially different; second, behavioural patterns are transferred from one group to the other; and third, the imitators maintain the demonstrated behaviour (Fisher, 2004).

In this vein, residents' comparisons between their own material possession and those belonging to tourists can be favourable or unfavourable. It can be unfavourable when individuals have contact with goods that are somehow better than those which they are used to consuming. Tourist-resident contact threatens the stability and persistence of local everyday consumption patterns. It stimulates imagination and desires and may lead to residents' frustration; it may also, however, lead residents to

look for chances to raise their standards of living and change their consumption patterns. In this case, the demonstration may become favourable in locals' minds. However, residents' awareness of such goods does not mean they necessarily change their own habits. Frequent contact with tourists may lead residents to higher levels of consumption in search of having this standard of living. This seems often to be the case of many local residents in developing countries, where wages are low and contact with tourists is high.

While the demonstration effect concept is commonly cited in the literature on tourism, very few studies have offered empirical evidence of the phenomenon. Furthermore, fewer studies have looked at how women's lives are or can be transformed by tourists' demonstrated behaviours. This paper presents the findings of a research project aimed at obtaining empirical evidence on the demonstration effect from female residents' emic perspective on the Pacific coast of Mexico. In order to do so, the paper first discusses the demonstration effect in the tourism context and highlights some of the most common misunderstandings regarding this concept. Then the study is described, including the methods employed. Findings are then presented and conclusions are finally drawn.

2. The demonstration effect

The demonstration effect has become a well-established concept frequently referred to in the literature on tourism. Existing literature suggests, however, that the demonstration effect is a vague concept that lacks a well-established definition and empirical validation. In general terms, previous papers reveal that the demonstration effect commonly refers to local residents' adoption of tourist consumption and spending behaviours. According to Burns (1999: 101), the demonstration effect "refers to the process by which traditional societies,



especially those which are particularly susceptible to outside influence such as youths, will 'voluntarily' seek to adopt certain behaviours (and accumulate material goods) on the basis that possession of them will lead to the achievement of the leisured, hedonistic lifestyle demonstrated by the tourists". Similarly, Moore (1995: 302) states that the demonstration effect "consists of host population emulation of the behaviour and especially the consumption practices of the tourists who visit them". Moreover, this conception is reinforced by Reisinger (2009) who claims that, as a consequence of the demonstration, locals notice the superior material possessions of tourists and wish to have the same. She also states that the demonstration effect often generates residents' jealousy, resentment, and even hatred of tourists in developing countries when locals see they are unable to be as wealthy as tourists and have the same standard of living. By claiming that the demonstration effect is unavoidable, Murphy (1985) adds that tourists generally possess greater financial and leisure-time affluence than many locals, and tourists' holiday experiences are based frequently upon conspicuous consumption.

While the notions above have become largely accepted, existing definitions, arguments, assumptions and empirical evidence need to be revised critically. Particularly, there are five specific issues related to the common conception of the demonstration effect that deserve special attention. First, it is observed that the demonstration effect is commonly defined in terms of tourists' consumption patterns, that is, centred on tourists' goods and spending behaviour. While this behaviour may be often imitated or at least desired by locals, this notion is a quite materialistic perspective. This is not surprising bearing in mind that the concept of a demonstration effect was likely borrowed from economics (Fisher, 2004). However, there is no reason to believe that locals' emulation is restricted only to tourist economic manifestations. The encounters between locals and tourists are not exclusively constrained to material exchange; in the tourist-resident interaction spectrum, there are a range of cross-cultural relationships that become significant in terms of the several behaviours demonstrated by both groups (locals and tourists). Tourists and locals are involved in a frequent, repeated and sometimes unplanned number of social and cultural demonstrations. Thus, the demonstration, perhaps more frequently, does not have an effect on materialistic emulation only. Perhaps more importantly, it may also have secondary effects on the internal structure of communities in terms of changes in the roles of women, community cohesion, demographic structure and institutional structures (Wall & Mathieson, 2006), to mention just a few. As a consequence, local beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviour are transformed, and all this may eventually alter social relationships and self-perceptions of local residents.

Second, the notion of the demonstration effect tends to be defined and thus reported as adopted behaviours. Scholars have found evidence for the effects on concrete and observable conducts that are allegedly adopted from tourists and incorporated into their everyday lives, such as drinking patterns, for example (Moore, 1995). However, this notion largely ignores that the effect will not always be a new conduct as such, but it can be simply a desire to adopt such conduct. While locals may be actually willing to adopt new behaviours, extrinsic factors such as economic power, social restrictions and personal conditions can potentially prevent locals from incorporating tourists' unfamiliar habits into their ordinary life. Furthermore, the effect of tourist demonstration may also lie in a process of reasoning that people go through in their lives without necessarily adopting a particular behaviour. Such reasoning may be incorporated into larger social processes and may thus end in observable adopted conduct or simply in a reflection itself. Therefore, the reasoning that locals go through about tourists' demonstrated behaviours may also be the effect itself.

Third, there seems to be a repeated emphasis on the negative implications of the demonstration effect; the demonstration effect is often reported as a harmful consequence of tourism for local populations. Mcelroy and De Albuquerque (1986), for example, maintain that although the demonstration effect's most common connotation is metropolitan imitation, it embraces almost any negative spill-over casually associated with tourist activity. Likewise, although maintaining that the demonstration effect can be advantageous, Wall and Mathieson (2006) argue that it is more commonly detrimental and that most scholars indicate concern for the consequences of foreign domination of the tourism industry and the impact of tourists who demonstrate symbols of their affluence to local people. In this vein, in his study on the sociocultural impact of tourism in Botswana, Mbaiwa (2005) reports that one of the negative effects of tourism in the Okavango Delta has been the adoption of Western styles of dressing and traditionally unacceptable "vulgar" language among young people.

In this vein, it must be recognised that the effects of tourism, including demonstration, can be both positive and negative simultaneously. The perceived effects of tourism and how these are perceived (positively or negatively) will be largely defined by the local population and, most importantly perhaps, independently by every single individual in the destination. Adopting an alien way of speaking, dressing, thinking, consuming, and interacting, to mention just a few, may be regarded as a cultural disadvantage for those believing that cultures should be conserved in their "raw" form. However, changes in eating, dressing, speaking habits or in any social representation may signify a positive effect on the lives of local people at a very individual level. In fact it would be unwise to believe that locals adopt and maintain, at least consciously, demonstrated lifestyles representing a disadvantage in their everyday lives.

Accordingly, this idea questions the common assumption that tourist behaviour is copied blindly by locals. Instead, the decision making process of locals regarding the demonstration effect is an active rather than a passive process. Individuals in destinations observe, analyse, compare, evaluate and finally decide on imitating tourists. As a result, residents may accurately or inaccurately imitate or learn socially from tourists (Fisher, 2004). Residents may thus observe and select tourists' social and cultural elements, adopting and adapting them to their local conditions and culture. If this evaluation by locals dictates that an exact copy of tourist behaviour is not possible, then similar goals can be achieved by altering tourist behaviour and incorporating it into the locals' own circumstances (Fisher, 2004). This process may therefore allow locals to adopt what they perceive as a benefit rather than a cost in their lives. According to Dogan (1989: 220), "[t]o the extent that the impacts of tourism are perceived as positive, [residents'] reaction takes the form of acceptance of the change; to the extent that it is perceived as negative, their reaction becomes more of a resistance". In summary, the impacts of tourism are defined as benefits or costs by those who experience them in their very personal and specific realities, and the behaviours adopted from tourists can thus be negotiated. Bearing this in mind, the demonstration effect can result in positive outcomes, perhaps more frequently than assumed.

Fourth, by stating that "[i]n tourism, demonstration effect refers to local residents adapting the styles and manners of visiting tourists" (Reisinger, 2009), it seems that the effects of tourists, and thus of tourism, can be clearly and accurately identified and isolated from the effects of other agents of change. On the one hand, it is quite hard, if not impossible, to categorically identify the very specific sociocultural effects of tourism on local communities. Some impacts of tourism encompass different dimensions of tourism and are thus



difficult to categorise exclusively within the social and cultural arena. On the other hand, tourism should not be considered the sole cause of social and cultural change; there are a large number of changing forces that are simultaneously and continuously transforming the populations of destinations in their sociocultural dimension. Cultures are not static: they change "naturally" according to their own needs of evolution. They are also exposed to external forces that lead societies to needed, (un)wanted and sometimes unconscious change. Examples of such forces are the media and other factors coming from industrialisation, migration, modernisation processes (McElroy & de Albuquerque, 1986), and globalisation itself which "has brought the elimination of barriers, economic, political and cultural, to the free flow of people, goods, capital, information, communication and lifestyles on a world-wide scale" (Cohen, 2012: 103). Consequently, destination societies are exposed to tourism and other demonstrators that can lead to sociocultural change. All these forces either individually, collectively or in combination with tourism can accelerate or retard cultural transformations in tourism destinations. Although it is almost unrealistic to attempt differentiation of sociocultural impacts caused by tourism and the general process of change (Burns, 1999), Fisher (2004: 442) points out that "[f]or the demonstration effect to be successfully evaluated it is necessary to understand how individuals behave as a result of contact with tourists, why they choose to behave so, and how their peer group and society will respond to any changes in behaviour".

The fifth and final observation lies in the lack and quality of empirical evidence of the demonstration effect. Although it has been argued that the demonstration effect is by no means "proven" by empirical evidence such as field research (Burns, 1999: 107), some studies have empirically supported the existence of the demonstration effect (Getz, 1993; Gjerard, 2005; McElroy & De Albuquerque, 1986; Moore, 1995; Spanou, 2007). The evidence offered, nonetheless, is somewhat limited in amount and questionable in relevance. This is mainly for two reasons. Firstly, it is observed that very few studies have exclusively looked at the demonstration effect as a consequence of tourism (see however McElroy & De Albuquerque, 1986). Many of the studies have reported the demonstration effect but only as one of the several impacts that tourism can have upon local populations. Thus, the empirical evidence of the phenomenon in some way has been accidentally found rather than specifically targeted. Most of existing empirical evidence of the effect is thus quite anecdotal. Very rarely have authors really offered sound evidence about who, why, when and how individuals are involved in the demonstration effect as a result of tourism. Furthermore, seldom have researchers explored and analysed in depth the specific effect of tourist demonstration from an emic approach. This means that scant attention has been given to the study of the demonstration effect from the perception of those who experience and witness the impacts of tourism, that is, through the voices of local residents themselves.

Secondly, previous research findings have revealed that the demonstration effects on local people are quite diverse and it is still highly difficult to isolate exclusive consequences of tourism. In their study of beach boys and tourists, for example, Beddoe (1998) indicates that the youths that work or live in tourist enclaves in Sri Lanka imitate certain types of tourist behaviours, particularly the use of drugs and alcohol. The author further found that if tourist behaviour does not conform to local moral norms, the youth try to copy it, especially in dress and male-female relations. However, in this case it is important to consider that while tourism may somehow play a role in the consumption of drugs and alcohol by young people, other factors such as extreme poverty, prostitution of young children and other social conditions may all lead to such behaviour.

Likewise, in his study of the impact of tourism on changes in alcohol consumption by men and women in a small Greek town, Moore (1995: 306, 310) asserts that "drinking practices of foreigners who have visited the town in increasing numbers have influenced drinking patterns of the local men [and that] the more recent openings of bars for Athenian tourists has also created more opportunities for young women to drink in public". While the actual displayed drinking behaviour of tourists may have an effect on local people, the relationship of such behaviour to local drinking practices is not automatic. The increasing consumption of alcohol may not come necessarily from tourists' exhibited behaviour, but from the actual increase in the supply of bars, for example. Other demonstrators such as television, films and advertising can all have a direct effect on changing drinking patterns in young people. Thus the actual role of the demonstration effect of tourism in the consumption of substances in both studies is not solidly demonstrated.

Similarly, when evaluating the general sociocultural impacts of tourism development in Cyprus, Spanou (2007) warned that the effects of tourists' displayed behaviour on young people in the country have been very noticeable. Tourist activities have led people to tend to spend a lot of their free time away from their families since they spend more time going out clubbing. The author also argues that the high concentration of tourists has resulted in the modification of social attitudes among the young, particularly towards dress code, sexual behaviour and nudity. While this evidence was obtained from interviews of local people, the author does not offer a detailed account of why people perceive these changes are a consequence of the demonstration effect and how such changes may actually be related to other socioeconomic and cultural phenomena.

In a similar context, in their study of the perceived sociocultural impact of tourism in Dawlish, UK, Brunt and Courtney (1999) suggest that the demonstration effect may possibly exist. The authors report that some of their informants felt that the younger generation tries to emulate tourist behaviour, but none were able to provide any solid examples. So the authors' possible evidence is quite questionable in terms of whether social modifications are exactly a consequence of the demonstration effect and how precisely it manifests in residents' behaviour.

In a related study, recognising that there is no systematic empirical validation of the demonstration hypothesis, McElroy and De Albuquerque (1986) examined the relationship between tourism intensity and local spending patterns of nine selected Caribbean countries. The authors, who conceive the demonstration effect as "the generally rapid assimilation of affluent, North American tastes and consumption patterns" (McElroy & De Albuquerque, 1986: 31), found that tourism can influence local consumption behaviour. They suggest that in the Caribbean the tourism demonstration effect is considerably weaker than and not easily distinguished from non-tourist modernisation influences. Based on their findings, McElroy and Albuquerque conclude that critics' assertion of a simple relationship between the presence of tourism and consumption patterns is suspect. They also propose that the demonstration effect needs empirical validation that is more specifically focused and that the existing evidence should be considered with caution. It is thus necessary to consider that although tourism is unquestionably a factor in sociocultural change, the type and intensity of change as well as the transmission mechanisms of such effects are uncertain and not always exclusive to tourism. Further empirical research is thus required for a more nuanced understanding of the meaning, causes and actual implications of the demonstration effect.

In summary, the demonstration effect commonly refers to the materialistic emulation of local people, particularly the young (Murphy, 1985; Reisinger, 2009). However, studies on the

phenomenon should also incorporate, perhaps more predominantly, social and cultural aspects of local populations (and tourists as well), in particular the adoption of the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of other cultures. Although exiting research suggests that it is the young population which is more likely to imitate, adopt or learn tourist behaviour (Beddoe, 1998; Getz, 1993; Moore, 1995), there is no reason to restrict the demonstration effect to the young. Adults, both male and female, are also capable of observing and perhaps willing to either totally or partially adopt tourist behaviours. The study of the demonstration effect on both men and women independently is another issue that deserves special attention, as their participation and relationships are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed differently by tourism-related activity (Kinnaird & Hall, 1996). Moreover, although the demonstration effect is commonly considered disruptive for local societies, it may also, and perhaps quite frequently, represent a benefit for locals. The benefit/cost dilemma is commonly defined by individuals who experience tourism in their everyday lives rather than by organisations, governments or researchers, whose own perspectives and priorities may significantly differ from the interests of locals. While a very interesting concept, the demonstration effect needs specific empirical evidence in order for the sociocultural impacts of tourism to be more fully and accurately understood.

3. Methods

The study presented here is part of a larger research project looking at the impact of tourism on women's gendered social representations. The larger project, and thus the study described here, was undertaken in a beach destination community in Mexico, named Huatulco. Huatulco is an international beach destination which was a fishing and farming community before the 1980s, when tourism started to develop. "In the past 23 years, Mexican government officials have converted the beachfront Zapotec Pueblo at Santa Cruz Bay (Huatulco) into an urban, elite tourist destination that still grows by eight percent each year" (Pankonien, 2012: 103).

Huatulco is the fifth state-planned tourism destination which aimed to attract international tourist flows mainly from the USA and, by doing so, to create permanent job opportunities, increase investment and foster the agricultural, industrial and construction sectors (Jiménez, 1993; Orozco, 1992). Nonetheless, despite the government's strategies to promote tourism in Huatulco and in other economically underdeveloped regions in the country, the sociocultural and economic outcomes that were expected were not achieved (Brenner, 2005; Gullette, 2007; see also López-López, Cukier & Sánchez-Crispín, 2006; Monterrubio, Gullette, Mendoza-Ontiveros, Fernández & Luque, 2012). Tourists visiting the destination are mainly the conventional sea and sun type and the cruise tourism segment also plays an important role in the local tourism economy (Cuellar-Río & Kido-Cruz, 2008). During the last decade around 70% of local people were employed in tourism (Brenner, 2005). People from rural surrounding areas know that Huatulco is now the city where social changes – including gender relations – are not static (Pankonien, 2012).

Methodologically speaking, the study was conducted through qualitative research techniques. Based on their great potential for helping researchers understand the social and cultural implications of tourism, qualitative approaches can generate theory out of research and place emphasis on understanding the world from participants' perspectives. They regard social life as the result of interaction and interpretations (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). Qualitative methods thus offer great potential for gaining access to emic perspectives in which the insiders' view provides the best lens to understanding the multiple realities of the phenomenon being studied (Jennings, 2001). As Pearce, Moscardo and Ross (1996) acknowledge, in

the search for the local residents' way of thinking and how wider social realities influence these thoughts, emic approaches allow researchers to consistently take the locals' point of view in trying to understand how they think, feel and speak about tourism phenomena including social and cultural impacts.

The project was divided into two methodological phases. The first phase was undertaken in November 2012 and consisted of twenty-one in-depth interviews with local women in the destination. The interview guidelines included questions regarding women's personal life history, perceptions towards women who (do not) work, their gendered relationships with their husbands and division of house chores in their families. Also questions were incorporated regarding how different women living in the destination are from those living in surrounding rural areas (namely *ranchos*) and from both international and domestic tourists. Importantly, based on informants' previous responses, as well as the theoretical assertions that women differ in their personal experiences and that individual perceptions are shaped by social influences including tourism (Bensemann, 2011), women were asked why they think women residing in the international tourism destination are different in the way they think and behave from others. More specifically, they were asked whether they think tourism and tourists have any influence in making this difference. The type and frequency of women's contact with tourists and their learning from tourists (if any) were also part of the instrument design.

Key descriptions of what women *are like* in the destination and what women *should be like* were obtained from the first phase. Based on such descriptions, six focus groups were created (ranging from three to six women in each group). Focus groups with women offer the potential to emphasise group interaction and thus a greater opportunity to derive understandings that reflect the lived experience of women. They are useful in successfully studying the individual within a social context and therefore to analyse the self as socially constructed (Bryman, 2008).

The phrases and adjectives (i.e., descriptions) that were commonly reported by women in the first phase were written separately on small cards and a set of these in an envelope was handed out to participants. This way each participant in each focus group had an envelope with the same number of cards inside. Next, they were told to rank only three cards individually according to how important each description was for them. Then, they were told to give explanations and examples in groups for why they think women are this way in the destination, as well as why women should be the way the groups reported. Lastly, special attention was paid to the role that tourism plays in women's gendered perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. Informants were asked whether they perceived that tourism and, more specifically, tourists have any influence on their social representations of women. If so, they were asked whether their interaction with tourists and living in a tourism destination itself has had any influence on the way they think and behave. These procedures of the second phase were also administered to three women residing in a *ranchito* as the very first attempt to identify similarities and/or differences from representations of destination women. All interviews from both phases were tape recorded, with prior informant consent.

4. Findings

4.1. Women in the destination and women in surrounding areas

As stated above, one of the questions incorporated in the instrument aimed to identify whether women in the destination perceived themselves to be different from those living in



ranchos. This aimed to test the researchers' assumption that tourism has an effect on how women think and perceive themselves and how they see other women. The researchers' assumption was corroborated. Women in the destination do perceive a difference in how women think and behave mainly in terms of gender roles. Women reported that, unlike in the destination, women in *ranchos* largely stick to traditional gender roles. Two informants claimed:

In ranchos, women, especially married, are convinced that they have to be always at home, doing house chores, taking care of children and her husband. It is the husband who has to work. In Huatulco, women are more liberal, they work and go out. (Business woman, single, 38 years old)

There is a difference between women from Huatulco and those from ranchos. In ranchos women are somehow more closed-minded, they can be cheated easily. They think the way people used to think in old times; they think it is fine if their husband gets home and beats them because they have not prepared food or because there are no clean clothes. They think that's the way it must be: women in ranchos believe they must be submissive. That does not happen in Huatulco, women in the destination think home responsibilities belong to both women and men. (Housewife, 31 years old)

Differences between women residing in the destination and those in surrounding areas were not only reported by women in the destination but also by those living in *ranchos*. Particularly the notion that women living in the destination value independence and liberalism is perceived by those living in surrounding areas. Furthermore, in *rancho* women's perceptions, such differences are clearly attributed to tourism, particularly to the contact women in the destination have with tourists. A thirty-seven year old woman living in a *rancho* argued:

Women from Huatulco are very liberal, very independent. They can go out and have fun, they can go clubbing at night with their female friends and nothing happens. Even men have got accustomed to this; in Huatulco it is fine for men if women go out with their female friends. A woman doing that in the rancho would be highly criticised. Also women in Huatulco dress differently, they wear few clothes. I think all this is because Huatulco is a tourist zone. People there often see tourists with fewer clothes, so locals get accustomed to it just because they see that happening often. So it becomes normal for them, but that is not normal for us in ranchos. In Huatulco, all women wear makeup, get well dressed, dye their hair, and this is because Huatulco is more populated and receives people from outside, from other countries. Tourists bring different customs and people in Huatulco pick up that behaviour. (Housewife)

4.2. Adopted behaviours

From the information gathered, it is clear that, in some women's mind, tourists do have a direct influence on local women behaving differently from how they used to behave. Some women repeatedly reported that tourists have had a direct effect on their conduct. Particularly, changes in the way women dress and wear makeup were reported as being a consequence of being in contact with tourists. The following two interview excerpts are offered to support this assertion:

I have changed my way of thinking and my behaviour, too. I have learnt a lot from the contact I have with tourists. I have changed my way of dressing. Before, I used to wear "rags", but now I wear high-heeled shoes, dresses and jeans. Also, I now take care of my body. I liked the way some tourists look, and I wanted to be like them. (Housewife, 34 years old, 18 years in the destination)

Recognising that tourists not only come to spend their money but also to teach locals certain things, the owner of a snorkel tour company reported:

I work with both foreign and domestic tourists, and I have learnt many things from them. When I see my customers [female tourists], I admire how women dress, they look beautiful. I also want to get dressed and behave the way tourists do. Before, for example, I did not use to paint my nails; now I even use synthetic nails. Yes, I have learnt from tourists. (42 years old, 19 years in the destination)

Demonstration not only has an effect on adults but also on children, particularly those belonging to families who are exposed to direct interaction with foreign tourists. A woman frequently hosting North American tourists in her house pointed out:

When our American friends come to visit us, they talk to each other in English. They also talk to my children in English. I have noticed that my children later repeat and use some words that they have picked up from our guests. (Housewife, 31 years old)

In addition to adopted conduct, informants claim that tourists also influence women's social representations in gender roles and in specific habits. A thirty-one year old housewife recounted:

I do have contact with foreign tourists. My husband has North American tourist friends and he brings them home. They have told me that women also have rights and should not allow men to treat women badly. I once told an American tourist woman that I wanted to go to the United States, and my husband said it would be difficult for me, but the female tourist said that I could do it by myself, that I could learn English and go ahead. I have learnt that from them.

The same informant added:

When we talk to tourists, they tell us several things and we learn those things from the people we talk to. They make us think about our own life or about the things that we are doing wrong. We may say the tourist is right – well, sometimes, because tourists are not always right. But we certainly come to realise things we were not aware of. People in Huatulco, including women, have opened their eyes due to the contact we have with tourists.

In a similar context, a married woman having contact with tourists maintained:

Huatulco receives people from other places and from different cultures. Here, we think in a way that sometimes is mistaken. When you meet people from other places, they make you see things differently. They teach us that things are not always the way we think they are. So, tourism has made us women open our eyes.

Another informant who had previously lived in a non-tourist area narrated her own experience:

I have learnt to become independent in certain ways. For example, I have been out to dinner with some foreign tourists and I have noticed that they split the bill when they go out for dinner. So I think being independent in that way is something we should learn from tourists.

Recognising that she would not like to be the way tourists are, a married woman who has lived fifteen years in Huatulco and has only an elementary school education reported a case in which demonstration by tourists can potentially have a direct effect on individuals' everyday habits.

I would not like to be like tourists. I am Mexican, they just have a different way of life. However, there is one thing I think

I have learnt from Canadian tourists. They are very responsible, and they are very punctual; that is something I like a lot about them. Now I am very punctual; when I have an appointment, I like to arrive before the time. It bothers me when people arrive late.

4.3. A desire to emulate tourist behaviours

In accordance with the above evidence, it is clear that tourists' demonstrated behaviour, beliefs and attitudes can have a direct effect on local behaviour and conduct. However, based on the findings, this study suggests that the effect of demonstration by tourists may not necessarily end in an adoption of visible behaviours. The demonstration effect may lie just in locals' desire to adopt other behaviours rather than the adoption itself. Informants repetitively stated their own wish to be like tourists in certain ways or the idea that women should be somehow like tourists. Issues such as tourists' independence and liberalism were one way or another desired by and for women in the destination. A twenty-six year old professional stated:

Some people can change by just observing or talking to tourists. I think women here in Huatulco should be more independent like the way female tourists are and should not be tied to men. (Accountant, single, 3 months in the destination)

Similarly, a thirty-eight year old woman working on her high school diploma argued:

I would like to be like a foreign female tourist in a way. From my experience with tourists, I can tell they are liberal, much more liberal than us in Mexico. They go out, they are not tied to their boyfriend or husband. If they do not like a relationship with a man, they immediately break off their relationship. So I would like to be as open-minded as female tourists are.

Although some women showed a wish to be like tourists, others argue that tourists should not be imitated. Rather, some informants claimed that local women should learn some things from tourists while recognising that not all tourist behaviours are desirable. When answering whether women should imitate female tourists in any way, a housewife born in Mexico City and living in the destination for six years maintained:

Rather than imitating, we should learn some things from Canadian tourists. We should learn some of their habits. For example, they are very punctual and they distinguish between Mexican and Canadian time. Perhaps women in Huatulco should be more independent and work more out of their homes. We should probably learn to be more practical like they are. However, we should not learn from them the way they prepare food. For example, they just put soup in the microwave and the food is ready! I think in that way we should not be as industrialised as they are. (Housewife, 38 years old)

While disagreeing with some female tourists' hedonic behaviours, a housewife asserted:

I think there are some things we should learn from female tourists. But also there are things that should not be imitated from them. Perhaps women in Huatulco should copy the way some female tourists think [being liberal and independent]. However, some tourists think even worse than me; they just come to have fun and go wild, they do not think positively. I think that is something we should not learn from them. (31 years old, native Mexican)

In a similar vein, a woman who has lived in Huatulco for twenty-five years and lived in the USA as an illegal immigrant for over ten years asserted:

Women from Huatulco should be like female North Americans in certain ways. They should be more liberal, they

should become more independent and not to be reliant on their husband. But there are some things that should not be imitated in them; in the USA women use drugs and drink a lot. I think women in Huatulco should not do that.

A woman working as an assistant in the local Health Centre further warned:

I would not like to be the way foreign female tourists are. They are more materialistic, they come and just think about what to buy, they just think about money and do not think about people's needs. (28 years old, 24 years in the destination)

4.4. Recognising other influential factors

While many women see tourists as a cause of change, some informants also asserted that what women are like in Huatulco, as compared with those in *ranchos*, is not a consequence of or related to tourism. The following excerpts exemplify this:

I feel that what a woman is like is not due to tourism. I think it has nothing to do with living in Huatulco. An independent woman can be found in a city or in a town where there are no tourists. (Focus group participant)

I do not believe that women think differently thanks to tourism. We all here have something to do with tourism, but I think a woman is independent or has self-esteem regardless of the place she lives in, whether it has tourism or not (Focus group participant)

I consider myself to be a great woman, but I think my way of being is not due to tourism or to being in contact with tourists. (Focus group participant)

Finally, this study provides evidence to support that tourism is not the only factor of change in local women. Informants recognised that the difference between women living in the destination and those living in surrounding areas is also attributable to other factors such as urbanisation, mass media and government intervention. While some of these factors may be associated with tourism development, informants reported them as other influential factors in their life.

A member of a tourism cooperative observed:

We have changed our way of thinking thanks to some of the courses that we have taken, courses that the government has given us. Examples of these are courses on self-esteem, human relationships, and tourism services courses. Other government projects have helped us to know we women have the same rights as men do.

5. Conclusions

Bearing in mind that the demonstration effect is still a concept that requires empirical testing, the main contribution of this study lies in gathering specialised empirical evidence on how tourists' demonstrated behaviours can have a(n) (in)direct effect on locals' behaviours. In this vein, by proving that emic approaches can lead to deep and integral understandings of how people's lives change in tourism destinations, these findings suggest that well-accepted notions of the demonstration effect should be revised.

On the one hand, this study indicates that while tourists' hedonic and consumption behaviours are largely visible (demonstrated) to local people, consumption patterns are not the only behaviours that can be emulated by locals. Actually, it seems that other social conducts, habits, ways of thinking and attitudes are perhaps more commonly adopted or learnt by local residents. Rather than economic in nature, sociocultural dimensions seem to be more present in the demonstration effect. On the other hand, this study also demonstrates that tourist behaviours are not copied blindly by locals. While there seems to be a common assumption that local people, especially



those in developing countries (Reisinger, 2009), will automatically adopt the demonstrated tourist behaviours, the evidence provided here warns that rather than imitating, local people are capable of observing, analysing and selecting or rejecting specific behavioural patterns that may represent a real or potential benefit for them. Thus, rather than passive actors in tourism's effects on social change processes, local people are thinking actors that actively select the changes they want to incorporate into their lives.

Furthermore, this study reconstructs the idea that the demonstration effect necessarily ends in the adoption of tourist conduct. If the demonstration effect is understood as a process rather than necessarily a behavioural state, it encompasses individual desire or only intentions to adopt such behaviours. Whilst some local people may be willing to be like tourists in certain ways, local conditions such as educational levels, socioeconomic and cultural structures, social constraints, and personal beliefs and attitudes, to mention just a few, may deter locals from adopting new behaviours. The demonstration effect thus may not always necessarily "materialise".

Additionally, one more contribution of this study is the finding that, in local people's mind, tourism is not always a factor in behavioural change, or at least not the only one. Some local people are clearly aware that in tourism destinations other forces, commonly extrinsic, may lead them to either collective or individual sociocultural change. This may become an opportunity for improvement or a challenge to face for tourism decision makers, the tourism industry and other organisations since the perceived impacts of tourism may shape local people's predispositions to the phenomenon (Pearce et al., 1996). Examining the perceptions and attitudes of destination societies is helpful in identifying specific segments of support for or rejection of tourism; this becomes a relevant issue for destination planning and management purposes (Harrill, 2004: 256).

While this study offers evidence of the demonstration effect on local people, one specific aspect still needs special scholarly attention. The effects that the demonstrated behaviours of locals have on tourists have been largely ignored in tourism studies. Such effects can be examined from both tourists' and locals' perceptions. In this study, an example of the latter was provided by a political activist who claimed, "while we do learn from tourists, they also learn from us. They come and leave their money with us, but we teach them to value nature; we teach them to take care of the attractions that they come to visit, for example our beaches; we teach them to keep them clean". Both tourists and locals have much to say about how they perceive tourism has transformed their everyday lives socioculturally.

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