

SPEND MONEY AT SUSTAINABLE PLACES: A QUALITATIVE EXAM OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS IN WINTER SPORTS

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INTRODUCTION

There is little argument that when it comes to the ski industry both the consumer and the resort play a critical role in combating the effects of climate change. Despite evidence of a highly vulnerable industry susceptible to the effects of a changing climate, little is known about skiers environmental attitudes and how to influence more responsible behaviors that promote sustainable practices across the industry (Little & Needham, 2011.)

Winter recreationists and resorts have a unique opportunity to determine what best practices to improve sustainability in the ski industry. We looked at the perspectives, ideas and behaviors of skiers and snowboarders to determine what the best holistic approach to sustainability should be adopted and implemented. The purpose of this study is to examine the environmental attitude of individuals as well as specific actions winter recreationists feel are important to achieve more sustainable behaviors, and how resorts can promote more sustainable management practices.

METHODS

Respondents (N = 147) were recruited using a convenience sample of students enrolled in university skiing and snowboarding classes. Our questionnaire consisted of 15 items from an adapted version of the New Ecological Paradigm (Dunlap 2000) to determine skiers' and snowboarders' environmental attitudes. In addition, we asked two open ended questions that were analyzed qualitatively:

1. "The most important thing ski resorts can do to promote sustainability is _____?"
2. "The most important thing skiers and snowboarders can do to promote sustainability is _____?"

Respondents' narrative were analyzed qualitatively for patterns and themes. These themes were then compared to the data until a coding scheme had been constructed (Strauss & Corbin 1990). Data that provided no room for interpretation was coded as such. Data that provided no room for interpretation was coded as such. Data analysis revealed 4 major themes including; transportation, education, minimal ecological impact and waste management. (See Charts Below)

Demographic Information of Respondents			
Gender		Education	
Female	43.8%	High school graduate or GED	8.9%
Male	56.5%	Some college but no degree	33.8%
		Associate degree	21.0%
		Bachelor's degree	17.8%
		Master's degree	9.6%
Age			
18-24	53.5%		
25-29	12.1%		
30-34	3.8%		
35-39	1.3%		
40-44	5.7%		
45-49	3.2%		
50-54	4.5%		
55-59	1.9%		
60-64	3.2%		
65+	2.5%		
Income			
		Less than \$10,000	7.0%
		\$10,000 to \$19,999	13.4%
		\$20,000 to \$29,999	8.9%
		\$30,000 to \$39,999	3.8%
		\$40,000 to \$49,999	4.5%
		\$50,000 to \$59,999	1.9%
		\$60,000 to \$69,999	6.4%
		\$70,000 to \$79,999	3.2%
		\$80,000 to \$89,999	5.1%
		\$90,000 to \$99,999	8.9%
		\$100,000 to \$149,999	13.4%
		\$150,000 or more	11.5%
Race			
Asian	3.8%		
African American	1.9%		
Pacific Islander	2.5%		
Other	5.1%		
White	83.4%		

DISCUSSION

Even though environmental awareness has increased over the last 10 years (Stoddart, 2011), our findings show that there was not a particularly strong environment attitude among skiers and snowboarders ($M = 3.18, SD = .43$). A mean score of 3.0 -5.0 indicates a more eco-centric view, whereas a mean score between 1.0-3.0 indicates a more anthropocentric view (Ogunbode, 2013).

- Sustainability Education: One participant summed up what 18.82% of respondents thought by saying "Be aware of the impacts they're making. Get educated about it and practice what they learn." Many survey responses showed that being informed, aware and educated would promote sustainability. The most popular response for what resorts could do, at 20.65%, is promote, advertise and educate the public about sustainability. One participant said "Inform patrons of their environmental impacts and seek input on how to better their practices." This shows that together the participants are trying to gain information about what is going on and what they can do. Survey participants show they think resorts should be providing that information. One participant said "Inform patrons of their environmental impacts and seek input on how to better their practices."
- Public Transportation: The most popular response with 30.59% of respondents, thought they could "try to carpool or use public transportation" to promote sustainability. There were 14.13% of respondents that thought resorts should provide public transportation.
- Recycling and Waste Management: 12.94% of those taking the survey said it would be important if they participated in recycling and waste management. "Don't trash the environment. If you brought it, take it out with you when you leave." 10.87% said it was important for resorts to have good recycling and waste management systems. For example, one participant recommended "offer recycling and renewable products." This shows that participants are suggesting they take responsibility for recycling and waste management as well as the reports.
- Minimal Ecological Impact: 7.06% of winter sports participants said "respect the mountain," 5.88% said "stay in resort"/"stay on trails" and 5.88% thought minimal environmental changes would be a way they could promote sustainability. There were also 15.22% of those being surveyed who said resorts could promote sustainability by minimal ecological impacts. One participant had a great suggestion for ski resorts. "Plant native vegetation over disturbed soil areas. For every tree cut for a run, plan double somewhere else." This shows the local environment, vegetation and wildlife should be considered while making recreation decisions.



RESULTS

Figure 1. Perceptions of what skiers and snowboarders can do to promote the sustainability of the industry

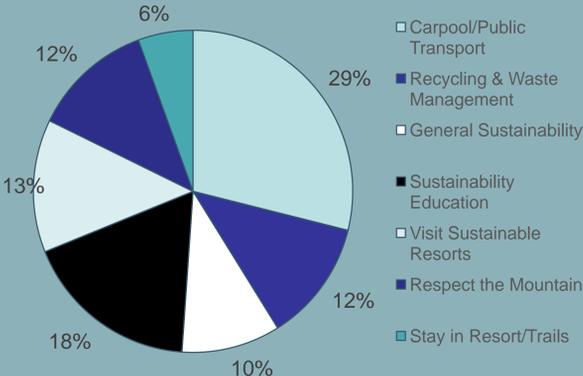
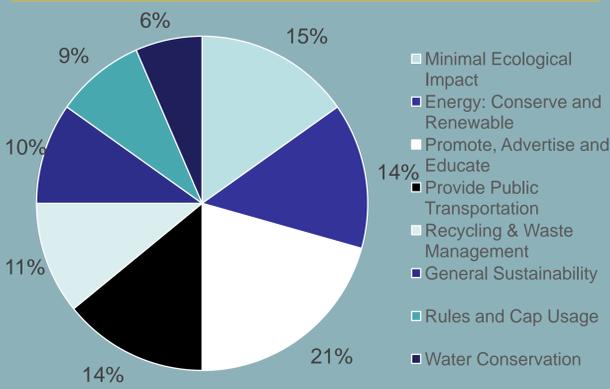


Figure 2. Perceptions of what ski resorts can do to promote sustainability in the industry



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BEST PRACTICES

We found through this survey that there are many ways we can improve sustainability. If more people became aware and felt the need to change their ways we could make a big change in our environment to improve sustainability in the long run. Our findings support that the best practices for resorts and people aligns with the Sustainable Slope Charter including:

- Green Your Ride: shift to sustainable transportation
- Focus On Energy: conserve and go renewable
- Reduce Waste: offering more recyclable products
- Engage Your Local Ski Area: educate guests