

## Post-trip philanthropic intentions of nature-based tourists in Galapagos

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Researchers and practitioners often highlight the potential for nature-based tourism and environmental conservation to function symbiotically, with favourable outcomes for visitors and the environment alike. This paper draws on data from two sets of passengers on weeklong cruises in the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador to explore philanthropic intentions resulting from such nature-based tourism experiences. Our findings suggest that the Galapagos experience fosters enjoyment of the environment, new knowledge about that environment, an affective connection with the environment and the local wildlife, and an interest in sharing those connections with others – trip characteristics that are related with intentions to philanthropically support environmental conservation in the Galapagos. Visitors in this study also exhibited values that related to the amounts they were willing to donate in support of a philanthropic fund for the islands' conservation needs. This study contributes to the emerging scholarship on travel-related conservation behaviour and travel philanthropy.

**Keywords:** nature-based tourism; ecotourism; behavioural intentions; conservation behaviour; travel philanthropy; Galapagos

### 1. Introduction

According to figures from the United Nations World Tourism Organization, tourism is one of the four largest exports on the planet, accounting for nearly \$1.4 trillion annually (2014). As the environmental consequences of this enormous industry are well documented (e.g. Holden & Fennell, 2013), researchers remain keenly interested in exploring ways of increasing the sustainability of tourism and reducing its impact on the environment. One promising line of research explores the role of tourism on conservation-related philanthropy (Honey, 2011), which is somewhat unique in its opportunity to engage visitors in supporting environmentally related efforts both within the tourism site as well as once tourists return home. Yet, despite several recent contributions (e.g. Goodwin, McCombes, & Eckardt, 2009; Honey, 2011; Powell & Ham, 2008), understanding the relationship of ecotourism with subsequent pro-environmental behaviours – especially philanthropic support of conservation – remains a largely unexplored, under-theorised area of research. Little peer-reviewed scholarship exists about the outcomes of nature-based tourism and

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ecotourism that occur outside of these activities' direct impacts on the destination during relatively narrow timeframes of the tourist visit (Ardoin, Wheaton, Bowers, Hunt, & Durham, 2015).

This paper makes an empirical contribution to the emerging scholarship on environmentally related travel philanthropy. We present the pertinent findings of a research effort to explore the outcomes of travel on conservation behaviour in the Galapagos Archipelago of Ecuador. Our research was driven by the question: how do the characteristics of the tourism experience and of the tourists drawn to the Galapagos relate to the tourists' intentions to contribute philanthropically in support of conservation-related initiatives in the Islands? Our analyses provide insight into key trip and visitor characteristics related to the tourists' intentions to provide philanthropic support that result from their Galapagos visit.

### **1.1. Literature review: tourism, conservation and philanthropy**

Since Budowski (1976) first suggested that a symbiotic relationship might exist between tourism and conservation, researchers and practitioners have explored the potential for nature-based tourism to have favourable outcomes for visitors and the environment alike. The potential for such a mutually beneficial relationship was initially explored through the lens of 'alternative tourism' (Smith & Eadington, 1992; Stronza, 2001). Yet, by the 1990s, the tourism industry responded to international calls for sustainable development – most notably in the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) – by putting its support behind the newly defined concept of ecotourism (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987). As a niche form of nature-based tourism, differentiated by its explicit support for conservation efforts, ecotourism became the fastest growing sector of the tourism industry, seeing enormous growth in the 1990s (Honey, 2008). Not surprisingly, scholarship on the topic grew at a parallel pace (Stronza, 2008).

As the scholarship on nature-based tourism – and ecotourism, in particular – expanded, also evident were 'competing and conflicting schools of thought' (Higham, 2007), as well as paradoxes in the notion of ecotourism (Higham & Luck, 2007). In brief, using tourism to support conservation is challenging as it draws visitors to the very places it purports to protect. Although both detractors and proponents of ecotourism agree that it can serve as a powerful tool for protecting biodiversity without undermining that biodiversity's existence (Agrawal & Redford, 2006; Stronza & Durham, 2008), debates about ecotourism's inherent contradiction persist (Fletcher, 2014; Hunt, Durham, Driscoll, & Honey, 2014). However, one element that is consistently underrepresented in these debates is any enduring influence that nature-based tourism experiences potentially may have on travellers' post-trip environmental behaviour (Ballantyne, Packer, & Falk, 2010; Beaumont, 2001; Orams, 1997). With so little empirical work conducted on the topic to date (Ardoin et al., 2015), more understanding is needed about the environmental consequences that may be set in motion as a result of the nature-based tourism experience.

One behaviour that researchers and practitioners are increasingly recognising as having consequences for the environment is travel-related philanthropy. Defined as 'the donating of money, in-kind resources, or time, occasioned by or facilitated by travel' (Goodwin et al., 2009, p. 11), travel philanthropy is often designed to contribute directly to the needs of destinations. Industry recognition of travel's influence on financial donations to destinations has existed for years, and organisations such as the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) and Sustainable Travel International (STI) – both of which are dedicated to enhancing sustainability and responsibility within the travel industry – now provide

guidelines (e.g. Global Giving, 2014; STI, 2008), handbooks with contributions from worldwide researchers and practitioners (Honey, 2011), and international symposiums about travel-related philanthropy. Yet despite the advocacy and practitioner enthusiasm, many travel philanthropy efforts proceed without a substantive theoretical understanding of how traveller and trip characteristics empirically relate to tourists' philanthropic intentions.

Goodwin et al. (2009) identified reasons that compel travel companies to engage in philanthropy: (1) altruistic motives to contribute to the conservation of the destination or to help local communities; (2) an enlightened self-interest motivation, recognising that, if destinations are to be maintained, investment is required; and (3) an ethical motivation, wherein the philanthropic support fits with the ethos of the company providing the travel opportunity, thus reinforcing and enhancing the company's brand. Similar reasoning may be true for visitors: philanthropy enhances visitors' sense of self and aligns with visitors' desires to contribute to local conservation efforts. Ham (2011, p. 141) encourages successful travel philanthropy as 'an experiential product that leads travellers to care about the place, and then give them an opportunity in the immediate time frame to act on their caring'; research is beginning to demonstrate the influence of travellers' level of caring and the role of trustworthy, on-site messaging on travellers' intentions to donate (Sgalitzer, 2013).

Yet, as Honey (2011) notes, travellers' philanthropy is not just about 'collecting loose change for charities', but rather it helps tourism businesses become involved as 'good citizens' in the destinations where they work; it assists local projects with a 'hand up', not a 'hand out', by promoting social empowerment, education, and entrepreneurship in an effort to foster longer-term sustainable conservation and development of destinations; and it also enriches the travel experience for visitors through 'meaningful, culturally sensitive, and productive interactions with people in host communities'. The underlying premise of travel philanthropy is that the direct experience offered by travel 'leads to the realization that the traveller or holidaymaker could make a difference, and often results in a strong motivation to put something back' (Goodwin et al., 2009, p. 14). As Barnes and Eagles (2004) note, these motivations may be especially strong in the context of ecotourism and nature-based travel.

In their review of scholarship on charitable giving, Bekkers and Weipking (2010) confirm that awareness of a need is the critical motive for philanthropy, regardless of the arena in which it takes place. Travel provides an ideal opportunity for stimulating philanthropy by first introducing travellers to conservation needs in the destinations and then providing those travellers with direct, personal connections to the people, ecosystems, and wildlife within those destinations. Pro-environmental behavioural outcomes resulting from nature-based tourism are particularly likely when the visitors' special interests are aligned with the needs of the people and place (Ardoin et al., 2015; Sgalitzer, 2013). With many tour operators and associated enterprises well-positioned to provide such personal connections, resulting philanthropy can be substantial (Barnes & Eagles, 2004). One estimate of philanthropic support stimulated by a single international tour operator, Thomas Cook, indicates that more than \$7.7 million in travel-related donations were reported between 2005 and 2009 (Goodwin et al., 2009). Furthermore, Goodwin et al. (2009) estimate that \$249 million in philanthropic donations were raised by just 39 companies in this manner.

One particularly innovative example in the travel philanthropy sector has been Lindblad Expeditions, which developed targeted communication strategies to solicit philanthropic support for the Charles Darwin Foundation (CDF) (Ham, 2011), an international nonprofit

organisation based in Puerto Ayora, Galapagos, and Quito, Ecuador. CDF undertakes natural and social science research, as well as community-based projects, in Galapagos ([www.cdf.org](http://www.cdf.org)). As a result of the communication strategies during Lindblad's one-week Galapagos tours, average philanthropy nearly quadrupled from \$1800 to \$6700 per Galapagos tour (Ham, 2011). In just its first decade, this travel philanthropy programme raised over \$4.5 million to support local conservation efforts of the Charles Darwin Research Station and the Galapagos National Park (Ham, 2011). Through its partnership with National Geographic, Lindblad Expeditions implements similar strategies in all of its nature-based travel regions, including the Amazon, Central America, Baja California, Antarctica, the Arctic Svalbard, Alaska, Vietnam, and Cambodia (Lindblad Expeditions, 2015).

Beyond the practitioner accounts, scholarship on travel-related philanthropy remains nascent. Although Honey (2011) has assembled a set of descriptive case studies from travel philanthropy practitioners, much of knowledge about travel-related philanthropy remains either anecdotal or conceptual (Goodwin et al., 2009). The majority of scholarship on the subject of philanthropy is conducted outside of the tourism context, focusing on the characteristics of those engaging in philanthropic behaviour more generally and the variables that influence their intentions to give (Bekkers & Weipking, 2010). Scholars still have little knowledge about how philanthropy may manifest differently in the travel and tourism context, and we know even less about travel-induced philanthropy in support of environmental conservation.

From the scholarship that more broadly addresses pro-environmental behaviours resulting from nature-based tourism, we know that this form of travel can contribute to enhancing travellers' (a) overall sense of connection with the environment, (b) emotional connections to wildlife and places visited, (c) interest in, and knowledge of, scientific principles, and (d) commitment to undertaking positive behaviours on behalf of the environment (Ardoin et al., 2015; Ham & Weiler, 2002; Powell, 2005; Powell & Ham, 2008). Studies in this area have documented pro-environmental behavioural actions resulting from nature-based tourism experiences, including undertaking citizen science projects while on site, joining conservation groups, and returning to similar nature-based tourism sites or parks (Ardoin et al., 2015). Given the anecdotal indications that similar mechanisms explain pro-environmental philanthropic intentions after nature-based tourism experiences (Goodwin et al., 2009; Honey, 2011; Sgalitzer, 2013), this paper explores how the characteristics of travellers, as well as nature-based experiences that have been linked to other pro-environmental behaviours, may also be related to pro-environmental philanthropy. More specifically, this study examines how the attitudes and knowledge of visitors to the Galapagos Islands, as well as their satisfaction with the trip experience, relate to their intentions to provide philanthropic support to local conservation initiatives in that destination.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. *The study context*

The Galapagos Islands are globally significant, biologically and culturally, as evidenced by their status as the first site to be listed, in 1978, as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (UNESCO, 2007). Because of their renowned flora and fauna, as well as their celebrated scientific history and particular influence on Charles Darwin, the Galapagos Islands provide an incredible opportunity for science and environmental education, connecting people to nature and natural heritage, and bringing about philanthropic as well as other environmentally friendly behavioural outcomes of tourism (Durham, 2008).

Tourism to Galapagos began in earnest in the early 1970s when Metropolitan Touring began to offer week-long tours on passenger ships. Since 1970, tourism in the islands has grown and continues to grow exponentially (deGroot, 1983; Hoyman & McCall, 2013; PNG, 2013) (Figure 1). As of 2013, a total of 204,395 registered tourists arrived in Galapagos (PNG, 2013). This is more than eight times the current population of the islands of 25,124 and was a principal cause of UNESCO's (2007) addition of the Galapagos Islands to its list of *World Heritage Sites in Danger* (Garcia, Orellana, & Araujo, 2012).

Of the more than 200,000 people who visit Galapagos each year, nearly 60% participate in live-aboard cruise ship tourism (Garcia, Rangel, & Auxiliadora Fariás, 2012). As of 2010, there were 84 live-aboard boats registered for operation in Galapagos; the boats ranged in capacity from 8 to 100 passengers (Garcia, Rangel, et al., 2012). Although there are recent indications that an island-hopping model of visitation to Galapagos –

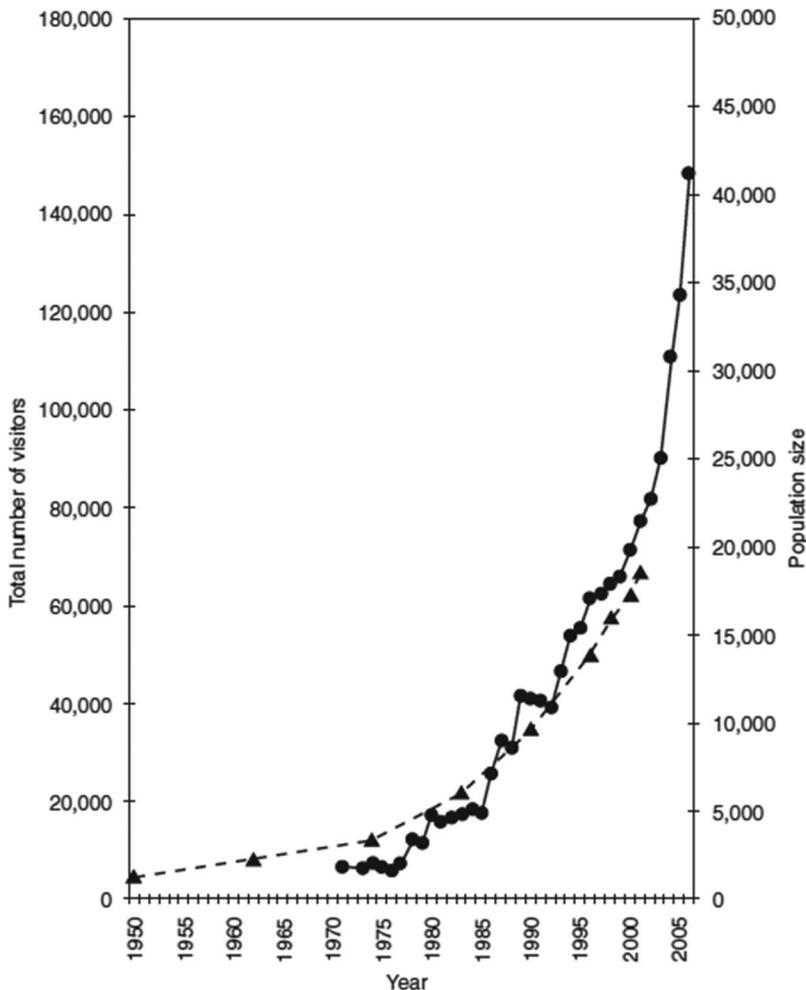


Figure 1. The rapid increase in tourism and resident population in the Galapagos Islands. Shown here are the total number of visitors to the islands (circles, solid line) according to records of the Galapagos National Park, plus the resident human population of inhabited islands (triangles, dotted line), according to national census data.

relying primarily on accommodations offered in Puerto Ayora and Puerto Baquerizo Moreno – is growing in popularity, local Galapagos officials are countering this trend with a dedicated effort to promote ‘slow travel’ in the Islands (Garcia, Orellana, et al., 2012). Thus, it is anticipated that the live-aboard tourism model will remain an important, if not the dominant, form of international tourism in the Galapagos; therefore, this form of visitation is the focus of our current study.

Although the number of passengers aboard these floating hotels can vary, the week-long, ship-based tours of Galapagos, otherwise, have very similar and predictable characteristics. All passengers arrive from the Ecuadorian mainland to one of two local airports: Baltra Airport on Santa Cruz Island or San Cristobal Airport in the town of Puerto Baquerizo Moreno on the island of San Cristobal. Passengers typically are greeted by their tour operator representatives, who escort them via bus to a nearby port for embarkation on the vessel. Galapagos National Park guidelines require that naturalist guides escort tourists in groups of 15 or fewer throughout their entire itinerary in the Islands. The naturalist guides are officially certified by the Galapagos National Park after completing a standardised training programme, and the guides are responsible for enforcing all park rules during the nature-based excursions on the islands, walks in the park, and snorkelling or diving experiences. The Galapagos National Park also works closely with registered tour operators to strictly enforce visitation calendars for each visitor site. This management practice virtually eliminates issues of visitor or tour operator crowding at any particular site at a given time. These park guidelines maintain visitor experience while also preserving the ecological integrity of the sites. In these ways, the experiences of all of the travellers participating in week-long tours are largely consistent across the 84 vessels registered to operate in the Islands.

## **2.2. Participant selection and data collection**

The first criterion we used to select study participants was that they travelled with a tour operator that offers week-long tours of the islands. Our participants travelled on a one-week circuit tour, embarking – and later disembarking – near the Baltra Airport, on a 100-passenger cruise vessel. While on their tour throughout the archipelago, each day visitors are offered multiple structured excursions to numerous individual islands for guided walks, near-shore (or near-boat) snorkel outings, and interpretive rides on smaller inflatable raft boats to observe the diverse wildlife and geology of the islands.

A second factor critical to our choice of research participants was that they travelled with a company with an explicit link between their operations and philanthropic support of environmental conservation. The company whose passengers participated in this study maintains a partnership with a US-based, non-governmental organisation for the purposes of providing philanthropic support of conservation in Galapagos. This partnership has supported a range of locally based activities including, for example, programmes that provide environmental education in local schools, work to eradicate invasive species, construct interpretive nature trails, and conserve tortoise habitat as well as support captive hatching programmes. This company provided our research team with access to tour passengers on the condition that we provide recommendations for how the company could better capitalise on travel philanthropy opportunities.

In May 2012, two members of our research team travelled to Ecuador to visit the island-based projects that had been supported through the philanthropic fund, participate in a week-long tour of the islands, and survey the company’s boat passengers on two separate week-long tours. The data presented in this paper were gathered in surveys of these two sets

of passengers. We administered a survey instrument to passengers immediately following their cruise experience as they disembarked in the Baltra Airport and awaited their return flights to the Ecuadorian mainland. The tour operator who serves this group of travellers maintains a private waiting room for their passengers; thus, participants were able to complete the surveys in this setting, without feeling rushed. The three-page survey was provided in paper format and took, on average, 15 minutes to complete.

The data collected in our survey were gathered primarily using measures developed in other published research and in alignment with recent studies (cf. Ardoin et al., 2015):

- (1) Visitors' attitudes, self-efficacy, and knowledge of environment and conservation through six items, adapted from Ballantyne, Packer, and Falk (2011)
- (2) Visitors' satisfaction related to various elements of the tour through 11 items, also adapted from Ballantyne et al. (2011)
- (3) Visitor demographics
- (4) Behavioural intentions via yes/no and free-list items
- (5) Visitors' perceptions of the conservation needs in Galapagos via a three-item list;
- (6) Visitors' willingness to make philanthropic donations in support of perceived conservation needs via a yes/no item
- (7) The dollar amount that respondents would be willing to donate in support of those perceived conservation needs in Galapagos

During the two weeks of data collection, all cruise passengers were approached to participate in this study. Although the boat operated at close to capacity in each of these two weeks, of those approached, 115 individuals completed at least part of the post-cruise survey. Response rate was lower than the total passenger count since, often, one member of a couple completed the survey on behalf of both individuals. Nevertheless, 115 surveys from a potential of 200 passengers reflects approximately a 57.5% response rate. This assessment of a week-long experience, our overall N value, and our response rate is consistent with – and even exceeds the standards for – research on pro-environmental behavioural intentions resulting from nature-based tourism experiences (Ardoin et al., 2015). The analyses here focus on the data from cruise passengers who provided complete information to items related to the dependent variable: philanthropic intentions (Figure 2).

### 2.3. Data analysis

The quantitative survey data were analysed using SPSS Version 21. Independent samples *t*-tests were used to determine whether visitors intending to change their behaviour and those willing to donate were statistically different from those visitors who were unwilling to donate, with respect to the independent variables: demographics, conservation attitudes, self-efficacy, action-related knowledge, and trip experience ratings. ANOVAs were then used to compare means scores for different independent variables on the five possible responses to the measure of 'willingness to pay to support conservation'.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Passenger characteristics

The visitors who responded to the survey were relatively evenly split by gender (57% of the respondents identified themselves as female; 43% as male). Similar to other studies

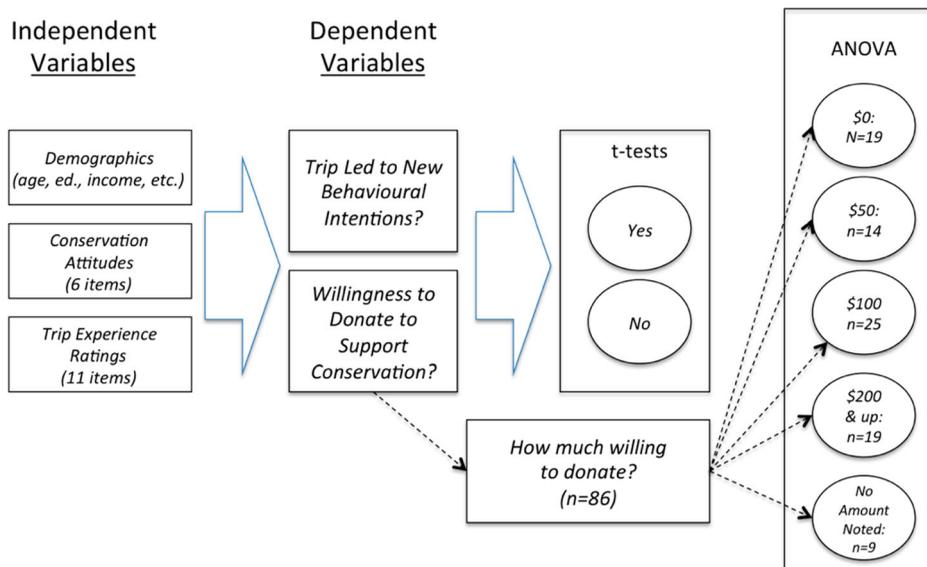


Figure 2. Analysis of variables related to philanthropic intentions of passengers.

of Galapagos visitors (e.g. Powell & Ham, 2008), the respondents were fairly homogenous in terms of age, income, ethnicity, and educational characteristics. The average age of visitors was 59, with the range being between 19 and 80 years old. Nearly half (46%) of the visitors were in their 60s. The overwhelming majority of these visitors identified themselves as Caucasian/White (95%); the remaining 5% identified as being of Chinese, Filipino, or other racial/ethnic backgrounds. With regard to income, 64% of the visitors reported a yearly household income of over US\$100,000, with 38% reporting a yearly household income of over US\$200,000. Notably, only 6% reported earning under US\$40,000 annually. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of the visitors in our sample held at least a bachelor's degree; 41% of the respondents reported having earned advanced degrees.

The majority of the visitors included in our sample were from North America: 47% from the United States and 32% from Canada, with the remainder being from the UK (16%), South Africa (3%), Belgium (2%), and Greece (1%). Age, income, ethnicity, race, and educational characteristics were, however, not statistically related to visitors' reported behavioural intentions in the post-trip surveys, including their intentions to donate to a philanthropic fund in support of conservation, or the amount that they would be willing to give in support of conservation.

### 3.2. Perceived conservation needs

In our survey, we asked visitors to list three Galapagos National Park conservation measures they felt needed the most support. The conservation effort mentioned by the most respondents (82%) was native species preservation. In particular, tourists were interested in measures to protect and propagate endemic species, both plants and animals, including the eradication of invasive species. Nearly a dozen people mentioned turtles/tortoises, specifically Lonesome George, the iconic Pinta Island tortoise who died just a few weeks after our survey was administered.

The second most commonly mentioned conservation effort perceived to be in need of support was tourism/human impact control, with 55% of respondents indicating that this was a major concern. In the words of one visitor, 'Limit of human effects – limit visitors'. At least one respondent commented on the ramifications of this measure, writing, 'Reduce the human exposure to the wildlife, but that would be a shame for the naturalists of the world'.

The next most common conservation effort listed was control and clean-up of pollution, from both the tourist industry and the local population, mentioned by 43% of visitors.

Some respondents specifically mentioned the impact of Galapagos residents. Efforts to control population growth and urban development were highlighted by 18% of visitors as needing more support. About one-tenth (9%) noted initiatives outside of the islands. A few visitors (7%) stated a need for increased funding for conservation efforts, whether through fees or donations and highlighted the need for increased efforts to grow local involvement in, and support for, conservation. More than one-quarter (27%) of respondents indicated the need for additional education and research surrounding Galapagos' conservation issues. Some respondents focused on the need for more education among local residents; others highlighted the need for more education initiatives with visitors or outside of the islands (Table 1).

### 3.3. *Willingness to philanthropically support perceived conservation needs*

The final section of the post-trip survey focused on one particular behavioural intention of Galapagos visitors: philanthropic support of what they perceived to be the conservation needs in the islands. After identifying three conservation efforts in need of support, as described in the above sub-section, we asked respondents, 'If there were a philanthropic fund to establish the three actions you listed, would you contribute to it? Yes or No'. Of the 86 visitors who answered this question, 67 (73%) selected 'yes' and 19 (22%) selected 'no'.

*T*-tests indicate that the three items related to attitudes towards nature and conservation (expressing concern for the well-being of flora and fauna in general; agreeing that conservation issues are meaningful; and wanting to protect and conserve marine environments) were significantly related to a willingness to donate in support of conservation (Figure 2, right column), while the other three items (feeling as though one has the ability to conserve resources; understanding the impact of one's actions on the environment; and knowing actions one can take to help protect natural places) were not significantly related to intention to donate in support of conservation. With respect to ratings of the trip experience, only 3 of 11 items were significantly related to intentions to donate: learning new things about conservation; sharing that information with others; and enjoying the physical surroundings (Table 1).

### 3.4. *Amount willing to donate to conservation*

After being asked whether they would be willing to donate to a philanthropic fund in support of perceived conservation needs, study participants were then asked to indicate the amount they would be willing to donate. The average amount these respondents were willing to contribute was \$150; summing the actual amounts, the 58 visitors indicated a willingness to donate a total of \$8700.

When participants were coded into one of five categories based on the amount they were willing to donate to conservation, an ANOVA revealed few significant findings in relation

Table 1. Results related to attitudes, self-efficacy, knowledge, and trip ratings.

Attitudes, self-efficacy, and action-related knowledge towards conservation	Do you intend to do anything differently with regard to the environment?					If there were a philanthropic fund to establish the three actions you listed, would you contribute to it?				
	Mean 'yes'	'no'	df	t	sig.	Mean 'yes'	Mean 'no'	df	t	sig.
I am concerned about the well-being of flora and fauna in general.	6.44	5.89	107	3.258	.002*	6.35	5.91	83	2.088	.040*
Nature conservation issues are meaningful to me.	6.57	5.93	108	4.771	.000*	6.41	5.95	84	2.514	.014*
I want to do everything I can to protect and conserve marine environments.	6.51	5.67	108	5.135	.000*	6.25	5.73	84	2.190	.031*
I feel that I have the ability to conserve resources.	6.15	5.74	108	2.095	.038*	6.14	5.77	84	1.475	.144
I understand the impact of my actions on the environment.	6.57	6.05	108	3.810	.000*	6.38	6.14	84	1.340	.184
I know actions I can take to help protect natural places.	6.36	5.91	108	2.738	.007*	6.25	6.00	84	1.177	.242
<i>Trip ratings</i>										
I was able to get a good view of the animals.	6.85	6.75	108	.986	.326	6.88	6.73	84	1.499	.138
There was plenty of activity to see.	6.79	6.54	108	1.898	.060	6.73	6.59	84	1.009	.316
I had an enjoyable experience.	6.83	6.73	106	1.070	.287	6.83	6.68	83	1.250	.215
I found the activities strenuous.	3.70	3.32	108	1.120	.265	3.5	3.95	84	-1.056	.294
The guides were engaging.	6.69	6.58	105	1.138	.258	6.66	6.67	81	-.044	.965
I learned something new about animals and/or their habitats.	6.83	6.68	108	1.368	.174	6.83	6.59	84	1.650	.103
I learned something new about conservation issues.	6.52	5.78	103	3.391	.001*	6.40	5.73	83	2.697	.008*
I felt an emotional connection with the animal/s I saw.	6.26	5.25	108	3.934	.000*	6.05	5.55	84	1.681	.096
Something I saw in relation to the wildlife made me feel sad.	5.13	4.34	107	2.205	.030*	4.70	5.14	83	-9.56	.342
I discussed new information with my companions.	6.44	5.89	107	2.951	.004*	6.41	5.86	83	2.703	.008*
I enjoyed looking at the surroundings.	6.91	6.64	107	3.067	.003*	6.89	6.57	83	3.162	.002*

\*Significance at  $p < .05$ .

to trip ratings and attitudes towards conservation (Table 1). Consistent with the *t*-tests related to the yes/no indication of willingness to donate in support of conservation, only the three attitude items were significantly related to different amounts tourists were willing to donate: I am concerned about the well-being of flora and fauna in general ( $p = .035$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $f = 2.727$ ); nature conservation issues are important to me ( $p = .023$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $f = 3.017$ ); and I want to do everything I can to protect and conserve marine environments ( $p = .040$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $f = 2.390$ ).

#### 4. Discussion

The results presented here suggest that travel experiences in Galapagos may encourage visitors to consider different and potentially novel behaviours. Given the option, these new behaviours may manifest as donating money in support of perceived conservation needs in the tourism site. These findings align with research that indicates that the spike in interest, knowledge, and, particularly, motivation that occurs during nature-based tourism experiences can manifest in environmentally friendly behaviour (Powell, Kellert, & Ham, 2008). The findings also support research demonstrating that attitudes towards the environment can translate into an intention to donate in support of conservation organisations in the tourism site (Adelman, Falk, & James, 2000; Ballantyne et al., 2010, 2011; Sgalitzer, 2013).

Through a range of variables interacting on the trip – including direct contact with nature and wildlife (Kellert, 2005), interpretation provided by naturalist guides (Ham & Weiler, 2002), and other aspects of the trip (Ballantyne et al., 2011) – the Galapagos cruise experience we examined appears to have a positive effect on visitors' relationships with nature and their sense of being capable of making a difference related to the environment. This 'connection to nature' effect, combined with newly acquired environmental knowledge, contributes to visitors' expressed intentions to donate in support of conservation of the Galapagos environment. In our data, enjoying that environment, learning about it, and sharing that information with others are linked with intention to donate. Yet, those factors do not appear to influence the amount that visitors are willing to give. Rather, the level of concern for nature that certain visitors exhibited best explained differences in their willingness to donate.

Furthermore, the fact that willingness to donate was significantly related to the statement, 'I discussed new information with my companions', suggests that the social element of discussions – both from a learning perspective as well as the normative aspects of behaviour – may influence willingness to donate. Thus, our findings suggest that tour operators interested in promoting conservation-related philanthropy might consider multiple steps towards this behaviour as important: fostering emotional connections between visitors and animals, introducing visitors to conservation issues in the destination, and then encouraging visitors to talk not only with their naturalist guides, but also with their companions, about these issues and connections.

Yet, not all visitors in our sample expressed new behavioural intentions as a result of their Galapagos experience. Just over half of the individuals did not indicate any new behavioural intentions, nor did they express interest in philanthropic support of conservation in Galapagos. Some of these visitors appeared to exhibit the ceiling effect (Beaumont, 2001), volunteering explanations such as, 'I already do as much as I can'. Other non-significant statistical results suggest that those with a better understanding of the impact of their actions, and of the ways to offset that impact, may feel less inclined to philanthropically support the efforts of other people to address conservation needs. If they know of tangible actions they personally can take to support conservation, they may prefer to take

action in ways other than through providing philanthropic support to organisations conducting community- or conservation-related efforts. Other visitors may feel sceptical of their financial support disappearing into philanthropic ‘black holes’, as Ham (2011) found in his work on travellers’ philanthropy with visitors to both the Galapagos and Baja, Mexico. Further in-depth research related to these findings could offer insight into such concerns and opportunities.

Additionally, despite the significance of the *t*-tests of items related to behavioural and philanthropic intentions, in the ANOVA, fewer items demonstrated significant links to the amount that tourists were willing to donate. This implies that, not only are behaviours motivated by different factors, but also that these factors are likely to be distinct from those affecting the nature of the new behaviour undertaken or, in the present case, the amount one donates to philanthropy. Further investigation into what influences motivations to give versus what influences the amount suggests a promising future research path.

#### **4.1. Limitations**

Although this exploratory research provides an empirical contribution to the emerging scholarship on travel-related conservation philanthropy and behaviour, it suffers from several important limitations. Available time and resources led to less-than-ideal timing of the survey and nature of the sample. Surveys were conducted immediately after the trip. Yet, past nature-based tourism studies have demonstrated that a tour’s impact on behaviours decays rapidly after the experience (Ballantyne & Packer, 2011; Powell et al., 2008). In light of logistical limitations of maintaining contact with tourists originating in an assortment of countries after they have visited nature-based tourism destinations of interest, the challenges inherent in this research are consistent with those of other studies that assess travellers’ on-site behavioural intentions, rather than using direct measures of behaviour after the trip. Further thought, methodological sophistication, and technological support are needed to better document actual post-trip behaviours after nature-based tourism experiences (Ardoin et al., 2015). Delayed post-trip measures could further illuminate the nature of the decay of the trip experience over time.

Also as noted, the sample comprised passengers from a single tour operator in the Galapagos. Dozens of companies operate week-long cruises with park-certified interpretive nature guides in this location. Determining how representative our results are of the larger population of Galapagos visitors would require access to the clients of multiple tour operators. What is clear from the researchers’ time interacting with the cruise passengers is that many of these tourists are cruise veterans who are accustomed to travelling on ships with thousands of fellow passengers. If the ceiling effect is evident amongst the ‘hard’ or ‘minimalist’ ecotour visitors, then perhaps additional research could explore whether it occurs with this segment of ‘softer’ ecotravellers with whom nature-based tourism potentially may have the greatest influence on environmental behaviour and/or support for conservation (Weaver, 2005).

Although these findings are largely consistent with previous research, several questions remain. What can be done to better align tourists’ interests in environment and conservation, their willingness to engage in conservation-related behaviours, and actual follow-through with those behaviours once they return home? How might researchers and practitioners address the gap in willingness to participate in conservation action more broadly – and willingness to contribute to philanthropic funds on behalf of conservation, more specifically – and actual action? If logistical challenges can be addressed, then opportunities exist to build on these findings using quasi-experimental designs that test the

effectiveness of particular programmatic elements on the outcomes of interest (e.g. positive changes in attitudes towards, and knowledge about, nature, wildlife, and conservation; pro-environmental behaviour in the destination; pro-environmental behaviour at home; and philanthropy). Such research would greatly inform interpretive programme design and associated conservation philanthropy in nature-based tourism destinations.

## 5. Conclusion

Nature-based travel can foster an appreciation for the sites experienced during the trip and, in turn, can expose visitors to threats and conservation-related issues facing destination sites. In the process, travel can introduce visitors to opportunities to make a difference directly through philanthropic support – a motive for philanthropic behaviour both in the travel context (Barnes & Eagles, 2004; Goodwin et al., 2009) and elsewhere (Bekkers & Weipking, 2010). In this way, nature-based tourism provides an opportunity for visitors to address pressing environmental issues. Like many nature-based tourism destinations, the Galapagos Islands are under great pressure resulting from a variety of conservation challenges. Through tours of the Galapagos Islands, tourists may become motivated to provide critically needed philanthropic support for conserving one of Earth's most unique ecosystems.

This research effort makes a humble, but empirical, contribution to the emerging body of scholarship on the role that travel plays in stimulating philanthropic support for destination needs. Our findings suggest that satisfaction with the trip experience affects one's willingness to give, whereas pre-existing values are more strongly associated with the amount one is willing to give. Although further research is needed to effectively connect trip and traveller characteristics not only to intentions, but also to observable philanthropic behaviour, these preliminary results suggest the importance of elements that enhance visitors' willingness to become engaged, such as the naturalist guides' interactions, on-board experiences, and social interactions with other visitors. Similar to past studies, these findings indicate that such experiential elements, when coupled with thoughtful pre- and post-visit support, can more effectively support visitor engagement in conservation and, particularly, travel philanthropy, in both the short and long terms.

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