



VANCOUVER ISLAND
UNIVERSITY

LOCAL VANCOUVER ISLAND TOURISM (LOVIT) PARTICIPATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP
TO QUALITY OF LIFE – AN EXPLORATORY THESIS RESEARCH PROJECT

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Presented as part of the requirement for the award of *MA* Degree in
Sustainable Leisure Management
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DECLARATION

This thesis is a product of my own work and is not the result of anything done in collaboration.

I agree that this Thesis may be available for reference and photocopying at the discretion of the University.

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ABSTRACT

This timely and relevant research project was an exploratory study of local Vancouver Island tourism participation and its relationship to quality of life for Vancouver Island residents. Examining sustainable leisure management from the perspective of how residents utilize and enjoy products and services deemed for tourists creates the opportunity for an enhanced understanding of the tourism industry on Vancouver Island. Linking that understanding to the study of quality of life for residents provides a more collaborative and innovative approach to how stakeholders can develop and market tourism to the benefit of the people that live, work, and play on Vancouver Island.

The qualitative data was collected through six semi-structured interviews with tourism industry stakeholders and one focus group of females in each of four separate communities across Vancouver Island during the summer of 2012. The richness of the information gathered formed the basis of a knowledge mobilization plan aimed at empowering residents to engage in truly sustainable tourism on the island they call home. This research was one of the first of its kind undertaken on Vancouver Island and the responses were both thoughtful and candid. Industry stakeholders and focus group participants were eager and appreciative of their inclusion in a discussion on local tourism and quality of life, as many had never been asked their opinions on this particular topic. Representing the supply side of tourism, industry stakeholders provided insight on the need to bring residents into conversations surrounding tourism. Focus group participants provided valuable information surrounding local tourism and quality of life from the demand perspective.

The term *local tourism* has yet to be clearly defined within the literature so through the collection and analysis of the data from this study, a definition has been created. Local tourism is tourism activity within the context of one's local community and is defined by the people within that community. Four local Vancouver Island tourism themes emerged from the analysis of data collected: people, emotions, activities, and places and spaces. When studying quality of life, the sense of space and pride of place the study participants have for the island is both embedded and explicit in their responses. When local tourism and quality of life were looked at together, the connection to place is overarching and is one of the key findings for the sustainability of simple, affordable, accessible local Vancouver Island tourism (LOVIT).

Joanne Schroeder, MA

Ken Hammer, PhD

Jenny Horn, PhD

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CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION

Leisure has the potential to create social cohesion, strengthen relationships, contribute to healthy lifestyles and improve quality of life. The benefits of leisure include, but are not limited to: balanced human development, social inclusion, improved personal health, reduction in self-destructive and anti-social behaviour, cohesive family relationships, reduction in health care, social service and police costs, increased self-esteem, enhanced community pride, and overall well being (Canadian Recreation/Parks Association, 1999; King, 2008; Minnaert, Maitland & Miler, 2009). Well being and quality of life indicators relate to individuals, communities, and society as a whole. Sustainable leisure management is about creating opportunities for individuals, communities and societies to reap the benefits of leisure participation. As 21st century researchers, academics and practitioners in the fields of leisure, tourism, and recreation, we are charged with the responsibility of creating and sustaining innovative and relevant leisure experiences. Leisure can take many forms, including but not limited to physical activity, participation in, and/or observation of arts, sports, and cultural activities, volunteering, day-to-day recreation activities, and tourism. Innovation in leisure relates to simplicity, affordability, and accessibility.

Participation in local tourism can provide an innovative opportunity to experience many of the same benefits as other forms of leisure. Through local tourism participation, residents can become more aware of local politics, ecosystems, flora and fauna, conservation efforts, arts and culture, parks and protected areas, and the residents in their neighbouring communities. The United Nations World Tourism Organization has recognized the value of domestic tourism (within one's own country) as being a complementary market to international tourism (2012). With the belief that all people should be able to enjoy the benefits of tourism participation (rest, discover new things, meet others, and have new experiences), domestic tourism is more accessible due to price and proximity of the product (Pierret, 2011). Domestic tourists often spend less per person, but overall expenditure is higher due to volume – in 2008 it was estimated that 83% of tourist activity could be categorized as domestic (ibid).

But one must ask if domestic tourism and local tourism are the same. Studies on *local tourism* are lacking, as is a definition of the term. This research argues that while the benefits of domestic tourism can be applied within a local context, local tourism is more focused on the geographical region surrounding one's own community and therefore requires its own definition. The perceptions of local tourism on Vancouver Island are examined from the perspective of tourism industry stakeholders and female residents, aged 30 – 39.

As the tourism industry continues to look for and create innovative, sustainable approaches to tourism development, local populations need to be involved at every stage. The European Commission's *European Sustainable Tourism* guidelines identify community well-being as one of the twelve aims, and "maintaining and enhancing community prosperity and quality of life in the face of change" (Notarstefano, 2007, p 5), as one of the eight challenges of sustainable tourism development. When examining quality of life indicators in relation to benefits of leisure (and therefore tourism) participation, the two appear closely tied, however more studies are needed to explore this connection.

In an effort to deepen the understanding of the relationship between local tourism, participation and quality of life, this timely, relevant thesis focused on tourism as a form of leisure - specifically, local tourism on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada (see Figure 1. Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada).



FIGURE 1.

VANCOUVER ISLAND, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

Vancouver Island Maps, 2012. Retrieved from:

http://www.vancouverislandmotels.ca/vancouver_island_maps.htm

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the research was:

To better understand what local tourism is on Vancouver Island and how participation in local tourism contributes to quality of life for Vancouver Island residents.

1.2 Objectives

The purpose was achieved using the following three objectives:

1. To explore how female, Vancouver Island residents, aged 30 – 39 years, and industry stakeholders perceive local tourism.
2. To document factors that contribute to quality of life for Vancouver Island residents, specifically females, aged 30 – 39 years.
3. To examine the relationship between local tourism participation and quality of life for Vancouver Island residents.

The literature reviewed provides a solid understanding of the research, discussions, and promotional efforts of both academia and industry with respect to Vancouver Island, local tourism, leisure participation, and quality of life. Without a generally accepted definition of what local tourism is, the tourism industry as a whole and on Vancouver Island in particular, is potentially missing a key contributor to the success of their industry. It is also clear that more research is needed on Vancouver Island resident travel patterns to allow the industry to connect with locals, respond more effectively to their needs, and strengthen the triple bottom line of sustainability. As an island community that prides itself on its livability, it is essential to understand more deeply what contributes to the high quality of life that Vancouver Islanders experience.

Based on the literature reviewed, and discussions with fellow researchers, tourism operators, academics and a regional destination management organization, the researcher utilized two methods of descriptive, qualitative data collection: semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The focus groups consisted of local tourism users (demand); the semi-structured interviews were conducted with local tourism stakeholders (supply).

The detailed analysis is described and displayed so the reader can visualize how the research was thematically categorized. Results of the research are described within each objective and are further explained in relation to new and emergent themes as they relate to the literature that is relevant to this study. The practical applications of this research are shared from both the focus group and industry stakeholder perspective and provide meaningful discussion on the relevancy of this topic of study. To further emphasize the value and relevancy of local Vancouver Island tourism participation and its relationship to quality of life for residents, a knowledge mobilization process was developed and is detailed in Appendix A. As

the researcher guides the reader through the study, the purpose of better understanding what local tourism is on Vancouver Island and how participation in local tourism contributes to quality of life for Vancouver Island residents will be explored and examined. The researcher cautions that while this study does provide value and meaning, the small sample size dictates that the purpose of this research was exploratory and the results are not generalizable.

CHAPTER 2.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To provide context for the research, it was necessary to first understand the location in which the study took place – Vancouver Island, British Columbia (BC). The Province of BC and Tourism Vancouver Island provide a wealth of information through official websites and publications for investors, visitors, and residents. The concepts of local tourism, participation, and quality of life have been researched to varying degrees and provide the background for the questions asked of the study participants and the basis for the analysis of data collected. A number of studies exist that examine domestic tourism (Hudson & Ritchie, 2002; McDonald & Murphy, 2007), some studies focus on the facilitators of, and constraints to leisure participation (Crawford, Jackson & Godbey, 1991; Raymore, 2002), and a large amount of research is devoted to quality of life (new economics foundation, 2008; World Health Organization, 2011; Quality of Life Research Unit, 2012). Where gaps in the literature were identified, the opportunity exists for new research to help contribute to the dynamic field of sustainable leisure management on Vancouver Island and across the globe (where applicable).

2.1 Vancouver Island

Vancouver Island is a tourism destination located on the West Coast of British Columbia, Canada. At over 30 000 square km, with 3 440 km of coastline, Vancouver Island is accessible by water and air only, making travel to and from the island cost-intensive, time consuming, and stressful for many of the approximately 783 000 residents (Province of BC, 2011). With a length of 460km and a width of 100km, Vancouver Island is similar in size to Taiwan or the Netherlands, making travel times and distances on the island relatively short (compared to off-island, or non-local travel). Canada's tallest waterfall (Della Falls), excellent salmon fishing, ancient rainforests, prime agricultural lands, and the mildest climate in Canada are just a few reasons why Vancouver Island is both a world-class tourism destination and an excellent place to work, live and play. Readers of *Travel & Leisure* voted Vancouver Island "the best island in the Continental US and Canada" and the tenth best island in the world (2012). Tourism on Vancouver Island is marketed worldwide through a regional destination management organization (Tourism Vancouver Island), a provincial destination marketing organization (Tourism BC), and the Canadian Tourism Commission. Tourism Vancouver Island has identified seven sub-regions of the island: North Island; North Central Island; Central Island; Pacific Rim; Cowichan; Gulf Islands; and South Island (see Figure 2. Map of Vancouver Island and its tourism sub-regions) each with unique attributes and demographics. The largest difference in regions could arguably be the North Island, which has the same geographical

boundaries as the Regional District of Mount Waddington, a population of less than 12 000, one-third of Vancouver Island’s land mass, and the lowest housing prices and tax rates on the island (Regional District of Mount Waddington, 2006) and the South Island with a population of 364 100, and the second highest housing prices in BC (Greater Victoria Development Agency, 2012).

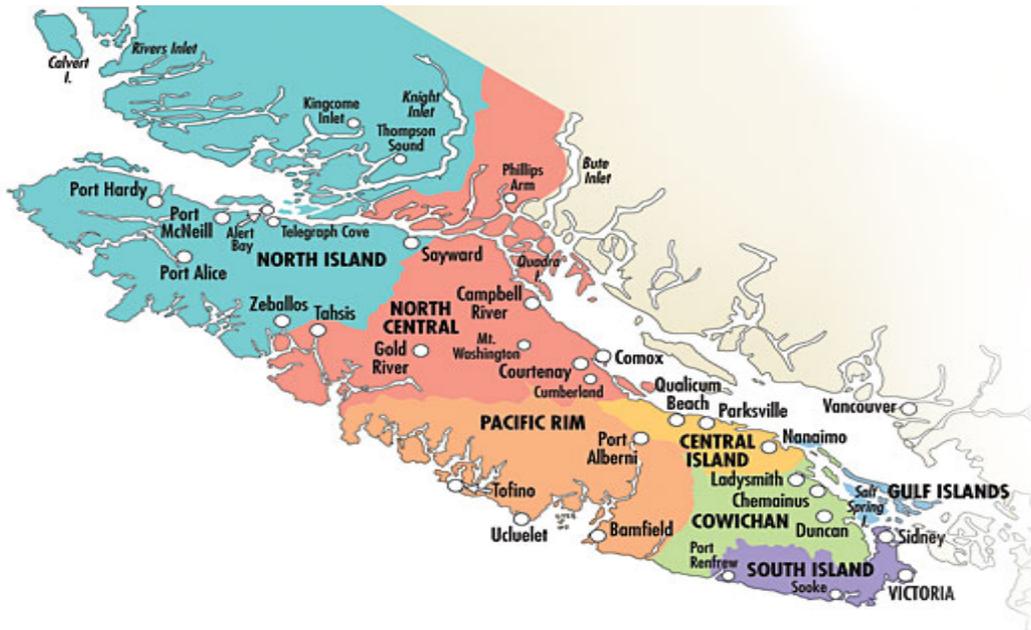


FIGURE 2.

MAP OF VANCOUVER ISLAND AND ITS TOURISM SUB-REGIONS

Tourism Vancouver Island, 2012. Vancouver Island Tourism – Vancouver Island Vacation & Travel Guide. Retrieved from: <http://www.vancouverisland.travel/regions/>.

This diversity is also reflected in the types of tourism and recreational activities available to residents and tourists of Vancouver Island – one can surf the waves off Tofino’s rugged west coast, celebrate Aboriginal Day with the K’omoks First Nations people, ski down the snow-covered slopes of Mount Washington Alpine Resort or spend the day learning about the vital shellfish economy and ecology at the Centre for Shellfish Research in Deep Bay.

The variety of landscapes, people, and experiences coupled with its island status make Vancouver Island a uniquely livable place for its residents and an appealing place for tourists to visit. Travel on and off the island is by air or water, which often translates into time and monetary costs that are not accessible to everyone. As an example, the sailing time between Nanaimo/Departure Bay (on Vancouver Island) and West Vancouver/Horseshoe Bay (on the mainland) is one hour and forty minutes aboard BC Ferries (one of two vehicle ferry systems servicing Vancouver Island), and an average round-trip cost for a family of four traveling with a

regular-sized vehicle is \$188.70 (British Columbia Ferry Services Inc., 2012). In 2012, BC Ferries reported that vehicle traffic was at a 13-year low and passenger traffic was at its lowest in 21 years (The Canadian Press, 2012). These decreases in ridership are cited as the reason that BC Ferries has announced service cuts on many of their major and minor routes between the mainland and coastal island communities (ibid). This reduction in sailings impacts island and non-island residents, as well as tourists visiting Vancouver Island from all over the world. As off-island travel becomes more cost-prohibitive to island residents, local tourism studies are needed to ensure the sustainability of tourism on Vancouver Island.

There are a number of isolated campaigns directed at the residential market on Vancouver Island (Backyard BC is a website that offers discounted rates on hotels and resorts across BC to BC residents; Island Daily Deals offers Vancouver Island residents discounts but it is not specifically linked to the tourism industry), but there is no one common voice collectively promoting local tourism to Vancouver Island residents. Annual hometown tourism campaigns exist in Victoria and Ladysmith offering incentives for local residents to eat, shop, and stay within their own home communities, but these promotions are not necessarily aimed at getting people out exploring the entire Vancouver Island community. Shop local, buy local and eat local are movements gaining popularity within various cities and towns across North America, and specifically Vancouver Island, however local tourism is rarely identified within these campaigns, nor is the term 'local' clearly stated.

2.2 Local Tourism

The concept of local tourism is loosely defined and many different phrases or words (e.g. staycation, domestic tourism, close-in markets, exploring your own backyard) are used to describe a similar topic, yet a definition specifically for local tourism does not exist. A generally accepted definition of tourism is “people traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for leisure, business, or other purposes” (UNWTO, 2012). Many definitions also include a minimum travel distance of 40km from home, but that limits or confines who is or who is not a tourist. However, there is evidence to support the idea that nearby tourism markets are emerging, “slow and inconsistent recovery from recent global economic crises, will lead to more conservative choices for travel in the short term, resulting in shorter, less expensive trips” (BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism, and Innovation, 2012). Domestic tourism, defined as travel within one’s own country, is also deemed to be less sensitive to economic, health, natural, and political crises and can serve as “an excellent crisis-shock absorber” (Pierret, 2011, p 3). These close-in, regional markets often travel in the shoulder season, therefore contributing to longer seasons and greater revenue generation (McDonald & Murphy, 2007) and high volume and strong repeat visitation (Pierret, 2011; Province of BC, 2012). A study prepared for Tourism BC stated “British Columbians traveling in British Columbia are critical to the success of tourism

businesses in the province” (Research Resolutions & Consulting Ltd, 2004, p. 5) and that intra-provincial travel supports tourism infrastructure while keeping spending dollars in the province.

British Columbia’s 2006 *Best Place on Earth* domestic ad campaign reported high success rates as bookings from within BC through Tourism BC’s *hellobc.com* site soared. The Tourism Minister at that time, Olga Illich, noted the need for recognizing the value of domestic tourism and the potential of its growth, (Minister of Sport, Tourism, and the Arts, 2006). The Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) launched a successful domestic tourism initiative in the summer of 2009, entitled *Locals Know*. By the program’s end on August 31st, 2010, 4 800 consumers had uploaded photos or videos to the *Locals Know* website, the television ad campaign boasted an 87% recall rate, and over 400 000 Canadians switched their travel plans from international to domestic destinations (Canadian Tourism Commission, 2012).

On Vancouver Island there is a gap in research related to resident travel patterns. The last major study at the regional level was an exit survey conducted in the summer of 2008, with 41% of respondents being from Vancouver Island or the Gulf Islands (Tourism Vancouver Island, 2012). Results from the 2008 Vancouver Island Exit Survey indicate that their respondents recognize the beauty and abundance of their residence/tourism destination. When the researchers at Tourism Vancouver Island analyzed the open comment portion of the survey, they noted that four main themes emerged: scenic beauty, friendly people, quality of life, and transportation issues. Tourism Victoria had administered an exit survey annually since 1998, but that initiative was discontinued in 2010 with no reason cited (Tourism Victoria, 2012).

One study suggests that domestic tourism is under-researched and commonly viewed as representing one homogeneous market (Hudson & Ritchie, 2002). Results of their study indicate that cost and value, safety and security, and visiting family and friends, were the top three factors for participating in domestic tourism (ibid). By 2011, domestic tourists (though somewhat difficult to track) represented a more diverse social structure including families, children and teenagers, seniors, people with disabilities, and households with modest but stable incomes (Pierret), which demonstrates that the domestic tourism market is becoming more widely researched. Because local tourism has not yet been defined in the literature, domestic tourism studies provide the basis for understanding within this topic. But clearly, a gap in the literature exists. Is the industry to assume that domestic tourism and local tourism are the same? In a country the size of Canada, tourists traveling within one’s home country and tourists traveling within their local community may or may not experience or contribute to the same benefits. Has participation in local tourism been sufficiently researched to provide evidence to answer these questions?

2.3 Participation

Participation in local tourism on Vancouver Island has not yet been explored, however, there are studies that look at facilitators and constraints of leisure participation in a more general scope and can guide further research. One model of leisure participation, based on interpersonal, intrapersonal, and structural facilitators and constraints was developed by Crawford, Jackson & Godbey (1991) and has formed the basis for other studies in this area. Interpersonal facilitators and constraints are identified as individuals and groups (participation and encouragement from friends, shared leisure experiences, parent to child influence); intrapersonal relates to personal characteristics, beliefs, and values; and structural refers to social and physical institutions and external influences of society (Crawford et al, 1991).

One specific example of a structural facilitator to leisure participation on Vancouver Island is the development and expansion of the Multi-Use Path in Tofino (see Figure 3. Tofino Multi-Use Path). Tofino's Multi-Use Path allows residents to commute to and from work, access beaches and green spaces, and have an overall better experience when getting out in their own community (Tourism by Design, Welk Consulting, 2008).



FIGURE 3.

TOFINO MULTI-USE PATH

Cottage Rental in Tofino, 2012. *Tofino multi-use path photo*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cottagecountry.com/listings/191715/>

The path also encourages visitors to explore the area by foot or by bicycle (therefore reducing congestion in the town centre), connects the First Nations community of Esowista to the services of Tofino, promotes the patronization of bike rental companies, and diversifies the recreational offerings of the area (ibid). As a designated Resort Municipality in British Columbia, a tax (Additional Hotel Room Tax) is charged to each visitor staying overnight in a fixed-roof accommodation in Tofino; that tax is fed back into the host community and helps to

fund projects such as the Multi-Use Path that is enjoyed by residents and visitors alike (District of Tofino, 2010). This participation in leisure is very visible to anyone coming into or leaving Tofino as the Multi-Use Path is adjacent to Highway 4 (Tofino's only road access).

Constraints to participation have been the focus of a number of leisure studies but the absence of a constraint does not necessarily lead to participation (Raymore, 2002). Understanding the factors that facilitate and encourage leisure (and tourism as a form of leisure) may foster more leisure participation opportunities. Facilitators to leisure are defined as “factors that are assumed by researchers and perceived or experienced by individuals to enable or promote the formation of leisure preferences and to encourage or enhance participation” (Raymore, 2002, p 39). Raymore also discusses the need to consider motivation to link the concepts of facilitators and constraints to behaviour.

The Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) has developed a new and innovative product to look at how and why people travel – the Explorer Quotient is a survey conceptualized and designed by the CTC that looks beyond demographics and more at psychographics (personal beliefs, social values, and world views) to assist in the planning, promotion, and delivery of tourism products and services across Canada (Canadian Tourism Commission, 2012). This innovative tool demonstrates academia and industry working collaboratively and has recently been adopted by a number of DMOs on Vancouver Island in 2012. At Host 2012, the annual BC tourism and hospitality industry conference, the concept of experiential travel was highlighted as a key method for growing the industry in a relevant and sustainable way. Because this approach is still quite new to the Vancouver Island tourism industry, the usage and results of this particular innovation are not yet known.

The demand side (or user) of tourism is a very large population to study, and as such, participation has been researched extensively from both a qualitative and a quantitative perspective. These two approaches have equally and varying roles to play in the advancement of sustainable leisure management research. From an ecological systems approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1992), it is beneficial to focus research on one particular segment of a population to better understand the environment and context of said system. This approach was used in a study in the exploration of lifestyle, leisure, and travel behaviours of Australian households with an objective of providing planning and marketing strategies for increased domestic tourism in Australia (Woodside, Caldwell & Spurr, 2006). Questions directed to study participants related to motivations and behaviours, past leisure and non-leisure participation, and future leisure and lifestyle plans. Facilitators and constraints were linked to the ecological systems approach within this study and Raymore's aforementioned research (ibid & 2002).

The role of women in leisure participation has been studied to varying degrees – constraints, contributions, and benefits being among the most researched, but studies on facilitators of women's leisure and tourism participation is lacking. Constraints to leisure

participation for women can be family responsibilities and obligations, household chores, and the (real or perceived) ethic of care (Khan, 2011; Lloyd & Little, 2005). Influenced by an ethic of care, women's leisure is viewed as a "shared social space for the family, a form of marital and familial role" (Lloyd & Little, 2005, p 172). Gaining insight into facilitators of women's leisure participation also provides valuable insight into the people directly affected by the women studied.

Identifying women through life stages provides the opportunity to focus on one segment of the female population in order to gain a more complete understanding of that particular group. Based on financial, health, and academic perspectives, women in the 30 – 39 year age category are in their middle adulthood stage and may be juggling careers, marital relations, and transitions to motherhood in addition to their need for personal/leisure time and managing their financial futures, all of which can create a considerable amount of stress (Khan, 2011; and National Women's Health Resource Center Inc., 2012), but there is a lack of research directed at this specific gender and age group. Studies specifically targeted at women help to create social justice and equality between genders (The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 2012), and research indicates that increased leisure participation does have a positive impact on quality of life (Brajša-Zganec, Merkas, & Sverko, 2010; and Lloyd & Auld, 2002). These studies help to support the concept of specifically studying females aged 30 - 39 to further understand the relationship between local tourism participation and quality of life (see Figure 4. Local Vancouver Island tourism participation).



FIGURE 4.

LOCAL VANCOUVER ISLAND TOURISM PARTICIPATION

Sliskovic, L. (2012). Personal photo.

2.4 Quality of Life

According to the Province of British Columbia's Invest British Columbia website (2011), "British Columbia's quality of life is world-renowned. Our west coast lifestyle with its abundant urban amenities, outdoor activities and entertainment choices helps to attract and retain young, creative minds." While there is no one universally accepted definition of quality of life, many studies support the idea that a variety of internal and external factors affect an individual's overall life satisfaction (Benckendorff et al., 2009; Dolnicar, 2012). The conceptualization of quality of life can include being (physical, psychological, and spiritual), belonging (physical, social, and community), and becoming (practical, leisure, and growth); determined by enjoyment and importance, possibilities and limitations (Quality of Life Research Unit, 2012). The World Health Organization recognizes four broad domains of quality of life: physical health; psychological health; social relationships; and the environment (Skevington, Lofty & O'Connell, 2004). The new economics foundation, a 'think-and-do-tank' in the UK, with a philosophy of "economics as if people and the planet mattered", has identified five evidence-based actions for everyday well-being, which are: connect, be active, take notice, keep learning, and give (nef, 2012). These five actions can be applied at home, at work, in one's own community, or while participating in tourism.

A recent, growing body of literature is specifically examining the relationship between quality of life and tourism participation. In 2008, the Business Enterprises for Sustainable Travel Education Network (BEST EN) – an international mix of educators whose purpose is to generate knowledge and research agendas for students and instructors in the field of sustainable tourism development – devoted their annual 3-day think-tank event to *Sustaining Quality of Life through Tourism* (Benckendorff et al, 2009). Working from a Futures Wheel that helps to identify the consequences of trends, events and decisions, the BEST EN identified a list of desirable futures for tourism and quality of life, (e.g. majority of tourism-based resources be sourced locally; to contribute genuinely to social change positively as described by local people; to improve indigenous community's well-being and preservation of culture) (Benckendorff et al., 2009). Two of the four selected topics identified for further research are: "build connections between tourism, health and well-being" and "improving tourism's contribution to public infrastructure" (ibid, p. 176). The *Handbook of tourism and quality of life research – enhancing the lives of tourists and residents of host communities* is a 702 page reference book aimed at academics and practitioners in the sustainable tourism industry (Uysal, Perdue & Sirgy, 2012).

These efforts complement a number of studies coming out of Europe that are examining the role and purpose of social tourism, which encourages individual and collective objectives such as improving enjoyment of life for all citizens (Minnaert et al., 2009). Social tourism in Europe generally takes place in the country of one's residence, thus, it can be

considered local tourism. Domestic/local tourism allows people of modest incomes to enjoy rest and holidays, thus easing the social pressures of the working class (and working class poor). As people of diverse incomes travel locally, the demand rises for a more diverse offering of tourism products and services, further encouraging development of various scope and scale which could translate into increased quality of life for the suppliers.

A study based in Virginia, USA sought to understand resident perceptions related to tourism development (Kim, 2002), but these residents were viewed only as hosts, not as participants in local tourism or suppliers of tourism products and services. The study was conducted upon a random sample of the population, so the hosts could not be identified as being involved in the tourism industry in any capacity. As an industry populated with small and medium sized businesses, tourism is a natural fit for lifestyle entrepreneurs; lifestyle entrepreneurs are often motivated by quality of life over profit generation (Peters, Frehse, and Buhalis, 2009).

While some research seems to support a link between tourism participation and quality of life, a comparison of nine quality of life indexes (with between five and nineteen domains each) reveals a lack of understanding into which domain tourism is a part of; there may be an implication that tourism is categorized within leisure, but very few indexes specifically use the words tourism, travel, or holiday (Dolnicar, 2012). The aforementioned study does conclude that leisure enjoyed at home does differ from leisure away from home (tourism activity), and therefore should be used as a separate measure for quality of life (ibid). However, one must use quality of life domains with caution – for example, not everyone values tourism equally—each individual experiences quality of life from his or her own perspective.

2.5 Literature Discussion

Vancouver Island, with its size and diversity of natural, historical, and cultural characteristics is a world-class tourism destination. Located on the West Coast of Canada and accessible by air and water only, tourism on Vancouver Island can be negatively affected by external factors such as rising ferry prices, high fuel prices, economic uncertainty and a strong Canadian dollar. Domestic tourism, defined as tourism within one's own country, has been identified as “an excellent crisis-shock absorber” (Pierret, 2011, p. 3), which helps signify the value of that market. However, local tourism has not yet been clearly defined within the literature, which leaves researchers and practitioners without an understanding of the characteristics and potential benefits of local tourism participation. If we are to assume that domestic and local tourism share similar features, studies on domestic tourism can guide future research into a more advanced comprehension of this diverse and complementary market to international and non-local travel.

Approaching a subjective topic from an ecological systems perspective, examining the subject through women aged 30 - 39, and collecting data through face-to-face conversations with focus group participants (demand) and semi-structured interviews (supply) provides the researcher with a deeper understanding of local Vancouver Island tourism. Tourism participation is often categorized by activity and/or motivations and while these are worthwhile areas of study, the relationship to quality of life provides a more holistic approach to tourism participation studies. Many of the studies cited in this literature review encourage further research into the relationships between quality of life and tourism participation, as there is much to be learned. The concept of well being has not, thus far, been linked to tourism participation within research, so the researcher chose to focus more heavily on quality of life literature as opposed to well being studies.

While the literature reviewed can guide the research process, it is necessary to not make assumptions about local tourism participation based on studies of leisure participation. There is a need for local tourism participation to be studied – residents of a host community are not only the suppliers of tourism products and services, they represent part of the demand for a sustainable tourism industry. The gaps in the literature surrounding local tourism, local tourism participation, Vancouver Island resident travel patterns, and the absence of quality of life in relation to tourism participation indicate that there is an opportunity for further research in these areas. As tourism leaders and academics continue to search for innovative ways to create and maintain a sustainable tourism industry on Vancouver Island, it makes sense to examine the issues from the residents' perspective. Local tourism is simple, affordable, and accessible. By conducting this exploratory study, the researcher will contribute to the field of sustainable leisure management by determining a definition of local tourism, and a better understanding of local Vancouver Island tourism participation and its relationship to quality of life for residents.

CHAPTER 3.

METHODS

Local Vancouver Island Tourism (LOVIT) and its relationship to quality of life for residents was explored through qualitative research methods during the months of May, June, July, August, and September 2012. Ethics approval from the Vancouver Island University Ethics Review Board was obtained on May 11th, 2012. A combination of semi-structured interviews with industry stakeholders and focus groups with residents in four communities on Vancouver Island provided the descriptive data that has been thematically and comparatively analyzed.

3.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were one of the two chosen methods for data collection. This method was chosen to encourage trust between the industry stakeholders and the researcher to allow for a natural back and forth dialogue of ideas, and to promote the exchange of information between industry and academia. The questions generated for the semi-structured interviews were developed to ensure the purpose of the study was realized and that each objective was achieved. The clarity and flow of questions were pre-tested, re-written, then tested again with a trusted group of colleagues to confirm the validity and strength of the questions in achieving the objectives. While this method does allow for probing questions and a level of flexibility, the researcher needs to be as un-influential and unbiased as possible so as not to skew or lead participant responses (Berg, 2012).

This process was completed through six semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a mix of owners, destination management organizations, not-for-profit organizations, and municipal and provincial government workers with a vested interest in tourism on Vancouver Island. Through the researcher's involvement in the tourism industry on Vancouver Island for the past fourteen years and discussions with colleagues, classmates, and the research team, a list of eight potential interviewees was generated by the researcher and can be found in Appendix B. The researcher contacted the eight stakeholders via email during the week of May 22nd, 2012.

Because the timing of the research collection coincided with the high tourism season for many of the stakeholders, a number of the business operator stakeholders were not available for an interview. The complete and revised semi-structured interview list can be found in Appendix C, and each participant consented to being identified by name. As the study of quality of life and local Vancouver Island tourism is a safe and non-sensitive subject, the researcher anticipated that participants would be open to discussion and they were. A list of the semi-structured interview questions can be found in Appendix D.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted between the months of May and September to accommodate each interview participant's schedule. Prior to commencement of any data collection, all interview participants had read, understood, dated and signed a consent form, complete with research details, assurance of confidentiality, disclosure of how the results would be used, and contact information for the researcher and the Vancouver Island University Research Ethics Officer.

The researcher allocated approximately one hour for each interview, which was a sufficient amount of time for the participants to answer the questions in full and to ask any questions of the researcher. Four of the interviews were done at the workplace of the participants, while two interviews took place in coffee shops. Convenience to the participant was the primary motivation in choosing a location for each interview.

Each semi-structured interview was recorded with an audio device to allow the researcher to fully engage in the conversation. This also enabled the researcher to listen to every interview numerous times to ensure the context was fully understood and correctly transcribed for analysis.

3.2 Focus groups

Motivations, behaviours, and structural, inter- and intrapersonal facilitators and constraints can collectively be examined from an ecological systems perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1992) such as one focused group of individuals (in this case, women). This model has been employed in various social sciences as it enables understanding of an individual's environment through human interactions and social structures. The questions developed for the focus group were directly related to the purpose of the study, and more specifically, the three objectives. Because the questions asked about previous and future local Vancouver Island tourism participation, benefits of participation, and quality of life the researcher was able to see a greater context being described (see Appendix E). As indicated in the literature review, women's leisure participation and quality of life are heavily influenced by inter- and intrapersonal facilitators and constraints, so focusing on women provided an in-depth understanding of local tourism participation and its relationship to quality of life for not only the women themselves, but also their respective social and familial relations.

In addition, focus groups allow participation from people whose literacy may be a barrier to other forms of data collection (reading and understanding questions, writing responses), can foster relationships between group members with similar interests, and can encourage and inspire participants to contribute more detailed answers to researcher questions. A potential weakness of focus groups is that members who know each other may not feel comfortable sharing personal information (lack of anonymity between group members) (Berg, 2012).

Four focus groups were conducted by the researcher between the months of July and September – one each in the communities of Campbell River, the Comox Valley, Nanaimo, and Tofino. These communities were chosen for a number of reasons including geographic feasibility for the researcher, variation in population and demographics, and central locations to enable participation from neighbouring community members. A recruitment poster (see Appendix F) was displayed in public places such as community activity centres, libraries, coffee shops, and tourism information centres in each of the four planned focus group communities. The target number of participants was four to six women between the ages of 30 and 39 - because the topic of study is safe and relevant to the potential participants, the researcher did not anticipate difficulty is finding female focus group participants.

The researcher, aided by an audio recording device, facilitated each focus group. The audio recording device allowed the researcher to be fully engaged in the relationship and dialogue of the group, while ensuring the oral data was being accurately recorded. In support of the local tourism theme, the researcher provided food from local gardens, waters, restaurants, shops and/or markets for all focus group participants. From previous experience conducting a focus group, the researcher learned the value of creating a comfortable, trusting environment for participants and the sharing of delicious, nutritious food seemed to help create that environment for the focus groups as participants were very open and engaged in the discussions generated from the questions. As with the semi-structured interviews, prior to any questioning or data collection, each focus group participant had read, understood, and signed the consent form. The researcher also led a short discussion on the need to respect each other's responses, how the information would be analyzed and potentially shared with a wider audience. The descriptive, qualitative characteristics of the data collected required that the researcher take general field notes immediately following the completion of each focus group. These recordings allowed the researcher to retain the context and atmosphere of each focus group that was not necessarily evident in the audio recordings.

3.3 Limitations

The main limitation of using both semi-structured interviews and focus groups is that on any given day, the data collected could be different from the data that was gathered at the time of research. The researcher is a female Vancouver Island tourism industry stakeholder between the ages of 30 and 39 so she is embedded in the research that was conducted. Acknowledging her bias allowed the researcher to connect with her study participants on a number of levels: stakeholder to stakeholder; female to female; age group to age group. While every effort was made on the part of the researcher to remain consistent, the natural flow of conversation dictated that not each and every interview and focus group would be delivered in precisely the same way. In order to maintain that consistency, the researcher predetermined

potential questions that the participants may have asked, then planned appropriate responses. One question example was “what is local tourism?” the response to focus group participants was “for the purpose of this study, local tourism is defined as all of Vancouver Island and the surrounding islands. That being said, part of the reason this study is being conducted is to better understand what you, the resident defines as local tourism.” With industry stakeholders, the answer differed slightly as they were more likely to know the industry standard definition of tourism (this point is discussed in section ‘4.2 General observations from the field’). The researcher also used the University of Toronto Quality of Life Research Unit’s *Quality of Life Model* (see Appendix G) if and when questions arose related to that particular subject.

Another limitation of this study was the relatively small sample size and the lack of generalizability of the results. This study was exploratory in nature and provides a basis for further studies surrounding local tourism, local Vancouver Island tourism, and quality of life for not only females between the ages of 30 and 39, but for all genders and ages. With the exception of the emergent definition of local tourism from the literature reviewed and input from all of the study participants, the results of this study apply only to this particular research within this specific context.

3.4 Data analysis - descriptive, thematic, comparative

The analysis of the data collected through the ongoing literature review, the focus groups, and the semi-structured interviews helped to accomplish the research purpose: to better understand what local tourism is on Vancouver Island and how participation in local tourism contributes to quality of life for female Vancouver Island residents between the ages of 30 and 39. The following table (Table 1. Data analysis) represents the analysis:

TABLE 1.
DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis			
Objectives	Methods	Instrument examples	Action
To investigate what female, Vancouver Island residents, aged 30 - 39, and industry stakeholders understand about local tourism.	Focus groups, semi-structured interviews	What is one of your most memorable Vancouver Island holiday experiences? What can be done to increase your tourism participation on Vancouver Island?	Identify and organize key words, phrases, themes that describe VI local tourism experiences and participation, compare responses from supply to demand
To document factors that contribute to quality of life for Vancouver Island residents, and specifically females, aged 30 – 39.	Literature review, focus groups, semi-structured interviews	What do you feel are the benefits of taking a holiday on Vancouver Island? What factors contribute to your quality of life?	Themes – Environmental, economic, social; being, belonging, becoming; relationships between words, phrases and themes that describe quality of life
To examine the relationship between local tourism participation and quality of life for Vancouver Island residents	Focus groups, semi-structured interviews	What do you feel are the benefits of taking a holiday on Vancouver Island? Do you see a relationship between local tourism participation and quality of life? How?	Themes - physical, emotional/mental, financial, relationships between words, phrases and themes, compare and interpret data, answer research objectives

To begin the analysis, the researcher transcribed each semi-structured interview and each focus group from the original audio recording (step 1). Then, using the analysis table as a guide, each transcription was read, transferred and categorized into “focus groups” and “semi-structured interviews” to display key words and phrases from both the demand and supply side of local tourism (step 2). From the categories of ‘focus group’ and semi-structured interviews’, the researcher used each objective to categorize and theme individual responses (step 3). As noted in the analysis table, definitions of quality of life from the literature review provided a guide for this action with respect to objective #2, while themes and categories for objectives #1 and #3 emerged out of the data collected. Once all of the data was analyzed and themed, the researcher listened to all of the original audio recordings once more to ensure that the analysis and emergent themes matched the raw data collected (step 4).

CHAPTER 4.

RESULTS

4.1 Study participants

A total of six industry stakeholders and thirteen female residents made up the semi-structured interviews and focus groups respectively. In total, the nineteen participants represented a diversity of communities across Vancouver Island and are symbolized by a red x in Figure 5. Hometowns of study participants.

The six industry stakeholders were: the president and CEO of the regional destination marketing organization on Vancouver Island, an owner/operator of a campground and rv park in the Central Island, a former tourism development officer with the Province of BC who lives in the South Island, a special project and vacation guide coordinator for a community-based publication in the Central Island, a tourism coordinator in the North Island, and the mayor of a small community in the Central Island. These six stakeholders were varied in their educational backgrounds, ages, genders, and involvement of tourism on Vancouver Island and together provided a wealth of perspectives on local tourism participation and its relationship to quality of life for residents. Each and every stakeholder was very candid in responding to questions and expressed appreciation for being a part of the research.



FIGURE 5.

HOMETOWNS OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Tourism Vancouver Island, 2012. Vancouver Island Tourism – Vancouver Island Vacation & Travel Guide. Adapted from: <http://www.vancouverisland.travel/regions/>.

The thirteen focus group participants from the four communities identified in the study were also a very diverse group. Six of the women grew up on Vancouver Island, one is a recent immigrant to Canada, and the remaining six relocated to the island from various parts of Canada at different times. At least four of the women brought up their former (or current) employment in the tourism industry on Vancouver Island, three were university students, while others were in professions such as nursing, employment counseling, marketing, graphic design, physiotherapy, and hairdressing. None of the women were asked demographic information directly by the researcher, however, throughout the natural discussion between focus group participants, these details emerged. It should also be noted that while there were varying degrees of physical and financial characteristics of focus group participants, all women who chose to participate in this research project appeared to be healthy and would be considered middle-class.

4.2 General observations from the field

While each interview was different from the next, so to was the flow of conversations within the focus groups. Because this study was exploratory in nature, the responses are descriptive and qualitative. The researcher has made every effort to present the results as they were recorded, but there were times when all members of a focus group would agree on one person's response by head nodding, so the field notes provided a way to gather meaning from body language and non-verbal communications.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher provided the generally accepted definition of tourism - at least 40km away from a person's usual environment, with at least one overnight stay – to industry stakeholders, but the researcher recently came across a definition that did not require a tourist to have an overnight stay (Province of BC, 2011). Day excursions are being included in the tourism definition in BC to create a broader vision of what the tourism industry is today. One industry stakeholder had been using a definition of tourism that included a minimum distance of 80kms travel from the usual environment - that definition would make it difficult for many Vancouver Island experiences to be considered tourism. Including the definition in the discussion and not forcing a definition upon the participants achieved the purpose of exploring the subject of local tourism, however the researcher did include the same geographic parameters of Vancouver Island and the surrounding islands to remain consistent with the discussions in the focus groups.

The nature of the subject being explored in this research was safe and all female focus group participants seemed to be open, honest, and sincere in their responses. As conversations were created through the open-ended questions, participants became enthused about the research topic – local Vancouver Island tourism and quality of life. Many of the female respondents were thankful for their inclusion in the research and were excited to be

discussing and sharing information about all that Vancouver Island has to offer from a tourism perspective.

However, recruiting focus group participants did prove to be a challenge in three of the four communities (the exception being the Comox Valley). The researcher can only speculate why potential participants did not respond to the recruitment posters, so the decision was made to carry out the focus groups as planned with a minimum of two participants in each community. The researcher used word of mouth and personal communication to invite potential participants to the focus groups, which proved to be successful. The researcher became aware that one of the participants was under the age of 30, which was outside of the original objectives, however the researcher did not feel that the study or results were compromised in any way. While the number of participants was slightly lower than expected, the substance of the data was rich, interesting, and at times, surprising to the researcher.

The semi-structured interviews also provided some extremely valuable information to the researcher for the development of future research opportunities. While many of the answers were very much in line with information found through the literature review, each interviewee provided a unique glimpse into the strengths and challenges of the local tourism industry on Vancouver Island. The specific objectives of the research were not given to the study participants, however the planned analysis allowed the researcher to explore the topic in a way that was conducive to conversation and generation of ideas and thoughts for all participants.

4.3 Objective #1

To explore how female, Vancouver Island residents, aged 30 - 39 and industry stakeholders perceive local tourism.

As a warm up question designed to get participants thinking about the topic of local Vancouver Island tourism (LOVIT), the researcher first asked focus group members and semi-structured interviewees “what is one of your most memorable local Vancouver Island tourism experiences?” Through the responses generated from all participants, four local tourism themes emerged: people; emotions; activities; and place/space (see Table 2. Local tourism themes). These four themes capture the essence of how participants perceive local Vancouver Island tourism.

TABLE 2.
LOCAL TOURISM THEMES

Numbers in parentheses refer to frequency of response.

Local tourism themes			
People	Emotions	Activities	Place/space
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with family (6) • with boyfriend (3) • with husband (3) • by ourselves (3) • with girlfriends (2) • want to meet locals (2) • with family and friends • with wife • do what locals do • learning about locals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • amazing (2) • relaxing (2) • memorable • always gets better • so many great experiences • live and enjoy • slow down • one of a kind • feel special to live here • fun • enjoying time • play • feel good supporting local • more respect for land and community • lucky to have access to green space • like to explore • desirable • want to be a part of what's going on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning (2) • exploring (2) • bike riding • day away • active • tent camping • boat on a lake • tenting, driving • off-season exploration • remote hike • nature • surfing • kayaking • challenging • experience and adventure • get out, tour around • hiking • weekend for the entire community • anything on the water • watching the tide change • whale watching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sense of place (2) • local restaurants • local food • off the beaten track • quintessential west coast • remote • farms and vineyards • trails • secluded areas • float plane access • hidden gems • natural habitats • can do it all here • gorgeous scenery • beautiful area • so much here • like to know the area I live in

4.3.1 People

Each participant (with the exception of one) included details about who accompanied her or him on the memorable experience, and the accompanier in each case was at least one significant other or family member while one participant related a story with eleven of her girlfriends. As indicated in the above table, family members were the most often-cited tourism companions. Traveling with a husband or wife was the second most cited response, and while spouses are considered family members, in the context of this question, 'with family' was referred to as including children.

A number of participants also acknowledged that connecting with local residents while being a tourist was a valuable part of the experience. One focus group participant's memorable holiday included riding her bike with her girlfriends, going to a farmers' market, and interacting with local growers, bakers, and artists from around Vancouver Island. This connection to

people was a theme that ran throughout many of the conversations in the focus groups and will be discussed at more length with respect to the second and third objectives of the research project.

However, contrary to the connection with locals was the enjoyment of solitude that a number of participants expressed about their local tourism experiences. The ability to get away from it all while traveling with loved ones seemed to resonate with some participants, as it reinforced the connection with their companions. Responses from stakeholders and focus group members were also heavily weighted in emotions and descriptions surrounding the activities and places and spaces on Vancouver Island.

4.3.2 Emotions

Each and every participant of the study expressed positive emotions surrounding their local tourism experiences. Words and phrases such as ‘amazing’, ‘one-of-a-kind’, ‘feel special to live here’, ‘feel good supporting local’, and ‘living and enjoying’, were all used to convey the feelings and emotions that they associated with local tourism. Participants in both methods of data collection also stated a real sense of pride and of place for Vancouver Island and the emotions expressed mirrored their words. Many spoke about Vancouver Island being a desirable location to live, enjoying the outdoor opportunities available, and being able to explore such beautiful areas so close to home.

4.3.3 Activities

The activities were as much the focus of the most memorable LOVIT experience as the people involved. Experiences ranged from the self-propelled (bike riding around the Cowichan Valley, hiking the North Coast Trail, kayaking around the Discovery Islands) to the motorized (road trip to the West Coast), and from the water (whale watching in Telegraph Cove, surfing off San Josef Bay, boating on Namint Lake), to the land (tenting with the family all over the island, the annual slo-pitch ball tournament in Lake Cowichan) to the sky (taking a float plane to hike the Nootka Island Trail). This diversity speaks to the plethora of choices Vancouver Island residents have with respect to tourism and recreation. The experiences varied in duration from single to multi-day excursions, time of year (all seasons were represented), remote (San Josef Bay) to populated destinations (Cowichan Valley), and reasons for participating (learning, exploring, visiting, getting away, tasting).

4.3.4 Places and spaces

Appreciation and pride for the places and spaces visited on Vancouver Island were embedded in many of the responses regarding local tourism participation. As focus group participants spoke about physical locations, other members nodded their agreement and/or asked questions about the places being described. It was difficult for a few participants to 'pick just one' memorable experience; 'all the little road trips' were equally memorable for one focus group member, while another stated 'it always gets better, there are so many great experiences here'. The passion behind the responses is difficult to record, however the researcher was able to hear the positive emotions in respondents' voices as they described their most memorable Vancouver Island tourism experience and recognizes that relationship to place as being one of the key findings of the research.

As women in the 30 - 39 year age category, it is important to remember the literature that points to the concept of an ethic of care and a shared social space for the family within leisure participation (Khan, 2011; Lloyd & Little, 2005). When women feel a sense of space and pride of place through local Vancouver Island tourism participation, there is a potential for those positive feelings to be shared and spread throughout her circles of influence.

4.3.4 Increased participation

To explore the topic of local Vancouver Island tourism further, the focus group participants were asked, "what can be done to increase your local tourism participation"; semi-structured interviewees were asked what could be done "to encourage Vancouver Island residents to participate in local Vancouver Island tourism". Many of the ideas circulating in the focus groups surrounded awareness and access to the same information that off-island tourists may be receiving. The participants indicated how much they enjoyed traveling during the non-busy tourism season (consistent with literature review), with cost/value and less crowded sites being the main reasons; as such they were seeking last minute deals and escapes during those times. Industry stakeholders (supply side) shared some professional initiatives (Hometown Tourist Weekend, promotion and partnership with other island businesses), as well as personal thoughts and suggestions such as utilizing social media to connect locals with one another.

This question of how to increase study participant's local tourism participation generated the biggest difference between each of the focus groups; one group zeroed in on the need for tourism on the island to be sustained and managed to ensure our spaces and products remain authentic and valuable. One participant's immediate response was, "keeping the space as authentic as possible I would say is the most important thing...it's hard to find something authentic these days because it (tourism) is an industry...I think so far we are doing a good job of keeping it authentic, but really keeping that in the forefront and not cheapening the experience...". Echoing that sentiment was this response: "I like how things are now. People

(council) are saying build it and they will come, but I think they are missing the big picture, I think it's already here, I think they're overlooking that...I think that the age group that you've chose, compared to the age group of (city) council, there's a huge difference in what they see as an important lifestyle is totally different than ours." These impassioned responses speak to the connection that residents have to Vancouver Island.

The same group also reinforced the idea that tourists and residents often enjoy the same amenities and that is part of what makes our island communities such great places to live and play. As the focus group participants hosted friends and family members, it was the interaction and engagement between the local tourism operators, local restaurant owners, and community business owners that provided the sense of pride and place. When traveling around the island, these participants also looked for that connection in their neighbouring communities and it is those communities that participants would return to again and again.

The second focus group indicated they did not feel as informed about local tourism information as they would like. They were looking for engagement in the form of open houses, tourist in your own town weekends and direct marketing campaigns to island residents. One of the group members was relatively new to her community so was not aware of the tourism products and services in her immediate area, but wanted to explore the options in a non-sales environment. These members were seeking opportunities to tour close to home as they had small children; they want their children to experience the outdoors and enjoy everything the island has to offer. This reflection supports the concept of the ethic of care surrounding women and leisure participation.

The third group expressed the need for all island residents to become a larger part of the tourism industry. These women want to know what locals in other communities on the island know, they are interested in learning the insider perspective on where to eat, where the best swimming hole is, and how the locals live in general.

The fourth group generated a great deal of discussion about how they researched travel to foreign destinations versus how they learn about tourism products on their own island. This well-informed group of women was the most adventurous of the four focus groups and felt that the island offered everything one could want in a tourism experience. As avid recreationists, these women surrounded themselves with other like-minded individuals so utilized word-of-mouth more than any other marketing medium. However, they still sought last-minute getaways, itineraries for one, two or three day escapes, and travel deals to entice them. Local restaurant, wineries and farms, as well as recreation gear retailers were touted as obvious links between residents and tourism products and services. Their message was that it is in the best interest of local retailers to partner with local tourism operators to generate excitement, as many island experiences require specific footwear, outerwear and gear.

This sentiment was echoed by an industry stakeholder who participates in a number of tourism/recreational pursuits on Vancouver Island. The activities in which he participates in require specialized gear, and the retailers that supply that gear are not always a part of tourism industry discussions. His suggestion to connect the industry to other island businesses (regardless of the direct link to tourism) creates a strong economic situation for all islanders. And because a large part of his business is Vancouver Island residents, he wants to see other local operators succeed.

Other tourism industry stakeholders also indicated the need to get more residents involved in the vision of what tourism is on Vancouver Island. Communities that embrace tourism are the communities that Island residents want to visit and explore. And while the island population is only approximately 760 000, the industry stakeholders know that (because we live in a tourism destination) most of those residents host friends and family members each year. Those visiting friends and family rely on information provided by their hosts – the residents of Vancouver Island. One stakeholder referred to residents as potential ‘champions’ for tourism on Vancouver Island, while another used the word ‘ambassador’ to describe the relationship that could facilitate an increase in local tourism participation.

The results of the questions related to increased local Vancouver Island tourism participation indicate a disconnect between available tourism information and resident engagement with that information (refer to section 5.2 Future Research Opportunities). The researcher cautions that simply creating awareness of tourism opportunities will not necessarily lead to participation; it is more valuable to look at what is facilitating participation and create strategies from that perspective (Raymore, 2002). Within the four emergent local tourism themes, a number of inter- and intrapersonal facilitators are evident. Within the theme of people, family, friends, and loved ones can be viewed as facilitators to local Vancouver Island tourism participation. On an intrapersonal level, the emotions participants associated with LOVIT such as feeling good, supporting local, and feeling special to live here, are positive and healthy. Structural facilitators brought up by study participants include farm and wine tours in the Cowichan Valley, Mount Washington Alpine Resort in the Comox Valley, access roads to remote lakes and rivers. The perceptions of local Vancouver Island tourism from industry stakeholders and female resident study participants can help the researcher to better understand local tourism.

4.4 Objective #2

To document factors that contribute to quality of life for Vancouver Island residents, and specifically females, aged 30 - 39.

When asked the question “what factors contribute to your quality of life”, focus group participants responded in a variety of ways. The researcher first encouraged the women to explore their own responses, and then if needed, the definitions of quality of life from the Quality of Life Research Unit (2012) and the World Health Organization (2004) were introduced. Being (who one is), belonging (connections with one’s environments) and becoming (personal goals, achievements and aspirations) are the three categories within the definition for quality of life from the Quality of Life Research Unit (2012), but it is important to realize that the categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and a number of responses could have fit into the belonging and/or becoming categories (see Table 3. Quality of life categories). It is noteworthy to remember that the factors can be analyzed by importance/meaning and enjoyment and may change throughout one’s life and perspective.

Through further analysis, it was apparent that a fourth, overarching category needed to be added to capture the essence of what was being discussed by focus group participants – the pride of place and sense of space that females in this particular age group associate with quality of life on Vancouver Island. This fourth category is represented by the bold, italicized factors in the following table. The terms ‘pride of place’ and ‘sense of space’ were not always the specific words that the study participants used to express this strong connection to Vancouver Island, but it was through the iterative analysis of responses and the emotions heard by the researcher that this finding emerged. One focus group participant stated: “I’ve traveled in a lot of different places, and locally, I’ve been as equally awe-shocked here...there are so many beautiful places to check out here...I feel pretty special to live on Vancouver Island”.

TABLE 3.

QUALITY OF LIFE CATEGORIES

Bold, italicized responses indicate the fourth category – pride of place and sense of space.

Quality of life categories		
Being (who one is)	Belonging (connections with one's environments)	Becoming (personal goals, achievements and aspirations)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more active • <i>feel healthier around green space and fresh air</i> • can and do bike to work • <i>have a healthy life</i> • <i>enjoy my healthy life</i> • <i>quality of experiences are healthy</i> • clean tap water • <i>doing more, able to, want to</i> • fitness • feeling good • taking care of myself • eating right • getting exercise • slow down • balance • able to exercise • healthy mind, body and soul for me and those around me • comfort • great food • buying local foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fitness with someone, socializing • outside with my children • family and friends • close to family • safe to go out • <i>strong community and green spaces</i> • <i>healthy, livable</i> • relationships, sharing experiences • meeting neighbours • connectedness • community support from friends • <i>sense of place</i> • <i>connections with other island residents</i> • safety of community • <i>lifestyle choice</i> • family connections • <i>sense of community with other island residents</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • environment and cost effective living • my own space, not crowded • <i>lifestyle</i> • <i>super accessible</i> • <i>get out and enjoy</i> • <i>climate gets me outside</i> • so many opportunities for families • peaceful • simplicity • lack of commute • <i>access to parks and waterfront</i> • <i>nature is so close – trails</i> • work/life balance • balance between family/work/personal – connected equally • <i>coastal life</i>

4.4.1 Being (who one is)

The category of 'being' relates to the physical, psychological, and spiritual qualities that make up who one is. Factors such as personal health, nutrition, exercise, values and feelings were described by focus group participants with words and phrases such as 'taking care of myself', 'feeling good', 'have a healthy life', 'doing more, active', and 'eating right and getting exercise'. One participant discussed wanting to be of healthy mind, body and soul and wanting those same things for her family and friends; her fellow participants all agreed with that response. It was evident that overall, the women in this study felt strongly about their personal health and that they were able to enjoy being who they are while living on Vancouver Island.

4.4.2 Belonging (connections with one's environments)

Connections with one's environments can be characterized as belonging through physical, social, and community perspectives (Quality of Life Research Unit, 2012). Participants discussed relationships, sharing experiences and facilitating the sense of connectedness many

Vancouver Island communities have as factors within this category. A number of participants travel around Vancouver Island to visit family and friends and the connection between residents of neighbouring communities was noted as a factor in their qualities of life. This combination of activities and socialization was brought up quite often in one of the focus groups. These same women also felt that since having children, it was more important to be outside, interacting with nature and experiencing the parks, green spaces, and waters on and around Vancouver Island. These qualities reinforce the ease of getting out and enjoying the abundance of what Vancouver Island has to offer its residents and local tourists. A number of focus group members also commented on a feeling of safety and strong sense of place inherent in their own communities, which goes a long way in exploring quality of life factors for women in this age group.

4.4.3 Becoming (achieving personal goals, hopes, and aspirations)

Practical-, leisure-, and growth-becoming round out the categorization of quality of life indicators as described by the model used for this study (Quality of Life Research Unit, 2012). The participants valued factors such as having one's own space and not feeling crowded, maintaining a balance between work and personal life, enjoying the lifestyle of Vancouver Island, being able to easily access so many recreational sites, getting out and enjoying the landscape, and having a climate that allows most of these activities year-round. Lifestyle and reference to 'the coastal life' indicate that the study participants appreciate the opportunities available on Vancouver Island and that proximity and accessibility to these natural landscapes are factors that provide residents with the choice and opportunity to be healthy, balanced and connected.

The variety and large number of factors that contribute to quality of life identified by the female study participants indicated that the categories of being, belonging, and becoming from the University of Toronto's Quality of Life Research Unit Model were not sufficient for this particular group. The researcher added a fourth category of sense of space and pride of place to reflect the participant responses that would not fit within the confines of the aforementioned categories. The addition of this fourth category for this particular group of female Vancouver Island residents, between the ages of 30 and 39 years appears to fit within the quality of life literature that stated how individualized quality of life is, and how difficult it can be to generalize quality of life studies.

4.5 Objective #3

To examine the relationship between local tourism participation and quality of life for Vancouver Island residents.

This third and final objective was analyzed from responses to the following two questions that were posed to both groups: "what do you feel are the benefits of participating in

local tourism”, and “do you see a relationship between local tourism participation and quality of life”. Most study participants seemed to feel comfortable answering the question related to benefits of local tourism participation and took little time coming up with economic, social, and environmental reasons; however it is noteworthy that the majority of responses can be categorized as ‘social benefits’.

The categories of economic, social, and environmental benefits can be related back to Hudson & Ritchie’s study that concluded the top three factors for participating in domestic tourism are cost and value, safety and security, and visiting family and friends (2002), the local tourism themes (people, emotions, activities, and places and spaces) that emerged from the analysis of objectives #1, and the factors that contribute to quality of life for residents (being, belonging, becoming and pride or place and sense of space) from objective #2. Industry stakeholders and female residents were all quite convinced that there is a relationship between local tourism participation and quality of life on Vancouver Island and delivered very straightforward yeses in response to that question.

From a sustainable leisure management perspective, the abundance of responses in relation to the first of the two aforementioned questions represents just how relevant the topic of local Vancouver Island tourism is to females in this age category and to tourism industry stakeholders. Study participants see the relationship between local tourism participation and quality of life, and they are seeking ways to increase their participation through the creation and development of facilitators in their lives. The focus group participants have influence on current and future generations, they recognize economic, social, and environmental benefits, and they represent health and prosperity through positive local Vancouver Island tourism opportunities.

4.5.1 Economic benefits

The economic benefits of participating in local tourism (see Table 4. Economic benefits) can be identified from a personal perspective and from a broader community perspective. Responses discussed by study participants were that it costs less to stay on the island, dollars are being spent on experiences and not the ferry, not spending dollars off-island, a better way to spend money, keeps money on the island, not as expensive as off-island travel, the general cost advantage of staying on the island and that money spent here provides money to have parks, green spaces and tourism infrastructure here. Further to those remarks, some responses related to the value for participants and their communities, the support for local economies, the need for that local support, keeping jobs in local communities, encouraging local business development, and keeping the cycle going here on the island. An industry stakeholder also identified that the taxes paid by tourism operators help contribute to infrastructure and that communities rely on both residential business tax to create and maintain services enjoyed by residents and tourists. For example, the multi-use path in Tofino, the harbourfront walkway in

Nanaimo, and the Rotary Seawall in Campbell River were all identified by focus group participants (in those respective communities) as integral to the health and vibrancy of said communities.

TABLE 4.
ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Economic benefits	
Personal	Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • costs less to stay on the island • not as expensive as holidays off-island • save money • money spent on experiences – not the ferry • better way to spend money • good mix of quality of life and cost of living • totally makes sense • more practical to stay on the island with a child • more affordable for island residents to stay on the island • mid-week travel • more frequent trips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not spending money elsewhere (2) • communities rely on residential and business tax • cost advantage to staying on the island • need local support • keep the cycle of spending going • provides dollars to have things here • keep jobs here on the island • value for us and our community • economic benefits are dispersed locally • taxes contribute to infrastructure • regional thinking provides more marketing dollars • great experiences drive word of mouth marketing • encourage business development • supporting local economies • huge economic contributor to area

4.5.2 Social benefits

Similar to the economic benefits of local Vancouver Island tourism participation, the responses related to the social benefits of local Vancouver Island tourism participation were categorized by individual and community. Many responses from study participants discussed the need to support local Vancouver Island communities to increase awareness about the history, people, places and attractions; they want to know about where they live, explore their surroundings and experience tourism close to home. A number of study participants indicated that choosing to live on Vancouver Island was a decision based on the lifestyle, quality of life, and the variety of things to see and experience. These residents and industry stakeholders want to spend their leisure time on the island, enjoying the outdoors, connecting with the people and places that make Vancouver Island what it is. As one focus group participant stated:

I've found that more recently, travel – the actual act of traveling – was never a major issue or consideration for me before having kids and now that time is of the essence, I realize that that time spent in a vehicle, or that time spent on a ferry, traveling to get

somewhere, is so much more critical, then the time being outside the vehicle and actually enjoying.

Socially, community recreation sites are where residents and tourists can connect and have shared, healthy experiences. The harbourfront walkway in Nanaimo is a place that all of the Nanaimo residents who participated in this study frequent, both with their in-town friends and families and their visiting friends and families. The walkway provides a link between locals and tourists, and as previously mentioned, tourists want to be where locals are; they want to learn about the people in a community. Respondents of this study want access to green spaces, and want to enjoy safe, healthy experiences with their family and friends.

A number of industry stakeholders expressed a growing awareness within the industry of the value of resident participation; that as residents explore the island, they become the champions of their own communities and the larger Vancouver Island community as a whole. An industry stakeholder noted that through sharing of knowledge, residents learn to respect the land and the communities in which they visit. Another industry stakeholder's commented that host communities may not feel as inundated by tourists if those tourists share a common language and behave similarly to the host community. And because island residents are more likely to experience Vancouver Island tourism in the non-peak travel times such as mid-week and shoulder seasons, tourist numbers are more evenly distributed.

The tourism industry stakeholders and the female study participants generated more social than economic or environmental benefit responses. The following table (Table 5. Social benefits) represents social benefits to individuals (divided to represent connections, family, lifestyle, and time) and communities (divided into connections and lifestyle).

TABLE 5.
SOCIAL BENEFITS

Social Benefits			
Personal		Community	
<p>Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal • family • relaxing experiences • fun and crazy experiences • sharing of local knowledge • more respect for land and communities • get to know your neighbours • feel good supporting local operators • locals share experiences • connect with people and places • variety • feel special to live here • promotes understanding 	<p>Family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • travel with child changes the dynamic • visiting friends and family on the island • island travel with a child is more appealing • visiting friends and relatives • I like to play • like and want to know where I live 	<p>Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sense of place • network of local businesses • connections between tourists and residents • new to community – way to meet people from the area • restoration of heritage • support your island community • increased awareness about history, people, places, attractions • look out for other island communities • need to collaborate to achieve goals • creates community • promotes regional partnerships • locals become champions of their own areas • supporting local communities • tourism is a people industry • engages communities • common language and mannerisms 	<p>Lifestyle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • living it • active lifestyle • totally makes sense • so much to do • place to live is attractive to residents and tourists • need residents to stay here • local operators pay attention to impacts on local communities • need local support • residents enjoy because of tourism development • residents are our best ambassadors • helps educate residents about their own backyards • easier to create benefits from residents than from long-haul visitors • gets people out • like and know the areas in which they live • provides incentive to build and maintain infrastructure • differences aren't as great for host communities • community does not feel as inundated with foreign visitors
<p>Lifestyle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • like to explore • see what the island has to offer • self-propelled activities are healthy • it's a lifestyle, a good quality of life • choose to be here • I want to live here • quality of life • great experiences • diversity of experiences • need to explore • able to experience and see cool things • spend time close to home 	<p>Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time in general is time spent doing • more frequent day and overnight trips on the island • quick and convenient getaways • time is valuable • enjoy spending time outside • more frequent trips 		

4.5.3 Environmental benefits

The social benefits of local tourism participation are very much linked to the environmental benefits, with a number of participant responses (e.g. connect with people and places) fitting into one category or the other. The natural landscape of Vancouver Island is a large part of what makes the island a desirable place to live, and the pride and appreciation for the diversity and abundance of the outdoor opportunities were evident in the way participants spoke about it. It is the combination of people and places that make local Vancouver Island tourism experiences so valuable to the research participants. Industry stakeholders and focus group participants recognize the beauty and natural geography of Vancouver Island as being an integral factor in the high quality of life for residents. Industry stakeholders look to tourism leaders to help preserve and protect the natural environment on and around the island, as many tourism operations depend on the wildlife, lakes, rivers, oceans, forests, and historical heritage for their sustained livelihoods. A number of focus group participants also acknowledged the role that the tourism industry plays in conservation and restoration efforts across Vancouver Island. The following table (Table 6. Environmental benefits) shows the responses generated by focus group and industry stakeholder participants that are categorized as environmental benefits.

TABLE 6.
ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Environmental Benefits	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • many self-propelled activities here • lucky to have access to rivers, lakes, and wilderness • protection of natural areas supported by tourism • conservation is heightened with tourism development because of increased use • less fuel burned by staying close to home • natural environment is what makes the island a desirable place to live • heritage restoration • conservation efforts through tourism • strong tourism industry provides links to physically and naturally attractive communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • connect with people and places • tourism product is nature so operators want to keep it natural • smaller ecological footprint closer to home • more respect for land and environment • increased awareness of local history • tourism industry demands that we retain the natural beauty • tourism contributes significantly to environment • tourism operators pay attention to water and power usage • provides incentives to develop and maintain parks, protected areas, and green spaces • increased understanding of biology (whales)

The economic, social, and environmental benefits of local tourism participation that were identified by the study participants, combined with the enthusiastic, positive responses to the question of a relationship between local tourism participation and quality of life indicate that, yes, there is a relationship, and the benefits are numerous and diverse. This third and final objective provided the opportunity for the researcher to examine the relationship between local

tourism participation and quality of life for not only the female, focus group participants, but also for all Vancouver Island residents from the perspective of the tourism industry stakeholders.

4.5.4 Results discussion

Each objective of the research project was designed to allow input from the female focus group participants and the tourism industry stakeholders. As responses to each question from the female focus group participants and tourism industry stakeholders were transcribed, analyzed, categorized and themed to ensure that each objective was completed, it became apparent to the researcher that the sense of space and pride of place were the overarching themes of this study. The purpose of better understanding what local tourism is on Vancouver Island and how participation in local tourism relates to quality of life for individuals was achieved throughout this process.

The connections made between residents of neighbouring communities contributes to the lifestyle that all study participants expressed appreciation for – being able to get out and experience the beautiful natural landscapes in and around Vancouver Island, living a healthy life with their families and friends. Female focus group members representing the 30 – 39 year age group are influencing and influenced by their respective marital and familial roles. The opportunity for the tourism industry on Vancouver Island to facilitate healthy tourism experiences for this market is exponential.

Exploring the island through local tourism participation gives the study participants a sense of space and pride of place, which translates into stronger connections and communities across Vancouver Island. The study participants indicated that they feel good supporting their local tourism businesses, as those business owners are often their neighbours and the ones who drive conservation efforts and the creation and protection of green spaces that Vancouver Island residents rely on for their quality of life.

CHAPTER 5.

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Final thoughts...

Local tourism can be defined as tourism activity within the context of one's own local community and identified by the people within that community. Local tourism relies on tourism operators to provide products, services, and experiences to participants. The participants of this study feel a sense of space and pride of place on Vancouver Island, and this connection allows the definition of local tourism to include all of Vancouver Island and because Vancouver Island is accessible by water and air only, it is uniquely positioned to encompass a specific geographical area without being defined by distance traveled or nights away.

As stated by both the industry stakeholders and the focus group participants, local Vancouver Island tourism (LOVIT) is amazing. From the open ocean offering surfing, kayaking, fishing, and boating, to the lush, ancient Coastal temperate rainforests, to the year-round golfing, seemingly endless outdoor opportunities, one can do it all on Vancouver Island. The benefits of leisure participation and quality of life have been researched and documented from the recreation and health perspectives; tourism is a part of leisure, yet the direct link between quality of life and tourism/leisure benefits is not always clear. While the potential exists for tourism participation to produce the same benefits as leisure participation, research has not fully explored that potential, but a number of academics and industry leaders are recognizing that a relationship exists.

By utilizing systems thinking, whereby relationships and processes are as important as the results as the research approach, the depth of understanding is greater and more valuable. Within the subjective study area of quality of life, it is necessary to look not only at quantitative data and demographics, but also the ecological system in which people live and interact within their own communities. The data collection questions were designed to capture past, present, and future motivations and behaviours with relation to local tourism participation and quality of life. By conducting semi-structured interview and focus groups, this research provides a starting point for the exploration of local Vancouver Island tourism participation and its relationship to quality of life for residents. Based on the discussion and responses from study participants, there is a growing awareness about the effects of including local residents in not only the development of sustainable tourism initiatives, but as a valuable market for the products and services being offered.

This study is not meant to compare or contrast international or off-island tourists with local or domestic tourism, on the contrary, local tourism can be an effective and complementary market for Vancouver Island tourism operators. Local tourism participation has the potential to

foster a positive relationship to a healthy quality of life as opportunities for individual, community and societal connections increase for residents of all income levels. By encouraging local residents to participate in tourism opportunities, the industry creates champions and ambassadors of all that Vancouver Island has to offer, further stretching tourism development and marketing dollars as friends and family visit island residents. This positive cycle also helps to create meaningful employment for residents, keeps discretionary dollars in the local economy, and results in more frequent and often off-season expenditures.

Innovation and sustainability are about simplicity, affordability, and accessibility, and local Vancouver Island tourism fits within all three of those descriptors. As residents learn and understand about the strengths and challenges that other island communities are facing, valorization of the uniqueness of Vancouver Island and resiliency of its people will naturally follow. As stated in the literature, domestic tourism can be “an excellent crisis-shock absorber” (Pierret, 2011, p. 3) and as Canadians and the rest of the world move through an unprecedented global economic shift, local Vancouver Island tourism, with its plethora and diversity of activities, products and opportunities is well situated to sustain itself.

By facilitating focus groups and semi-structured interviews, the research has achieved the purpose of better understanding what local tourism is on Vancouver Island and how participation in local tourism contributes to quality of life for Vancouver Island residents. The three objectives were:

1. To explore how female, Vancouver Island residents, aged 30 - 39, and industry stakeholders perceive local tourism;
2. To document factors that contribute to quality of life for Vancouver Island residents, specifically females, aged 30 - 39;
3. To examine the relationship between local tourism participation and quality of life for Vancouver Island residents.

The first objective can be answered as: female, Vancouver Island residents aged 30 - 39, and industry stakeholders understand local tourism to be comprised of people, emotions, activities, and places and spaces. Study participants enjoy local Vancouver Island tourism with their families and friends, and often, but not always, look for a connection with other local people when they travel. The emotions associated with local tourism participation were positive and demonstrated an appreciation for the island and all it has to offer from a tourism perspective. The range of activities discussed by study participants was broad and reached from kayaking to whale watching to remote hiking, from self-propelled to motorized, from land to sea. From a local tourism perspective, the activities available to Vancouver Island residents is unmatched by off-island locations putting the local Vancouver Island tourism industry in a very advantageous situation – their markets already have pride in the places and spaces, they want

to be a part of the island community, they want to contribute to the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of the island.

The second objective documented quality of life through the Quality of Life Research Unit model of being, belonging, and becoming, with the addition of a fourth theme or category which was embedded within the discussions of local tourism and quality of life - the sense of space and pride of place that Vancouver Island residents attach to their communities. The female study participants enjoy the abundance of fresh air, green spaces, accessible outdoor opportunities, and the social connections within their home communities and across the island as they explore, learn, and visit with their friends, family members, and local residents.

The third objective evidenced the strength of the relationship between local Vancouver Island tourism participation and quality of life for its residents. All research contributors responded affirmatively and enthusiastically when asked if there was a relationship between the two topics. When one lives in a world class tourism destination, the choices for tourism participation are almost limitless, and this research demonstrates that those who choose to participate in local Vancouver Island tourism are the ones who take advantage of the plethora of opportunities that are available right in their own backyards and they share those times with their loved ones. As one focus group participant stated: “I really enjoy when friends come from out of town, and I can take them to these places, and kind of have this sense of being proud, not to show it off, but to have some sense of connection...and to share it with other people. It really feels good to share it with friends. For quality of life, it feels really good.”

5.2 Practical applications

In order to facilitate and increase local tourism participation and to foster a high quality of life for residents, it is recommended that people in the tourism industry continue to recognize the value of local residents as both customers and stakeholders in the development and delivery of tourism on Vancouver Island. The female study participants want to be a part of the local tourism industry – they know that tourism operators are their fellow community members, and they know that having access to the outdoor opportunities that they value are dependent upon a sustainable economy, environment and social community. The focus group participants want Vancouver Island tourism to remain authentic - they want to do what other locals are doing, they want to interact with and learn about their neighbouring communities, and they want to share their experiences with their friends and family and be able to showcase their sense of space and pride of place on Vancouver Island.

The tourism industry on Vancouver Island needs to learn more about their island residents and needs to find ways to engage with residents to facilitate and enable more participation from the people who are already on the island. It is vitally important for a tourism destination that is only accessible by air and water to create and sustain tourism opportunities

for the people who are already on the island. The tourism industry on Vancouver Island has the potential to connect residents and foster healthy, vibrant communities that are economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable.

Some specific suggestions from the focus group participants include offering open houses of local tourism accommodations, attractions, products, and services much like the 'Be a Hometown Tourist' concept employed by the Ladysmith community. While many tourism businesses may feel that they are doing that every day, residents need to be invited in and treated like a valued market. Locals have access to the same information as non-locals, but their methods of obtaining information about Vancouver Island products and services are quite different than that of a non-local tourist. Focus group participants want to know what they can do for a day trip, an overnight trip, and a two or three day excursion from their own communities. They want to see their local parks and recreation guides partnering with local tourism operators to provide suggestions on what to see and do on the island.

Facilitating local resident exchanges of favourite recreational sites, restaurants, farms, getaways, and markets is another way to encourage resident travel on the island. Social media was identified by one stakeholder as an integral piece of marketing to island residents and involving their guests in the sharing of local knowledge and information. And as residents often travel in the off-season, many participants expressed the desire for reduced rates, reflecting the knowledge that products and services may be limited in the off-season, and that while per trip expenditure may be lower, the frequency of trips is greater.

One particular topic that the researcher was expecting to hear more about from study participants was local food. While it was briefly noted by a few participants, Vancouver Island food, wine, and cuisine were not included in the majority of discussions. As agri-tourism initiatives gain momentum on Vancouver Island and across the province of BC, it is worth exploring the reasons behind this lack of interest from these participants. The researcher did not ask specifically about local foods, so it is either implied in the responses or food and agriculture are not necessarily of importance to the participants of this study. Either way, it is worth noting in the application of this research that local food is not associated with local tourism and/or that more studies are needed in that direction.

5.3 Future research opportunities

The research presented here has only scratched the surface of the topic of local Vancouver Island tourism participation and quality of life so the opportunity for further study is quite substantial. Through the delivery of the knowledge mobilization plan as detailed in Appendix A, the researcher has set up a way to connect tourism industry stakeholders with the results and applications of this study. Continuing to engage residents of Vancouver Island, the tourism industry and academia through meaningful dialogue and actions will form the basis for further exploration of this relevant topic of study. For those people outside the Vancouver Island region, this study can act as a guide for exploring and examining the relationship between local tourism participation and quality of life for residents in any chosen community, however, the researcher cautions that the context will be very different and as such, parts of this study may not be applicable.

As academics and practitioners in the field of sustainable leisure management, it is our responsibility to be leaders in creating socially, economically, and environmentally healthy, vibrant communities. The benefits of leisure participation are well documented in the National Benefits Hub, yet tourism research is scarcely mentioned (Alberta Recreation & Parks Association, 2010). There is a need for tourism, leisure, and recreation practitioners and academics to form partnerships, share resources, and support a transdisciplinary exchange of information to ensure that these interconnected fields of study are recognized and valued for their positive contributions to healthy, vibrant communities. The benefits of leisure can and should be applied to sustainable tourism initiatives on Vancouver Island and across the globe. And while it is important to think globally, one must first act locally.

Local tourism is a simple, affordable, accessible form of leisure, and can therefore be consumed by people of many income levels. Social tourism strategies in Europe can be adapted and integrated into the delivery of tourism services on Vancouver Island. Through a volunteer experience in April 2012, the researcher learned about the Family Holiday Association in the UK. Working from a motto of 'giving families a break', the organization sent over 1100 families on holiday in 2011 (Family Holiday Association, 2012). This model of facilitating tourism participation for people of modest income levels is an excellent example of sustainable leisure management that exemplifies the philosophy of a five-pillar approach to sustainability, which in addition to economic, social, and environmental perspectives also promotes education, and participation at its core. The researcher sees an opportunity for future studies and practical implications in the development of an organization similar to the Family Holiday Association on Vancouver Island.

While the researcher did have a significant interest in the data collected as the researcher is both a resident of Vancouver Island and a tourism industry stakeholder, that bias and connection to the industry was acknowledged and used to enrich the entire research

process – from inception to knowledge mobilization. Her passion for sustainable leisure management, learning, local tourism participation, quality of life and Vancouver Island provided motivation and enthusiasm for this timely, relevant thesis – Quality of Life – LOVIT!



FIGURE 6.

FEMALE LOCAL VANCOUVER ISLAND TOURISM PARTICIPATION

Sliskovic, L. (2010). Personal photo.

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APPENDIX A.

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION – THE GRAND MASTER’S PLAN...

Quality of Life – LOVIT is just the beginning of what the researcher hopes will be a sustainable leisure management success story. Because her research purpose is to better understand what local tourism is on Vancouver Island and how local tourism participation contributes to quality of life for Vancouver Island residents, the knowledge mobilization plan is fluid; it has changed for the collaborators and their needs. As the researcher gains a more in-depth understanding of the topic, she is mobilizing that knowledge into action. The researcher wants to create awareness and involvement of Vancouver Island residents in the local tourism opportunities that exist. The researcher also wants to create awareness of quality of life and how participation in local tourism can contribute to that sense of being, belonging and becoming. She wants that awareness to translate into involvement from residents and the tourism industry to help create a more sustainable leisure lifestyle for all residents of Vancouver Island. The researcher wants to create collaboration with like-minded individuals and communities and explore what this research can develop into.

A.1 March

The first open presentation of this thesis research topic took place on Friday, March 9th, 2012 with a presentation to classmates, and a number of faculty members. The researcher also invited two of the owners of the company she works with, one potential scholarship funder, and a tourism industry stakeholder. This small, yet diverse audience allowed the researcher to receive feedback and encouragement at an early stage in her research process.

A.2 March - Ongoing

Concurrent to the development of her thesis research proposal, the researcher started a blog that can be found at <http://sustainableleisurevancouverisland.wordpress.com>. This open concept idea for sharing her thoughts, stories, research and photos has enabled the researcher to interact with people outside her social and professional circles, and to start a dialogue on the topic in a casual, informed environment. The researcher has publicized her blog entries on her LinkedIn and Facebook accounts to inform her professional and social networks of updates.

A.3 April

April was the month that the researcher traveled to London, England to complete her field experience with the Family Holiday Association – a UK charity that provides low-income families with holiday opportunities almost exclusively within their own country (and often within a few hours of home). This experience allowed the researcher to gain a broader understanding of social tourism in Europe and to share her ideas with experts in the field of local tourism participation.

After that experience, the researcher traveled to Turkey as she was accepted to present her thesis proposal orally and visually at the 6th World Conference for Graduate Research in Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality in Fethiye, Turkey from April 25th – 29th, 2012. This international audience provided the opportunity to receive feedback and perspective on my proposed methods of data collection, while promoting both Vancouver Island and local tourism in an international context. The message is not only about Vancouver Island - this may be a worthwhile study for other researchers to repeat within their own home communities. The feedback she received was generally quite positive and reinforced her appreciation for the community in which she is studying.

A.4 May – August

May, June, July, August, and September were primarily used for data collection, and the beginning stages of the analysis. As part of both the data analysis and knowledge mobilization, the researcher would like feedback and confirmation that the data as she has collected and understood it, is accurate. With consent of her participants, she may be following up with individuals to clarify statements, details, and/or meanings from focus groups and/or semi-structured interviews. This iterative communication may be construed as a part of knowledge mobilization.

A.5 December

Within the first two weeks of December, the researcher presented her thesis to a panel of three examiners – two of these examiners were the researcher's thesis supervisors, one was an external examiner. The researcher's fellow classmates, students and instructors within the Department of Recreation and Tourism Management, and a small number of personally invited guests attended the presentation.

A.6 January 2013

The researcher will facilitate a discussion on local Vancouver Island tourism participation in the form of a public/stakeholder workshop in partnership with Tourism Vancouver Island. Designed as a two-hour workshop, the researcher will invite tourism industry stakeholders, focus group participants, elected officials, recreation professionals and members of the local economic development corporations to learn about the research project (focusing on methods, results, and practical applications) and how the tourism industry and academia can move forward with utilizing this information in a timely and relevant way. Based on the results of my data, the experience gained through the researcher's fieldwork (also a requirement of the Master's degree completion), and this final knowledge mobilization product, the researcher has turned this research into a stepping stone for future entrepreneurial opportunities.

APPENDIX B.

LIST OF POTENTIAL SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

1. Duane Bell, General Manager, Middle Beach Lodge (Pacific Rim, private)
2. Joli White, Tourism Coordinator, Vancouver Island North (North Island, not-for-profit)
3. Jack Springer, Owner and guide, Campbell River Whale Watching and Adventure Tours (Campbell River, private)
4. Lillian Hunt, Cultural Tourism Manager, U'mista Cultural Centre (North Island, not-for-profit)
5. David Littlejohn, Owner and general manager, Living Forest Oceanside Campground & RV Park (Central/Nanaimo, private business)
6. Laura Plant, Manager of Community Partnerships at Tourism BC (province wide, government)
7. Ross Forrest, Mayor, Lake Cowichan (Mid-island, municipal government)
8. Janet Docherty, Co-owner, Merridale Estate Cidery (Mid/south-island, private)

APPENDIX C.

LIST OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

1. Ross Forrest - Mayor, Lake Cowichan (municipal government)
2. Joli White - Tourism Coordinator, Vancouver Island North Tourism (destination management organization)
3. Amber Crofts, former Tourism Development Officer, Ministry of Jobs, Tourism, and Innovation (provincial government)
4. Cindy Damphousse - Vacation Guide Coordinator and Special Projects, Take 5 Publications (community-based not-for-profit organization)
5. Dave Petryk – President and CEO, Tourism Vancouver Island (regional destination management organization)
6. Rob Littlejohn – Owner and Operations Manager, Living Forest Oceanside Campground & RV Park (private business)

APPENDIX D.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

By beginning the semi-structured interview with personal questions, I am hoping to evoke favourable memories of local Vancouver Island tourism experiences. This will help ensure a more well-rounded response from the supply side.

- What is one of your most memorable local tourism experiences? Why?
- What do you feel are the benefits of local Vancouver Island tourism participation?
- Do you see a relationship between local tourism participation and quality of life for Vancouver Island residents? Please explain.
- What constraints or barriers to participation in local tourism on Vancouver Island do VI residents encounter?
- To overcome some of the barriers what can be done (incentives, loyalty programs, government support, awareness campaigns, resident passes, etc.) to encourage Vancouver Island residents to participate in local Vancouver Island tourism?
- Is your business/operation doing any of the previously mentioned initiatives to encourage VI residents to participate in local Vancouver Island tourism? Why or why not?
- Do you feel a collaborative local tourism initiative for Vancouver Island would benefit your business/operation? Why or why not?
- What other information do you feel is relevant to the Quality of Life – LOVIT research project?

APPENDIX E.

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Primary question	Clarification question(s)/statements	Probing question(s)
1. What is one of your most memorable local tourism experiences?	General question to warm the group up.	Who was with you? What made it so memorable?
2. What do you feel are the benefits of participating in local tourism?	Benefits to you and/or your family members.	Money? Time? Stress? Frequency?
3. What factors contribute to your quality of life?	Many definitions of quality of life, what is yours?	Individually? Family? Community? Spirituality? Physical health?
4. Do you see a relationship between local tourism participation and quality of life? How?	Note responses from question 2 and 3.	
5. What can be done to increase your local tourism participation?		Incentives, loyalty programs, gov't support, awareness campaigns, resident passes?
6. What other information do you feel is relevant to this discussion?	Any additional comments?	

APPENDIX F.

RECRUITMENT POSTER, FOCUS GROUPS



VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY

Hello! My name is Laurel Sliskovic and I am completing my Master of Arts degree in Sustainable Leisure Management at Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo. I am doing a thesis project entitled “Quality of Life – LOVIT (Local Vancouver Island Tourism)”, and am looking for females, aged 30 – 39, to participate in focus groups as part of my research.

The reason I am using focus groups is to gain a more in-depth understanding of what local tourism participation means to women in this age group, and how participation can effect quality of life for Vancouver Island residents. My goal is to have six females, aged 30 – 39 from your community (will be changed to Nanaimo, Tofino/Ucluelet, Campbell River, or the Comox Valley) take part in a focus group on specific date/time at specific place. Please consider this an invitation to participate.

I would appreciate the opportunity to answer any questions you may have about my research and your potential participation in a focus group, so please contact me by specific date if you are interested. Your participation is completely voluntary and anonymous.

Thank you for your time. Have a happy day!

Laurel Sliskovic
Student, MA-SLM, Vancouver Island University
laurel@campingbc.com
250-618-9336

APPENDIX G.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO QUALITY OF LIFE RESEARCH UNIT'S QUALITY OF LIFE MODEL

Retrieved and adapted from: http://www.utoronto.ca/qol/qol_model.htm

<i>being</i>	<i>who one is</i>
Physical Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical health • personal hygiene • nutrition • exercise • grooming and clothing • general physical appearance • psychological health and adjustment
Psychological Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cognitions • feelings • self-esteem, self-concept and self-control
Spiritual Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal values • personal standards of conduct • spiritual beliefs
<i>belonging</i>	<i>connections with one's environments</i>
Physical Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • home • workplace/school • neighbourhood • community • intimate others
Social Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • family • friends • co-workers • neighbourhood and community • adequate income • health and social services
Community Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employment • educational programs • recreational programs • community events and activities
<i>becoming</i>	<i>achieving personal goals, hopes, and aspirations</i>
Practical Becoming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • domestic activities • paid work • school or volunteer activities
Leisure Becoming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seeing to health or social needs. • activities that promote relaxation and stress reduction
Growth Becoming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • activities that promote the maintenance or improvement of knowledge and skills • adapting to change.

APPENDIX H.

REFLECTIONS

I am so passionate about my research! Exploring local Vancouver Island tourism participation and quality of life through a Master's thesis in Sustainable Leisure Management has been an extraordinary experience for me. From the conceptualization of the topic, through to the data analysis and knowledge mobilization, this academic journey has helped me to create opportunities and expand my skills and abilities.

I truly feel as though my research is timely and relevant to sustainable leisure management on Vancouver Island. Local Vancouver Island tourism (LOVIT) is what makes the island such an amazing place to live and I want to use my knowledge and experience to get as many people involved in tourism as possible to ensure that we, as residents, are in control of our economy, our environment, and our social communities. Vancouver Island needs its residents to benefit from all that we have to offer, and the more our communities connect with one another, the healthier our island will be. I feel so grateful to be able to live on an island so rich in natural resources and beauty, but I sense there is sometimes a disconnect between those who are thriving and those people who are merely surviving. I want to use my education to facilitate healthy leisure participation on Vancouver Island and local tourism is my chosen approach as I continue to experience firsthand its relationship to my high quality of life.

The findings of my research were that local Vancouver Island tourism is about people, emotions, activities, and places and spaces. I also discovered that quality of life can be categorized into being, belonging, and becoming, but also that the overarching theme for quality of life on Vancouver Island is the pride of place and sense of space that islanders have. These two concepts of local tourism and quality of life share a strong relationship as evidenced through the strength of positive responses from the female study participants and the industry stakeholders who I interviewed.

The participants seemed genuinely interested in the topic of local Vancouver Island tourism participation and quality of life. Though I did not specifically ask, it came up in a number of conversations that participants had not vocalized their most memorable local tourism experiences, nor had they ever discussed what quality of life meant to them. For me, this realization reinforced the importance of sharing knowledge about our chosen fields. It is imperative that as recreation, tourism, and leisure academics and professionals, we make the effort to connect with our communities and find innovative ways to facilitate sustainable leisure participation.

As I reflect back on the process itself, I find myself looking at the first page of ideas I wrote down and I see that I have written: process not an end point. And I really have done my best to embrace the process. In order to make sense of it all, I have worked through the

guidelines for preparing a thesis and a thesis proposal and have made comments along the way (starting with the proposal phase).

Coming into the Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management, I had a pretty good idea about what I wanted to write a thesis on. I started by looking at families and camping – in part because I loved camping with my family when I was growing up and also because I have worked at the Living Forest Oceanside Campground & RV Park in Nanaimo since June 2001 and have seen so many wonderful families enjoying their time together in a positive, healthy environment. A lot of what I love about campers is that (generally) they get outside, they make friends, they play, and they are all around a great segment of the tourism industry to interact with on a daily basis. But as I explored that topic further, I started to realize that a lot of really great people don't enjoy camping, and that if I focused my research on one particular user group, I may exclude a whole population of leisure participants.

And from all of the advice that I received – especially in the first few months when trying to determine a topic – I knew I needed to make this thesis something I was really passionate about or the next twelve to fourteen months were going to be very difficult. On December 14th, 2011, I handed in a research proposal with the following purpose: To create awareness and understanding of the benefits of simple, affordable, and accessible local tourism participation on Vancouver Island and how that participation contributes to the social, environmental, and economic sustainability of Vancouver Island.

My documentation over the next few months is not the best, but I do know that fine-tuning my research purpose was done with the guidance of my amazing co-supervisors – Joanne Schroeder and Ken Hammer. With passion and expertise in the role of families in leisure and recreation, Joanne provided sound advice and was often the one to look at the big picture and help bring it all back to where it needed to be. Ken's dedication to learning and excelling was evident in the way he posed questions and continually required that I make it clear exactly what I wanted to accomplish and how I was going to make it happen. To have a team so different in their approach to learning, understanding and guiding while at the same time being so dedicated to my success is a gift that I am very thankful for. I do love a challenge.

By March 2012 my research purpose was solidified and I presented my thesis proposal in written and oral form. With my supervisors' approval and feedback from my classmates and a number of invited colleagues and guests, I was set free from my coursework and was on to the next phase of my thesis – and it was all on me. I took the month of April to complete my field experience, which proved to be invaluable learning and a much-needed transition from the classroom to the non-structured academic world.

My next task was to obtain ethics approval for my data collection. This process really forced me to think through every detail of my research in a way that was logical, time-bound, and realistic. After only two iterations, I was approved by the VIU Ethics Review Board to begin my thesis research! I started out quite strong – I sent emails to my potential industry stakeholders

and had my first interview eight days later. Because the high tourist season on Vancouver Island was quickly approaching, I was not able to interview a few of the stakeholders on my list, which was disappointing. While I have every confidence in the data that was collected for this exploratory study, I still would have liked two particular people to have participated. My full time tourism management job also demands a lot of me in the summer months, so I will just take this as a lesson in the importance of making time for students and contributing to learning and research.

It was also extremely difficult to get focus group participants. As a result of the ethics review process, I had to alter my original recruitment strategy and was required to develop a recruitment poster so participants were freely volunteering to be a part of my study. I thought my recruitment posters were quite appealing so I really didn't anticipate that females would not respond, but they didn't. In conversations with various faculty members, the sentiment was that posters are a very challenging way to recruit. By this time, a number of people in my professional and social circles were fully aware of my research project and had expressed their interest in being a participant in my study. In order to keep my timeline and ensure my data was collected, I carried out my focus groups with less members than originally planned. I also did not ask the exact ages of the females who volunteered to be focus group participants. I do know that at least one woman was under the age of 30 but I am certain that her contribution was far more valuable than excluding her because she was not quite 30 years old. The literature on life stages and age categorization is not consistent so I would have accepted women between the ages of 25 and 44. Again, because my research was exploratory (and a learning process for me as a student), the richness of the data provided more than enough material for me to analyze.

As I transcribed my audio recordings into text, my excitement over my chosen topic resurfaced. Through the transcription process, I was also able to evaluate and critically analyze my own strengths and weaknesses as a researcher and as a communicator. As I strive to constantly improve my skills and abilities, it is important to take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves.

I am an avid lifelong learner and being a part of research has been fascinating for me. I loved sharing my topic and some of the literature with the participants in my study. And the process of writing and re-writing enabled and challenged me to thoroughly dig through my topic and the related literature. It was evident once I had completed my first draft that my literature review lacked the depth necessary to analyze and write at a master's level. I often struggled with the breadth of my study, as there is so much valuable information to be shared within the field of sustainable leisure management. But the value of my chosen sources and the quality of my writing trumped the addition of extraneous references and unnecessary words. Also within the re-write process, I feel as though my original motivations for applying to complete my Master's of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management have resurfaced. One of the first things I recorded when I began this journey was "feasibility of bringing the Family Holiday Association

UK program to Vancouver Island”. This study of local Vancouver Island tourism participation and its relationship to quality of life has reinforced my desire to help facilitate healthy, positive tourism experiences for people of all socio-economic circumstances. Local tourism participation has such an effect on my quality of life; I play outside a lot on this island and I know that makes me happy. The new economic foundation *5 ways to improve well being* are: connect; be active; take notice; keep learning; and give (nef, 2012). We are so fortunate to live on Vancouver Island and to be Canadian citizens – we need to incorporate these 5 ways into our daily lives, and we need to find ways to enable more people to thrive in our communities. I truly believe in what I am studying; LOVIT is simple, affordable, and accessible.

I feel so blessed to be in a position where I get to study what I love and believe in, and that the opportunities I can create for myself at this point are limitless. I believe I have reignited an appetite for research in a few of my industry colleagues through my return to the world of academia. My passion for what I am studying has provoked conversations between me and a number of my friends and family members and I am so grateful for all the love and support that I have had through this entire process. The information I gained was so valuable not only to my thesis, but also to my future plans to create a Vancouver Island organization similar to the Family Holiday Association in London, England. I’m thinking I’ll call it LOVIT for Families!