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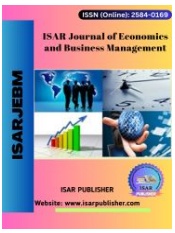

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The Art of Communicating with Business Developers via Multiple Intelligences: A Case Study of what is in a Periodical's Message?

Jill Fjelstul[1], Catherine Johnson[2], Earney Lasten[3], Randall S. Upchurch[4*],

[1]Associate Professor, Rosen College of Hospitality Management, University of Central Florida, Orlando, U.S.A.

[2]Associate Professor, School of Resort & Hospitality Management, 10501 FGCU Boulevard South, Fort Myers, Florida USA

[3]Senior Research Scientist, Director in International Hospitality & Tourism Management Degree Program, University of Curaçao, Curaçao

[4]Professor, School of Resort & Hospitality Management, 10501 FGCU Boulevard South, Fort Myers, Florida USA.

***Corresponding Author**
Randall S. Upchurch
Professor, School of Resort & Hospitality Management, 10501 FGCU Boulevard South, Fort Myers, Florida USA.

Orcid ID: 0000-0003-3194-308X

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Abstract: A singular publication titled *The Voice of the Vacation Ownership Industry: Developments*, hereafter referred to as *Developments*, is dedicated to sharing development trends and issues pertaining to their readership base which consists of academicians, consumers, entrepreneurs, legislators, and resort developers. However, to date, there is an absence of empirically oriented studies within peer reviewed journals structured around modeling message content as aligned with information assimilation processes leveraged by that publication's readership. In an effort to address that void, the enclosed research note is premised upon Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences whereby he proffers that individuals filter information through nine distinct intelligences which in turn allow an individual to dynamically encode message content as representative of the nine intelligences of 1) bodily-kinesthetic, 2) existential, 3) intrapersonal, 4) interpersonal, 5) linguistic, 6) logical-mathematical, 7) musical, 8) naturalistic, and 9) visual-spatial. The employed pilot study content analysis process indicates that all nine of Gardner's multiple intelligences were represented albeit at differing levels of exposure, thus implying an incomplete representation as to how timeshare product offerings and services integrate with his/her hospitality and recreational values, attitudes, and interests.

Keywords: Semantic mapping, multiple intelligence theory, timeshare recreational experiences.

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Introduction

In 2002, Upchurch and Gruber (2002) noted that the timeshare industry, a subsector of the hospitality industry and correspondingly associated with recreational activities relative to natural and manmade experiences, had grown in the number of available resorts, national and international locations, number of owners, rapid market expansion as spearheaded by the entrance of branded lodging companies such as Disney, Hilton, Holiday Inns, Marriott, and Wyndham and accentuated by an impressive reporting by owners that 90% are happy with their overall ownership experience (AIF, 2022). Now twenty-one years later, a quarterly periodical publication produced by the American Resort Development Association (ARDA), the timeshare industry's trade association, titled The Voice of the Vacation Ownership Industry: Developments, hereafter referred to as Developments, remains dedicated to sharing trends and issues with a possible outreach of academicians, consumers, entrepreneurs, legislators, and resort developers (Carpenter & Upchurch, 2008).

To date, there has been a lack of empirically oriented studies structured around modeling message content published within the American Resort Development Association (ARDA) publication, Developments. It should be understood that the purpose of ARDA's publication is to share 'news pertaining to trends, economic impact studies, business features, and membership' to an audience comprised of legislators, regulatory bodies, academics, financial analysts, allied organizations, and mainstream media.' Within that context, the purpose of the study as detailed within this manuscript entails a sentiment analysis of articles published within ARDA's Developments periodical by means of overlaying Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. According to Gardner's multiple intelligence theory, people use nine modalities to filter and internalize information. Furthermore, people may be particularly strong in a specific interpretive intelligence although it is quite possible for a person to combine intelligences in making sense of information (Gardner, 2013). Relative to the application of this multiple intelligence model, this pilot study is seminal in that it provides an analysis of message sentiment and interpretive

faculties expressed in article content to Development's readership, thus offering a window into the presence of predominant or perhaps multiple modalities addressed within this publication.

Study Focus. In an effort to address this absence of sentiment and multiple intelligence analysis with particular interest being the Developments periodical, the enclosed research note is premised upon Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences whereby he proffers that individuals filter information through nine distinct intelligences of which faculties allow an individual to dynamically encode message content as representative of nine intelligences (Gardner, 2013, 2011, 2007, 1999, 1983). Those intelligences are 1) bodily-kinesthetic, 2) existential, 3) intrapersonal, 4) interpersonal, 5) linguistic, 6) logical-mathematical, 7) musical, 8) naturalistic, and 9) visual-spatial. Furthermore, the need to analyze article content published within Developments aligns with Macnamara's notation that effective communications, as expressed by multinational organizations, must incorporate human faculties (intelligences) of their intended audiences (Macnamara, 2016). The underlying premise, and according to Gardner, these intelligences are fundamental to an individual internalizing information for the effect of understanding interactions between a person's surrounding naturally occurring or built environments. It is this latter component that applies to the process of deciphering and need to properly frame information presented within ARDA's Developments publication.

Materials and Methods

As stated previously, the foundation for the enclosed study is based upon the concept of semantic intelligence mapping which is a method of understanding how individuals internalize, encode, and interpret information as extracted from words, phrases, and sentences (Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2011). According to Woods (1975), semantic analysis is fundamental in explaining how experiences and derived emotions are afforded meaning by an individual and from a practical perspective, and according to Sternberg (1999), this process refers to the underlying utility of such knowledge to contextualize real-life experiences. For the context of this study, intelligence means to perceive or comprehend message content signifying an individual's ability to internalize and then categorize information in a meaningful manner (Dorling & Fairbairn, 2013).

Research Objectives

There were four research questions established for this study. Those questions were:

R_1. What overarching thematic categories were conveyed via cover page imagery?

R_2. What was the general 'tone' of main content published in Developments as presented over time?

R_3. Which of Howard Gardner's Nine Multiple Intelligences were represented within main content?

R_4. What interrelationships exist between the detected multiple intelligences as expressed within main content?

Study Focus, Sampling and Processes

The research team approached the Director of AIF (the American Resort Development Association's foundation) and the editor-in-chief of ARDA's Development's publication requesting access to digital versions of that publication for the purpose of analyzing main article content by overlaying Gardner's Multiple Intelligence model for the purpose of identifying which intelligences were being addressed while communicating with timeshare resort developers. This digital content review process excluded the review of sponsor-provided or other forms of paid advertisements. It should also be understood that the editor-in-chief had no knowledge of Garner's Multiple Intelligence model nor was the editorial staff aware of any previously conducted analysis of periodical content thus supporting ARDA's interest in potentially aligning message content with this publication's intended target audience, meaning timeshare resort developers.

Sampling and Processes.

The research team analyzed digital files as published in the Developments publication for a three-year period encompassing the main categories of a) current issue stories, b) sales and marketing practices and strategies, c) innovative approaches relative to business operations, d) legal issues surrounding the industry, e) technology trends, and f) emerging issues.

The Atlas.ti 9 content analysis tool was chosen due to the software's ability to code word strings into meaningful categories thereby generating maps of predominant underlying and meaningful patterns. In doing so, the researchers deployed a qualitative research approach to analyzing article content with the primary focus being upon profiling the underlying interrelationships. Secondly, those findings were then set within Gardner's Multiple Intelligence framework with the intent being to model if Developments content represented a predominant, or perhaps a combination of, Gardner's intelligences (Gardner, 1999; Gardner, 2007). As an overview, this structured analysis was capable of determining if all nine of Gardner's multiple intelligences were represented and at what degree of exposure. A primary assumption was that an unequal focus placed upon a singular interpretative faculty or a limited number of interpretative faculties could lead to possible misinterpretation of message content with the intended target audience.

Coding of Content

The coding of content began with deductive coding as comprised of nine pre-established categories intended to represent each of the multiple intelligences established by Gardner. Those nine preset categories were labeled Body (BKI), Existential (EXI), Independent (IAI), Team (IEI), Writing (LI), Music (MUI), Nature (NAI), Number (LMI), and Image (VSI). The next phase entailed leveraging inductive coding as generated by Atlas.ti within the context of Gardner's nine intelligence categories thus generating a profile of synonyms as associated with each intelligence type. Figure 1 is an abbreviated visual representation of this resultant content analysis and synonym profile.

Figure 1: Adapted from Armstrong, T. (2009). Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom (3rd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

Results and Discussions

Findings R1. Preliminary analysis of cover page themes

To discern the major thematic categories addressed within Developments, the researchers leveraged an Application Programming Interface (API) analysis of cover page images which yielded four categorical themes. Those derived categories were a) resort properties, b) consumption of products and services, c) leisure, recreation, and vacationing, and d) the involvement of people in the co-creation of experiences. Moreover, imagery pertaining to timeshare resorts and geographical locations had a 95% probability of occurring b) images associated with membership products and services occurred at a 91% probability, c) pictures pertaining to leisure, environment, nature, recreational, and vacation experiences occurred at a 90% probability, and d) the role of people in the promotion, delivery, and measurement of those products and services occurred at a 90% probability of occurring. Therefore, it is quite evident that the overarching goals leveraged by the editorial team concentrate on generating public awareness via focusing upon a) raising awareness for the timeshare industry as a viable vacation accommodation alternative, b) the range, utility, and quality of timeshare resort products and services as associated with consumer vacationing needs, and c) presenting, fostering and perpetuating a positive image of the timeshare resort developers and the timeshare industry as a whole. Such findings are perhaps of no surprise given that the stated intent by ARDA is to 'disseminate information to its members.'

Findings R2. Measurement of Message Tone over time

As a preliminary data analysis step and given that Developments is the singular voice of the timeshare industry, it was important to gather the general sentiment (message tone) of content as expressed across the various issues. For this analysis the researchers mapped out sentiment captured over three years thereby entailing a review of overall tone expressed within sentences and paragraphs. In total, this process contained a review of 868,371 entries. In analyzing those sentences and paragraphs, the software categorized message content into the three categories of positive, neutral, and negative sentiments. For example, a positive reference could be worded in an affirmative direction such as 'I like the new design of membership benefits', a neutral reference could be 'I'm not sure if I like the updated design of the pool area', and a negative reference could be 'there was a drastic decrease in revenues related to Covid.' This process resulted in a Sankey flow diagram of sentiments for Year 1, 2 and 3. The Sankey diagram noted in Figure 2 is a visualization technique which shows the flow of message sentiment from the initial node (Years) via arcs (sentiment paths) into the final nodes of a) positive sentences, b) positive paragraphs, c) neutral sentences, d) neutral paragraphs, e) negative sentences, and f) negative paragraphs. It is important to note that the size of each arc represents the numbers of references contained thus indicating the magnitude of the flow. Figure 2 indicates a significant numerical increase in the number of total references detected in Year 2 which upon evaluating message content were largely rebound strategies related to the aftermath of

the pandemic; a call to action related to issues relating to resales concerns, an increase in acquisitions of independent timeshare resorts by one of the major lodging brands, improvements in membership services, and sustained needs surrounding the positive merits of timeshare ownership (n=183,079). In addition, it seems rather unfortunate that the level of neutral references (n=95,926) also increased during that same period thus indicating missed impression management opportunities by simple wording of message content. It should be noted that the number of negative references (n=111,337) was also elevated during that same period. This finding, however, should not always be positioned in a negative light in that some of the instances were worded negatively while in actuality the underlying intent was intended to be positive references. For instance, a noted decrease in owner complaints concerning sales, marketing, or owner services was in essence a positive outcome.

Lastly, and from an impression management perspective, the goal of Development's editorial staff is to influence the perceptions of readership concerning the merits of ownership along with an associated credibility and reputation of the timeshare industry. A key point here is that Development's is the voice of the timeshare industry, of which industry has been under scrutiny in the past due to less than scrupulous sales and marketing activities. It is within that very context that the Sankey diagramming process would be of great value to the editors given the visualization patterns which it yields. For instance, applying this process of sentiment analysis specific to content from each issue before its release would be a powerful method in confirming message content as being positive, negative, or perhaps neutral. That sentiment then could be mapped over time by issue and by year to gain an aggregated view of sentiment. On that note, a deeper concern would be if message content as written, and intended to be positive, was visually profiled as either negative or neutral in impression.

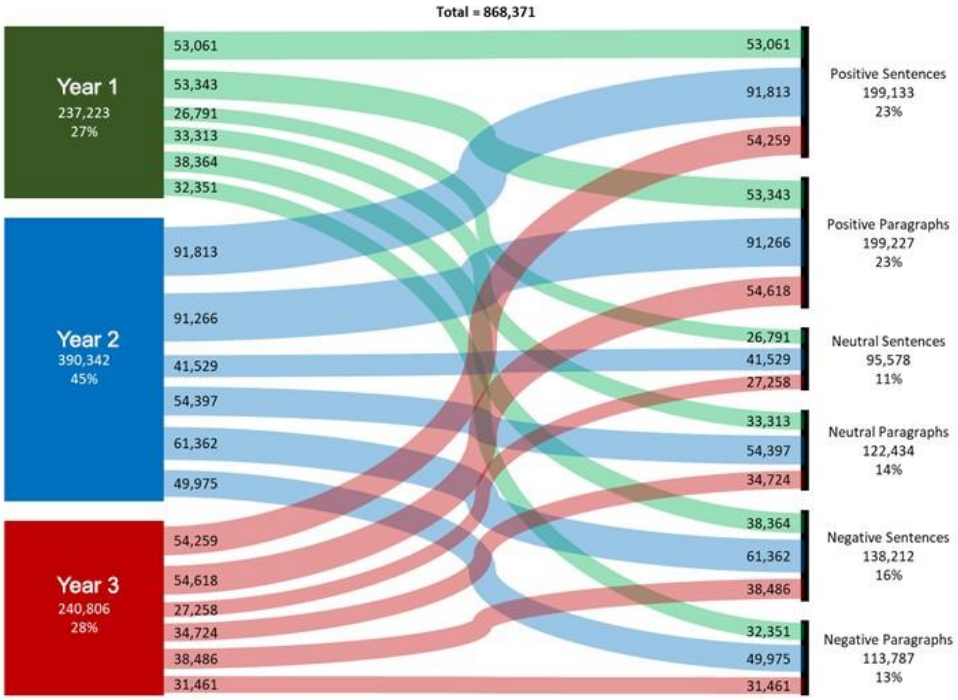
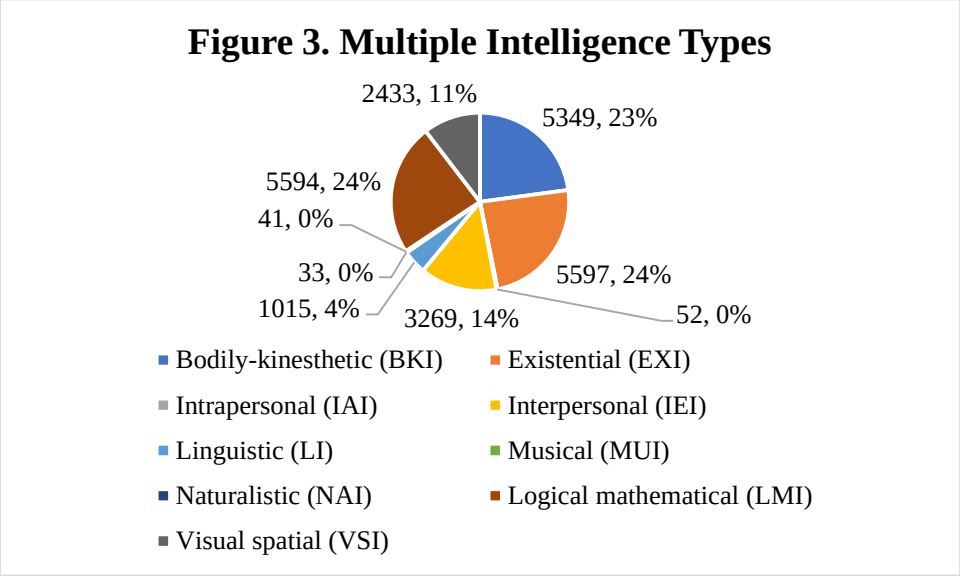


Figure 2: Sankey visualization of Message Sentiment – All Years

Findings R3. Multiple Intelligence Profile

In reviewing three years of main article content, five overarching findings came forward when applying Gardner's Multiple Intelligences model. Those predominant findings were that: a) all nine intelligences were represented, b) there were five dominant intelligences represented (BKI/EXI/IEI/LMI/VSI), c) each intelligence received differing levels of exposure in terms of frequency of reference, d) there were significant crossovers in terms of intelligences being represented within a single article as noted by intercorrelations, and e) those correlations between the various intelligences ranged from weak to high.

Figure 3 presents the profile of intelligences represented in order of numerical representation as: BKI with 5349 code references or 23% of overall word count, EXI (5597 code references out of a total or 24.07% of overall word count), IEI had a total of 3269 code references or 14.06% of the overall word count, LMI with 5594 code references or 24.05% of overall word count), and VSI had 2433 code references out or 10.46% of the overall word count, and LI with 1015 references or 4.36% of the overall word count. Collectively there was a heavy emphasis placed upon the three intelligences of BKI, EXI, and LMI (71.42%). However, the fact that IEI, VSI, and LI were detected may imply that an interactive effect could be evident…as to whether that decision was made consciously be the editorial team was not a component of this study. It is the possibility of such an interactive relationship that led to the application of intercorrelation procedures as noted in the following section.



Findings R3: Main article analysis. Evidence of Multiple Intelligences

Findings R4. Multiple Intelligence Intercorrelations

Relative to the presence of embedded associations between the intelligence types, BKI was highly correlated with LMI (.76), moderately correlated with EXI (.5) and IEI (.52), and had a low correlation with VSI (.29), and a very low correlation with IAI (.01), LI (.12), and NAI (.01); EXI was moderately correlated with LMI (.57), and had low correlation values with IEI (.32) and VSI (.3), and very low correlation values with IAI (.01), LI (.13), and NAI (.01); IAI had very low correlation values with IEI (.01), LI (.01), and VSI (.01); LI had very low correlations with LMI (.16), MUI (.01), NAI (.01), and VSI (.16); LMI had a low correlation with MUI (.01); MUI had a low correlation with VSI (.37) and a very low correlation with NAI (.04).

This correlational profile concerning the relationship between the differing intelligences is not conceptually surprising given the nature of the timeshare resort industry in that it embodies elements of co-creation and immersive experiences, participation in nature and the environment, consumption of recreational activities and attractions, resort operation programs, owner service programs, attainment of financial goals by developers, entrepreneurial endeavors taken by timeshare leaders, image perpetuation as transacted by timeshare developers, and owner satisfaction with provided membership services. However, given that this industry was built by an entrepreneurial spirit there should also be no surprise that actions taken by key timeshare leaders or their companies (IEI) correlates highly with key industry metrics in terms of revenues, owner satisfaction, market share, net promoter scores, etcetera (LMI). Furthermore, the fact that BKI correlates strongly with LMI is also logical given that one of the primary goals set by ARDA pertains to positive impacts associated with impression management, ethics, sales, marketing, and financial solvency which is known to be important to owners, regulators, Wall Street, and legislators.

Table 1. Intelligence Types by number of entry references & correlation values

	BKI	EXI	IAI	IEI	LI	LMI	MUI	NAI	VSI
BKI									
EXI	3645 (.5) *								
IAI	45 (.01)	43 (.01)							
IEI	2958 (.52) *	2169 (.32)	30 (.01)						
LI	697 (.12)	755 (.13)	7 (.01)	400 (.10)					
LMI	4742 (.76) **	4053 (.57) *	19 (.0)	3861 (.77) **	924 (.16)				
MUI	21 (.0)	28 (.0)	-	17 (.01)	7 (.01)	33 (.01)			
NAI	32 (.01)	37 (.01)	-	18 (.01)	10 (.01)	14 (.0)	3 (.04)		
VSI	1726 (.29)	1863 (.3)	16 (.01)	1011 (.22)	483 (.16)	2160 (.37)	17 (.37)	21 (.01)	

Scale: 0<r≤.19 Very low; .2≤r≤.39 Low; .4≤r≤.59 Moderate*;.6≤r≤.79 High**; .8≤r≤1.0 Very high

BKI. Importance is placed upon being physically adroit and interactive with their surroundings. Keywords and associated synonyms: sports, interactive sports, dancing, outdoor activities.
EXI. Importance is placed upon recreational choice, meaning of travel, meaning of ownership, importance of personal growth, spiritual growth, ethical growth, importance of aesthetics. Keywords and associated synonyms: personal growth, affirming existence, independent, free thinker, free agent, meaning existence.
IEI. Importance of timeshare products and services are framed within the context of relationships with family, friends, and others. They are often described as having a high degree of emotional intelligence. Keywords and associated synonyms: empathetic, cooperative, sensitive to others, emotive, team player, caring.
IAI. Importance is framed with a) knowing what he/she wants to achieve, b) personal aggrandizement, and c) personal motives and interests. Keywords and associated synonyms: Self-awareness, intrinsic motivation, personal goals, entrepreneur, introspection.
LI. Importance is placed upon spoken and written words, cues, and symbolism. Keywords and associated synonyms: storytelling, fiction, public speaking, debating, persuasive discourse, public relations.
LMI. Importance is framed within solving problems, understanding patterns, and relationships via the use of numerical values, metrics, and causal relationships. Keywords and associated synonyms: numbers, math, problem solving, statistical patterns, pattern identification, analysis.
MUI. Importance is placed upon musical characteristics associated with melody, harmony, rhythm, and timbre. Keywords and associated synonyms: melody, musical instrument, singing, songs, pitch, timbre, tone.
NAI. Importance is placed upon one's ability to connect with naturally occurring flora, fauna, recreational activities, and the wilderness. Keywords and associated synonyms: nature, flora, fauna, birding, surfing conservation, walking, jogging, hiking.
VSI. Importance is placed upon navigation, geographical spatial relations, drawing, and maps. Keywords and associated synonyms: maps, drawing, graphic, painting, puzzles, charts, graphs.

Future Directions and Pilot Study Conclusions

The current study has provided a foundation for future research. First, a suggested follow up study would be to determine the impact or combination, of intelligences upon positive impressions of the Development's publication from the lens of the timeshare developer. Such premise would be based upon the notion that successful communications are dependent upon how messages are interpreted and applied by the recipient (University of Tennessee, 2022). The process of analyzing message content within the framework of addressing multiple intelligences, therefore, will provide predictive value to this journal's readership.

Second, the current study did not assess which faculties or combination of faculties were leveraged by readership as filtering mechanisms. Message content may possibly be misaligned with how Developments readership analyzes and subsequently assimilates information, consequently leading to an incomplete fit as to how timeshare product offerings and services integrate with timeshare consumer recreational experience values, attitudes, and interests. A future study could explore how individuals make sense of their communications by means of faculties inherent to their innate decision-making processes (Macnamara, 2016).

Third, future research could be designed with appeal to Wall Street, real estate investors, and existing/future timeshare consumers. A deeper analysis would be needed given that the content in Developments is heavily positioned for the purpose of highlighting timeshare developer products and services while representing the interests of vacation owners. Messaging for such demographics would therefore differ in content and the intelligence type being leveraged.

Fourth, future research could include goals of raising awareness and the ultimate selection of the timeshare industry as a career path by college students and young professionals. A study could be designed to explore educational and training programming related to the findings and variables of the current study to enhance curriculum and partnerships at higher education institutions for future workforce considerations and as contributions to recreation and hospitality education, in general.

Lastly, the findings of the current study could serve as a catalyst to explore similar agendas with alternative publications related to the timeshare industry, more specifically, the travel, recreation, and hospitality industries. Identifying best practices of communications via multiple intelligences would benefit not only the additional audiences but would serve as comparative findings to the current study, offering additional insight to the ARDA in general and Developments more specifically.

Disclosure statement

There are no conflicts of interests pertaining to the conduct of this study.

Contributor notes

Dr. Jill Fjelstul, Associate Professor at the University of Central Florida Rosen College of Hospitality Management, conducts research in travel, sustainability, recreation, and hospitality education.

Dr. Catherine Johnson, Associate Professor for the School of Resort & Hospitality Management at Florida Gulf Coast University conducts research on organizational behavior, organizational development, and consumer behavior specific to hospitality and tourism businesses.

Dr. Earney Lasten, Senior Scientist for the University of Curacao, conducts research pertaining to tourism consumer analytics.

Dr. Randall Upchurch, Professor for the School of Resort & Hospitality Management at Florida Gulf Coast University conducts research on tourism and hospitality consumer behavior, timeshare resorts and development, corporate social responsibility, ethics, and sustainability.

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