



Research note

Exploring tourists' perceptions of tourism impacts

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ABSTRACT

Unlike how tourism is viewed by residents, little is known about how tourists feel about tourism in the destination. Nevertheless, studies have shown that tourists' emotional bonds with the destination positively affect their perceptions of and reactions to tourism in the destination. Such emotional bonds often vary based on tourists' previous experience in the destination. Thus, this study explored how tourists' emotional solidarity with residents influences their perceptions of tourism and how first-timers and repeat tourists differ in their views. To this end, 404 responses from South Korean sport tourists were analyzed. Though differences were not evident between first-timers and repeat tourists in their emotional solidarity or attitudes toward tourism, a positive relationship was confirmed between emotional solidarity and perceptions of tourism. The findings suggest that attitudes toward tourism is no longer a construct exclusive to residents and destination managers should also consider tourists' views.

1. Introduction

Understanding how residents perceive tourism impacts and support tourism development within a destination has received considerable attention in tourism research (Harrill, 2004) so as to better understand how tourism can be most beneficial for many involved parties (Hunt, Durham, Driscoll, & Honey, 2015; Su, Huang, & Huang, 2016). Unequivocally, a preponderance of such studies have focused on predictors or antecedents of how individuals view tourism, which include economic dependency (Pizam, 1978), travel history (Draper, Woosnam, & Norman, 2011), demographic background (Huh & Vogt, 2008), and distance from tourism center (Fredline & Faulkner, 2001) to name a few. More recently, a growing body of tourism research has considered the role of social relationships between host and guest in explaining residents' perceptions of tourism benefits and approval of tourism development (Lai & Hitchcock, 2017; Li & Wan, 2017). Focusing on “affective bonds individuals feel with one another” (Woosnam, 2008, p. 16), Woosnam (2012) and Hasani, Moghavvemi, and Hamzah (2016) each found that residents with greater emotional solidarity with tourists also demonstrated more optimistic views of the impacts of tourism.

Implicit in each of these studies is a focus on how residents think about tourism in their community or how their social emotion toward tourists affects their perceptions. Tourism research to date has mostly neglected to examine how tourists think about tourism impacts and

tourism development in the destination they are visiting. Arguably, this research gap has resulted from a dichotomous view where non-residents of a destination are expected to have little opinion regarding what is planned for and managed in the destination. Nevertheless, such a dichotomous view should be questioned on two grounds. First, tourists may become emotionally attached to the destination (Cardinale, Nguyen, & Melewar, 2016; Cheng & Wu, 2015) and sometimes identify themselves with it (Su & Swanson, 2017). Consequentially, tourists can become mindful about the environmental and cultural impacts of their behavior (Cheng & Wu, 2015; Chiu, Lee, & Chen, 2014; Su & Swanson, 2017). Second, efforts in tourism research have increased to explore a single construct from both residents' and tourists' perspectives. For instance, place attachment has been studied using data collected from both residents and tourists (Gu & Ryan, 2008; McCool & Martin, 1994), as has destination image (Stylidis, Shani, & Belhassen, 2017).

Thus, it would be both logical and meaningful to ask tourists about their perceptions of tourism impacts on the destination and what contributes to more positive attitudes concerning tourism development. Studies (e.g., Cardinale et al., 2016; Su & Swanson, 2017) have not only supported the idea of emotional attachment emerging between tourists and the destination, but also many popular destinations (e.g., Hawaii or London) have witnessed a substantial increase in the number of repeat tourists (Hawaii Tourism Authority, 2017; VisitBritain, 2015) who are more likely to be emotionally connected to the destinations they

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frequent. This, in turn, creates a good environment for tourists to develop emotional solidarity with residents, as the two groups are more likely to have repeated interaction. According to the emotional solidarity theory (Durkheim, 1912/1995), individuals' affective bonds with one another is enhanced as their interaction increases. Indeed, in a study of residents' feelings toward festival participants, emotional solidarity was greater with residents who participated in the festival for multiple years (Woosnam, Aleshinloye, Van Winkle, & Qian, 2014). This implies that recurring interaction promotes residents' emotional solidarity, which is also likely to be true for tourists.

Repeated visits to a destination potentially provide tourists with a greater emotional attachment to the destination (Cardinale et al., 2016) and its residents (Joo, Woosnam, & Dudensing, 2015), and this may alter tourists' perceptions of tourism in the destination (Woosnam, 2012). The close association between residents' emotional solidarity with tourists and their attitudes concerning tourism indicates that individuals who have more pleasant relationships with others in tourism settings also tend to be more optimistic about tourism (Lai & Hitchcock, 2017; Li & Wan, 2017; Woosnam, 2012). Thus, individuals, or particularly residents, consider non-monetary rewards (i.e., social emotions) as much as monetary benefits when supporting tourism (Woosnam, 2012). It is possible to suspect that tourists' perceptions of tourism in a destination are guided by their emotional solidarity with residents. In other words, when tourists feel welcomed and emotionally close to residents, they may also maintain favorable views of tourism in the destination. On the flip side, low emotional solidarity between tourists and residents may contribute to the former feeling less optimistic about what tourism does and will do in the destination. Thus, this study hypothesizes the following relationship:

H₁. Tourists' emotional solidarity with residents significantly predicts the former's attitudes concerning tourism.

At the same time, studies have constantly suggested that first-time and repeat tourists differ in how they think and act while in the destination (Okamura & Fukushige, 2010; Su & Swanson, 2017). Similarly, the two groups are likely to deviate from one another in their emotional solidarity and tourism attitudes. As illustrated above, interaction is integral to emotional solidarity (Durkheim, 1912/1995; Woosnam, Norman, & Ying, 2009), and repeat tourists are more likely to have greater interaction with residents than first-time visitors. Repeat tourists travel in smaller groups, stay longer, and engage in more activities than those visiting for the first time (Lau & McKercher, 2004; McKercher & Wong, 2004), which can all work toward greater interaction with residents. The diverging levels of interaction may lead to a significant difference in first-timers' and repeat tourists' emotional solidarity with residents (Joo et al., 2015). Another possible outcome is a disparity in their attitudes toward tourism in the destination. Given their experiences and interaction, repeat tourists may not only have a more accurate understanding of tourism in the destination, but also be more supportive of tourism and its accompanying development.

H₂. First-timers and repeat tourists significantly differ in their emotional solidarity with residents.

H₃. First-timers and repeat tourists significantly differ in their attitudes concerning tourism in the destination.

In testing the research hypotheses, this study looked at South Korean sport tourists who traveled primarily to watch professional baseball games (Bull & Weed, 2012; Nogawa, Yamaguchi, & Hagi, 1996). This group of tourists was selected for numerous reasons. Sport tourists are more likely to be repeat tourists than non-sport tourists (Taks, Chalip, Green, Kesenne, & Martyn, 2009) often returning to a destination on a regular basis for multiple years (Cho, Joo, & Chi, 2019; Cho, Lee, Moore, Norman, & Ramshaw, 2017; Cho, Ramshaw, & Norman, 2014). Thus, this study considered sport tourists adequate for examining the intersection of tourists' emotional solidarity and tourism

attitudes. Furthermore, given that baseball stadia in South Korea also function as major tourism centers, around which many attractions are provided, baseball tourists were expected to have a clearer understanding of tourism impacts. Finally, professional baseball games are the most popular sporting events in South Korea, making it more convenient to sample a robust number of sport tourists.

2. Methods

Data were collected at Jamsil Baseball Stadium in Seoul, South Korea over six distinct periods of time in April and May of 2017. Of many baseball stadia in South Korea, the Jamsil stadium was selected for its locational (i.e., it is in Seoul's popular tourism center) and symbolic (i.e., it is a longtime home of two popular teams in Seoul) value. Specifically, data were collected in and adjacent to parking lots as well as inside the Jamsil stadium before and after the baseball games, using a convenient sampling method with a self-administered questionnaire. Of 571 questionnaires distributed, 487 were completed and retrieved (a response rate of 85.3%).

Respondents were provided with questions about their past and current visits to Jamsil, interaction with Jamsil residents, perceptions of tourism development in Jamsil, and demographic information (Appendix A). To address the goal of this study, the following measurement scales were used: tourists' emotional solidarity with residents was measured using the Emotional Solidarity Scale (ESS) (Woosnam, 2011), and their attitudes toward tourism were assessed via a modified version of Lankford and Howard's (1994) Tourism Impact Attitude Scale (TIAS). The ESS has been proven valid and reliable in measuring tourists' emotional solidarity with residents (Joo, Woosnam, Shafer, Scott, & An, 2017; Woosnam, 2011) across various cultures (Ribeiro, Woosnam, Pinto, & Silva, 2018; Woosnam, Maruyama, Boley, & Erul, 2018), resulting in a three-dimensional structure (i.e., *feeling welcomed*, *emotional closeness*, and *sympathetic understanding*) of tourists' emotional solidarity. Likewise, the TIAS has been widely utilized in measuring how residents perceive tourism impacts and tourism development in a destination (Lai & Hitchcock, 2017; Li & Wan, 2017; Woosnam, 2012). While the scale has not been used to examine tourists' attitudes, it has resulted in two consistent factors (i.e., *support for tourism* and *community benefits*) (Lankford & Howard, 1994; Woosnam, 2012). All items were presented on a 7-point Likert agreement scale (with 1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree).

When analyzing the data, the following three phases were undertaken. First, the data were screened for any invalid responses or outliers. Then, to determine whether and how tourists' emotional solidarity with residents predicts their attitudes toward tourism (H₁), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) were undertaken using EQS. 6.3. Finally, two-sample *t*-tests were conducted in SPSS 25.0 to compare how first-timers and repeat tourists differ in their emotional solidarity with residents (H₂) and their attitudes toward tourism (H₃) in Jamsil.

3. Results

To single out responses from non-sport tourists, the researchers reviewed respondents' postal codes. Of 487 responses collected, 26 were discarded as they were residents of Jamsil or a surrounding area. By inspecting *z*-scores and Mahalanobis distance, the researchers further eliminated 22 responses from questionnaires that were < 50% complete and 35 others that contained significant outliers. This resulted in 404 useable questionnaires and their corresponding data.

The sample included more males ($n = 235$, 58.2%) than females ($n = 162$, 40.1%). Respondents were generally well-educated (i.e., 76.7% holding an associate's degree or higher) and young ($M = 29.35$ years old). Based on this, the sample was believed to provide a good representation of baseball fans in South Korea who are predominantly young males. Most individuals ($n = 336$, 83.2%) were

Table 1
Factor loading (λ), Rho, and AVE of the measurement model.

Factors and items	λ	Rho	AVE
Emotional solidarity			
Feeling welcomed		0.875	0.639
I feel residents appreciate the contribution we (as visitors) make to the local economy.	0.639		
I treat residents of Jamsil fairly.	0.790		
I am proud to be welcomed as a visitor to Jamsil.	0.908		
I feel residents appreciate the benefits associated with me coming to the community.	0.837		
Emotional closeness		0.884	0.793
I have made friends with some residents in Jamsil	0.819		
I feel close to some residents I have met in the Jamsil.	0.957		
Sympathetic understanding		0.992	0.747
I understand Jamsil residents.	0.795		
I feel affection toward residents of Jamsil.	0.902		
I identify with residents of Jamsil.	0.894		
I have a lot in common with residents of Jamsil.	0.861		
Tourism impact attitude			
Support for tourism		0.935	0.616
I believe tourism should be actively encouraged in Jamsil.	0.889		
I support tourism and want to see it remain important to Jamsil.	0.895		
I support new tourism facilities that will attract new visitors to Jamsil.	0.806		
Jamsil should support the promotion of tourism.	0.840		
In general, the positive benefits of tourism outweigh negative impacts.	0.705		
Jamsil should remain a tourist destination.	0.780		
Long-term planning by the government can control negative impacts of tourism.	0.656		
It is important to develop plans in managing tourism growth.	0.699		
The tourism sector will continue to play a major role in the Jamsil economy.	0.757		
Community benefits		0.937	0.651
One of the most important benefits of tourism is how it can improve the local standard of living.	0.781		
Shopping opportunities are good in Jamsil as a result of tourism.	0.775		
Jamsil has good roads due to tourism.	0.698		
The tourism sector provides many desirable employment opportunities for residents.	0.821		
From my estimation, quality of life in Jamsil is high because of tourism facilities.	0.882		
From my estimation, residents in Jamsil have many recreational opportunities (places to go and things to do) because of tourism.	0.829		
From my estimation, quality of public services is high due to tourism in Jamsil.	0.859		
From my estimation, residents' household standard of living is high because of money tourists spend here.	0.797		

repeat tourists to Jamsil.

Prior to testing H_1 , the researchers verified the factor structures of the ESS and the TIAS. CFA supported an acceptable fit of the measurement model to the data: $S-B \chi^2_{(df)} = 766.85_{(312)}$, CFI = 0.942, NNFI = 0.934, RMSEA = 0.062 (90% CI: 0.057–0.068), and SRMR = 0.057. Rho coefficients also indicated that the measurement model was reliable (Fornell & Larcker, 1981): 0.875 for *feeling welcomed*, 0.884 for *emotional closeness*, 0.992 for *sympathetic understanding*, 0.935 for *support for tourism*, and 0.937 for *community benefits* (see Table 1). The average variance extracted (AVE) values of the factors were all > 0.5, endorsing convergent validity as well (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). To assure the discriminant validity of the measurement model, the researchers conducted a chi-square difference test by comparing the freely estimated measurement model with a measurement model which fixed correlations among the factors to 1.0. The freely estimated model fit better than the constrained model, indicating acceptable discriminant validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Kenny, 1979; Marsh & Hocevar, 1983).

Following this, SEM analysis was run to examine the relationship between tourists' emotional solidarity with residents and their attitudes concerning tourism in Jamsil. When undertaking SEM analysis, item parceling was used to avoid complexity (Hall, Snell, & Foust, 1999). The structural model showed a good fit to the data: $S-B \chi^2_{(df)} = 8.43_{(4)}$, CFI = 0.996, NNFI = 0.991, RMSEA = 0.052 (90% CI: 0.006–0.102), and SRMR = 0.021. A significant relationship was found between the ESS and the TIAS ($\beta = 0.563$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H_1 . The researchers further examined the relationships between each ESS factor and each TIAS factor. *Feeling welcomed* ($\beta_{Support} = 0.430$; $\beta_{Benefit} = 0.475$), *emotional closeness* ($\beta_{Support} = 0.345$; $\beta_{Benefit} = 0.381$), and *sympathetic understanding* ($\beta_{Support} = 0.458$; $\beta_{Benefit} = 0.506$) were positively associated with both *support for tourism* and *community benefits* at

an alpha = 0.01 level.

Finally, to test the next two hypotheses, first-timers and repeat tourists' mean scores were compared for all 10 ESS items (H_2) as well as all 17 TIAS items (H_3). While repeat tourists yielded higher mean scores across all ESS and TIAS items except for one, the differences fell short from being statistically significant at an alpha level of 0.05.

4. Conclusion

The goal of this study was two-fold: a) to test if tourists expressing greater emotional solidarity with residents hold more positive views about tourism (H_1) and b) to see if first-timers and repeat tourists differ in their degree of emotional solidarity with residents (H_2) and attitudes concerning tourism (H_3) in Jamsil. Though differences in emotional solidarity and attitudes concerning tourism were not significantly different between first-timers and repeat tourists (i.e., H_2 and H_3 were not supported), the means were higher for repeat tourists. As for H_1 , the study found sound evidence for the positive connection between tourists' social relationships with residents and their attitudes toward tourism development. The relationship was significant not only at the construct level (i.e., emotional solidarity and tourism attitude) but also at the factor level.

Findings from this study give way to multiple theoretical implications. First and foremost, this study brings to light the valuable perspective of tourists in assessing attitudes concerning tourism. That is, tourists can be aware of what tourism brings to a destination (i.e., *community benefits*) and shape their attitudes accordingly (i.e., *support for tourism*). This is in line with what other scholars (e.g., Cheng & Wu, 2015; Su & Swanson, 2017) have reported in regards to environmental awareness and protective behavior. However, unlike others whose focus was exclusively on nature-based or responsible tourists, the

sample considered in this study was sport tourists. As sport tourists often head to large scale sporting events hosted in urban destinations (Delpy, 1998), they may seem less concerned about what tourism does to the destination. However, the findings of this study support that such a generalized view of sport tourists is not warranted per Fredline (2005), and sport tourism and awareness of social and environmental outcomes can be compatible with one another.

Such attitudes of tourists were effectively predicted by their feelings toward residents. The ESS factors together explained a significant amount (i.e., 33.3%) of the variance in the TIAS factors (i.e., *community benefits and support for tourism*). The findings are in part comparable to what others (e.g., Cheng & Wu, 2015; Su & Swanson, 2017) found regarding tourists' identification with a destination and their environmentally-responsible behavior. The common findings of these studies are that tourists' affective bonds with destination can lead to corresponding behavior. However, place attachment derives from not only physical bonding to a place but also appreciation of social relationships associated with the place (Lewicka, 2011). Thus, by introducing social relationships into the equation, this study complements Su and Swanson's (2017) study which treated a destination only as an abstract and functional entity. Furthermore, the results of this study replicated what Woosnam (2012) found from residents in a coastal destination and what Li and Wan (2017) observed in a distinctively different festival setting.

The findings of this study further support the applicability of the ESS in a substantially new context (i.e., sports tourism in urban South Korea). Given that Jamsil is a highly urbanized destination, what is found in this study can serve as a good reference for emotional solidarity between tourists and residents in a less intimate environment. In the same vein, this urban setting may explain why there was little difference between first-timers and repeat tourists in their emotional solidarity and attitudes toward tourism.

Still, destination managers should not overlook that tourists can also have their own perceptions of tourism impacts in the destination. Given how tourists' attitudes usually function as a gateway to their behavior (Su & Swanson, 2017; Jalilvand, Samiei, Dini, & Manzari, 2012), tourists are less likely to return if what they see is mostly negative outcomes of tourism in the destination. As in many other forms of tourism, sport tourists' destination loyalty is a product of what they experience (i.e., event characteristics and experience quality) and see (i.e., attraction and atmosphere of the destination) in the destination (Kaplanidou, Jordan, Funk, & Ridinger, 2012). Tourists' experience and perceptions are likely to deteriorate if they feel less welcomed or emotionally separated from residents and observe negative outcomes from their visits.

Given the pioneering nature of this study, its findings point to multiple research possibilities. Above all, it will be worthwhile to compare how residents and tourists think about tourism impacts and tourism development in the destination. Considering facilities and services required in tourism cater to both residents and tourists, the two groups may hold similar views regarding tourism in the destination. Still, their level of agreement on how tourism benefits the destination and what needs to be done in the future is likely to deviate. Given this approach is an understudied topic in tourism research, taking various analytical approaches can be helpful. For instance, correlational analysis between each scale items may furnish more intuitive and elementary knowledge concerning the topic. A more sophisticated approach would be considering how tourists' previous experience (i.e., first-time or repeat tourists) or primary motivation (i.e., sport tourists or non-sport tourists) moderates their understanding of tourism in the destination. Although this study could have made such an attempt, it was fettered by a large difference in the number of first-timers and repeat tourists.

Another research possibility is to construct a more appropriate novel measurement scale for tourists' perceptions of tourism impacts. While the modified TIAS used in this study was found solid in its

psychometric properties, some of its items may prove challenging for tourists to answer. Furthermore, all of its items were presented in a form where tourists had to express their level of agreement with positive aspects of tourism. While they could have expressed disagreement by giving lower scores to the items, adding some negatively-worded items may present a more accurate picture. Finally, tourism scholars may consider emotional solidarity in tandem with other affective constructs (e.g., nostalgia) or explore emotional solidarity emerging between tourists. In fact, sport tourists would provide a good testing environment for such possibilities, given sport tourists often share collective beliefs and behavior, which are known to encourage emotional solidarity among them.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.05.008>.

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