

USING RESIDENTS' TRAVEL USE HISTORY (TUH) TO EXPLAIN SOLIDARITY THEY REPORT WITH AREA VISITORS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how residents' previous travel experiences affect their emotional solidarity with tourists. Using the dataset collected with residents of Galveston, Texas, it is found that two of the TUH measures (number of overnight trips in the U.S. over the past two years and number of day trips in the U.S. over the past two years) significantly predicted two of the ESS dimensions, welcoming nature and emotional closeness. Given the importance of residents' attitude toward tourists in providing satisfying experiences for the latter, further research is needed to explore other plausible factors in explaining residents' emotional solidarity with tourists.

Key Words: travel use history (TUH); emotional solidarity scale (ESS); residents and visitors

INTRODUCTION

Existing research on emotional solidarity indicates that the quality and quantity of interaction (e.g., amount of time spent together, degree of communication, exchange of support) influences emotional solidarity people experience with one another (Bahr et al., 2004). Nonetheless, limited attention has been paid to the impact of general behavioral patterns on individuals' degree of emotional solidarity with others in the context of resident–tourist relationships. This paper examines how residents' previous travel experiences (as measured by the 5-variable *Tourism Use History* framework or TUH modified on the basis of Experience Use History, Hammitt, Backlund, and Bixler 2004) affect their emotional solidarity (as measured by Woosnam and Norman's (2010) 10-item *Emotional Solidarity Scale* or ESS) with tourists.

DATA SOURCE

The data of the study were collected during the fall of 2009 with residents of Galveston, Texas following a multi-stage cluster sampling scheme. The research team visited 1,364 households throughout a five-week period. Excluding non-response and seasonal resident households, the team contacted heads of households (or spouse) at 623 homes and asked them to participate in the study. Nearly 85% of the households ($n = 592$) accepted the invitation. The team then distributed surveys to those households, among which 456 completed the survey (a completion rate of 86.2%), resulting in an effective response rate of 73.2%.

Table 1
Demographic Information of Respondents

Demographics	Categories/Range	Percentage/Mean
Type of visitor	Day visitor	28.9%
	Family and friends traveler	21.3%
	Family vacationer	16.6%
	Summer Vacationer	10.5%
	Others	22.7%
Age	15-93	M=48.1
Gender	Female	51.9%
	Male	48.1%
Race	White alone	61.7%
	Latino or Hispanic	15.2%
	Black or African American alone	13.2%
	Others	9.9%
Highest education	Some college (including junior college)	32.5%
	Four-year college (BA, BS, BFA)	28.9%
	High school diploma or GED	12.8%
	Master's degree (MA, MS, MFA, March, MBA)	9.4%
	Others	16.4%
Household income	\$100k or more	22.6%
	\$20k – 39,999	19.7%
	\$40k – 59,999	17.3%
	\$60k – 79,999	15.3%
	Others	25.1%

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The three ESS factors (*welcoming nature*—four items, $\alpha = 0.80$; *emotional closeness*—two items, $\alpha = 0.93$; *sympathetic understanding*—four items, $\alpha = .84$) yielded sound coefficients. Multiple regression analyses showed that two TUH variables, number of overnight trips in the U.S. over the past two years (*welcoming nature*: $t = -3.17$, $p < .01$; *emotional closeness*: $t = -2.56$, $p < .05$) and number of day trips in the U.S. over the past two years (*welcoming nature*: $t = 2.28$, $p < .05$; *emotional closeness*: $t = 2.67$, $p < .01$), significantly predicted *welcoming nature* ($F_{5,132} = 2.502$, $p < 0.05$) and *emotional closeness* ($F_{5,132} = 2.399$, $p < 0.05$), explaining 5.2% and 4.9% of the variances in the two factors respectively. The VIF values of the TUH variables in the model with *welcoming nature* as the dependent variable ranged from 3.15 to 4.84 and from 1.55 to 4.84 in the model with *emotional closeness* as the dependent variable, suggesting no multi-collinearity concerns in the two models (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Table 2
Descriptives of Independent and Dependent Variables

Variables	Mean/Categories	S.D./Percentage
IV: Travel Use History (TUH)^a		
Overnight trips in U.S. over past two years	8.61	13.09
Day trips in U.S. over past two years	8.65	15.43
Destinations visited in U.S. over past two years	6.10	8.39
International trips over past two years	Yes/No	31.3%/68.7%
International destinations over past two years	3.45	9.42
DV: Emotional Solidarity Scale (ESS)^b		Cronbach α reliability

Welcoming Nature	6.17	.87	.80
Emotional Closeness	3.79	1.72	.93
Sympathetic Understanding	4.76	1.17	.84

^aTUH items (except for “international trips over past two years”) were measured by number of times.

^bEach of the ESS items was asked on a 7-point scales where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.

Table 3
Multiple Regression Output

ESS models with TUH	B	Beta(β)	<i>t</i>	VIF ^a
Model 1: ESS Welcoming Nature ($F_{5,132} = 2.502, p = .034, R^2 = .052$)				
Overnight trips in U.S. over past two years	-.02	-.42	-3.17**	2.50 ^b
Day trips in U.S. over past two years	.011	.24	2.28*	1.55
Destinations visited in U.S. over past two years	.01	.17	.95	4.84
International trips over past two years	.01	.11	.68	3.75
International destinations over past two years	-.05	-.15	-.99	3.15
Model 2: ESS Emotional Closeness ($F_{5,132} = 2.399, p = .041, R^2 = .049$)				
Overnight trips in U.S. over past two years	-.03	-.34	-2.56*	
Day trips in U.S. over past two years	.02	.28	2.67**	
Destinations visited in U.S. over past two years	.01	.06	.32	
International trips over past two years	.01	.06	.38	
International destinations over past two years	.03	.06	.37	
Model 3: ESS Sympathetic Understanding ($F_{5,132} = .678, p = .641, R^2 = .025$)				
Overnight trips in U.S. over past two years	-.01	-.17	-1.28	
Day trips in U.S. over past two years	.01	.12	1.14	
Destinations visited in U.S. over past two years	-.01	-.04	-.19	
International trips over past two years	.01	.10	.60	
International destinations over past two years	-.02	-.06	-.39	

^a Same VIF values across each of the three models given the same TUH factors were considered predictors in each model.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

DISCUSSION

While TUH significantly predicted two of the ESS factors, residents’ previous travel experiences did not explain a large amount of variance in the outcome factors. Residents with more extensive travel experiences tend to be emotionally closer to tourist, hence more likely to contribute to a friendly hosting environment for tourists. Given the importance of residents’ attitude toward tourists in providing satisfying experiences for the latter, further research is needed to explore other plausible factors along with TUH in explaining residents’ emotional solidarity with tourists. Moreover, the results suggested that it could be beneficial for tourism managers to investigate reasons that residents’ past overnight travel experiences negatively contributed to the factor of welcoming nature of ESS.

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