

The Occasional Tourist: Behavioural Intentions For Tourist Facilities

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Abstract

Previous literature does not adequately address the perceptions that residents have of their own place of living. The residents are a major stakeholder in tourism and their perspective has been overlooked, other than their views about tourists. To analyse this perspective, a structural model is developed to explain the formation of resident's attitude to their city brand and further the path to explaining intentions of residents to act as "occasional tourists" in their own city. The statistical tests demonstrate the validity of the structural model.

Keywords: local tourism, brand image, residents, North Queensland

Introduction

The focus of the study is in understanding of the behavioural intentions of tourist and recreational facilities by local residents. We term this occasional tourism. The residents' views of tourism have always been mixed, both positive and negative. The tension that can exist between residents and tourists reflects the notion that they are not mutually exclusive entities. During their stay in the tourist destination, tourists are *both* tourist and (temporary) resident. For their part, residents are *both* resident and (occasional) tourist within their own environment. By *occasional tourist* we include the residential use of recreational and tourist facilities, including restaurants and theme parks and even playing the "surrogate tourist" role of spending a weekend at a local hotel/motel and being in the tourist mindset. This is not a new concept. For example, in a UK study of residents' perceptions of tourism, one resident commented: "We are all tourists from time to time" (Ryan & Montgomery 1994, p.364). Also, in the Gold Coast, Australia, local demand for theme parks represents about a third of the total demand. Thus it is important for tourism management to understand how residents form attitudes about their city (our city branding model) and what influences residents' intention to use recreational and tourism facilities and acting like a tourist for a day.

Our aim is to understand what are the important community attributes that make a city liveable and hence attractive to use the local tourist and recreational facilities. A conceptual model of city branding is developed from the literature. The key variable of focus is city brand attitudes of residents. Using city brand attitudes as the core we also study the behavioural *consequences of these attitudes* (intention to use the tourist and recreational facilities) and the *antecedents of brand attitudes* (various community attributes).

Literature Review

The *active* role of residents in image studies is the notion that residents of destinations have images of their own place of residence that can be investigated in their own right (Gallarza, Saura & Garcia 2001). Previous research has primarily focused on the

passive role of residents in tourism. That is, what residents think of tourists and tourism and if they are supportive or not (Cavus & Tanrisevdi 2003; Ryan & Montgomery 1994; Smith & Krannich 1998). One of the first studies taking the perspective of the active role of residents was Sternquist Witter's (1985), with a focus on resident businesses, namely retailers in a tourist location, Traverse City in North Michigan. The retailers' attitudes were compared with those of tourists. Retailers tended to have more positive attitudes of the destination, but also structured differently. The implication from Sternquist Witter (1985) was that different perceptions between resident retailers and tourists might result in tourists receiving a less than optimal service. Perhaps the most relevant resident study for our approach is that of Schroeder (1996). Randomly selected residents of North Dakota were surveyed in terms of their assessment of 20 tourism destination attributes. Key factors included sightseeing, activities, urban (shopping and restaurants) and hospitality (clean environment, friendly local people, moderately priced accommodation). Residents with a more positive overall image were more likely to recommend North Dakota as a place to visit and to support state tourism funding support. Residents with less positive overall image reported more trips and vacations outside the state. The current paper makes the *active* role of the resident its focus. We argue that there is a need to develop a comprehensive approach to understanding the attitudes of residents in a city to their own city brand. What are the main brand associations connected to such a city brand, giving us insight to the components of the brand?

A proposed model of city branding attitude formation

The literature helps inform our development of a relevant conceptual model. Rather than focus on brand attributes per se as components of brand image, we aimed to develop a structural model in which overall brand attitudes held by residents about their city were determined by various community attributes. Thus city brand attitudes, as a summative measure, represent the core or central element in our structural model. The three-equation structural model that we propose is as follows:

- (1) $OTI = f(\text{Brand; Shopping})$
- (2) $\text{Brand} = f(\text{Social})$
- (3) $\text{Social} = f(\text{Nature; Vibrancy; Recreation})$.

Where *OTI* is occasional tourism intentions; *Brand* is the attitude that residents have of their city brand; *Social*; represents social capital and relates to the health of social or inter-personal relations in the community; *Nature* refers to the natural landscape; *Vibrancy* refers to business vibrancy in the community including growth of jobs; *Recreation* refers to recreation facilities.

The first link in the model is the relationship between brand attitudes and behavioural intentions. In different contexts, the link between overall brand attitudes and behavioural intentions has been demonstrated in Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman (2001), Low and Lamb (2000), Sandvik and Duhan (1996), Selnes (1993), and Taylor and Hunter (2003). The social, nature and vibrancy variables can be considered to be community attribute variables or brand associations that help identify communities. Keller (2003) and Kapferer (1997) have conceptualized the relationship between brand attributes or brand associations on one hand, and the overall brand attitude on the other. Overall brand attitudes are a summative measure of the attitudes towards an entity, place or product, while brand attitudes or associations are perceptions about specific features or attributes that make a connection to the overall

attitude. Empirical studies of the overall brand attitude and brand attributes include Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman (2001), Low and Lamb (2000), Sandvik and Duhan (1996), Selnes (1993) and Taylor and Hunter (2003). Notwithstanding this growing literature, previous empirical investigation of the brand attribute and brand attitude relationship has *not* been applied to the city branding context. The items for the occasional tourist intentions and city brand attitudes were developed from Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman (2001), Low and Lamb (2000), Sandvik and Duhan (1996), Selnes (1993) and Taylor and Hunter (2003) and adapted to the occasional tourist context.

If city brand attitude is considered the central construct in our structural model, then community attributes are the antecedents. Previous studies such as Schroeder (1996) suggest variables such as nature, recreational activities, urban (shopping and restaurants) and hospitality (friendliness, accommodation) as relevant community variables. Other studies have indicated culture and history as further possible relevant community variables. Social capital is a relatively new construct, building on the seminal work of Putnam (1993; 1995). It is synonymous with social cohesion and emphasises inter-personal relationships, social relations, friends and family, interactions and ties and cultural tolerance (see also Berger-Schmitt 2002; Robinson 2002). Previous studies of destinations have either ignored social capital or only covered fragments of it, such as lack of crime or say friendliness. A more holistic, composite approach is proposed in the current study. The items for the social capital construct were developed from Berger-Schmitt (2002), Putnam (1993; 1995), Robinson (2002) and Watters (2004). The items for the vibrant community construct were developed from Florida (2003). The items for the shopping and restaurant construct were developed from Schroeder (1996) and Yuksel (2004). The items for the recreation construct were developed from Allen (1990) and Schroeder (1996).

Methodology

Given that we are developing a city branding model from the resident perspective it was decided to use a reasonably large city by Australian standards. Cairns, Queensland was chosen as the city is a major tropical tourist destination in Australia, with impressive natural assets, including easy access to rainforests and the Great Barrier Reef. Sampling was stratified with random selection within each strata. The strata groups were eight suburbs selected to give a good cross-section of suburbs by socio-economic groups. The surveys were then randomly distributed to households within each selected suburb by a direct to household, letterbox delivery firm. The response rate of 12% provided 360 usable surveys for analysis. A comparison of early and late responses was undertaken to discount non-response bias (Armstrong & Overton 1979). Using independent sample t-tests of significance of mean differences for each item across the early and later respondent sub-samples, provided evidence of no items being statistically significantly different based on the response time. The self-administered survey instrument was designed in a way to make it user-friendly. All variables were measured with multi-item scales and measurement items were measured by seven-point likert scales (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), requiring a circle to complete the answer. The demographic variable scales differed depending on the element, with seven options for age and two for gender for example.

Analysis was conducted in two stages following Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) recommendations. The first stage consisted of purifying the initial measures. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to assess the unidimensionality and validity of each of the construct measures. For the second stage, structural equation modelling using AMOS (version 4) was used to estimate the model. The model was assessed using a partially disaggregated approach. Partial disaggregation involves the creation of two or more composite variables for each construct (Bentler & Wu 1995; Dabholkar, Thorpe & Rentz 1996). The composites may be created from identified subdimensions of an indicator construct of the overall latent construct (Bagozzi & Heatherton 1994) or items may be allocated and aggregated randomly as "it is expected that any combination of a construct's variable indicators should yield the same model fit" (Dabholkar, Thorpe & Rentz 1996, p. 10). The latter approach was taken for this research. Partial disaggregation provides particular benefits of being able to assess a complex higher-order model, whilst reducing the level of random error, more stable estimates from reducing the number of parameters to be estimated and improving approximation of normality distributions (Bagozzi & Heatherton 1994; Dabholkar, Thorpe & Rentz 1996).

Results: Measurement Phase

The six constructs used in the analysis (occasional tourism usage, city brand attitudes, social capital, nature, shopping and business vibrancy) were jointly measured using confirmatory factor analysis. All of the confirmatory factor analysis tests were affirmative in support of the relevant construct. The goodness of fit indices were all appropriately high, including GFI=0.95; AGFI=0.91; NFI=0.97. All exceeded the benchmark of 0.90 (Hair et al 1995), so we conclude that the data fits the model. Similarly there was no evidence of misfit. For example RMSEA was 0.068, appropriately less than the benchmark of 0.08 (Hair et al 1995). Standardized RMR was 0.028, less than the benchmark of 0.05 (Ullman 2001). The normed chi-square was 2.66, less than the benchmark of 3 (Carmines & McIver 1981). All of the relevant statistics are favourable relative to the benchmarks and so we conclude that the model and its constructs have overall measurement validity. Some additional tests were carried out. All of the paths between the latent constructs and the manifest variables were statistically significant, indicating convergent validity. Further, all the exogenous variable constructs demonstrated discriminant validity evidenced by having correlation coefficients that were significantly different from 1.0. Moreover, all the constructs were uni-dimensional, based on factor analysis that indicated only one factor per construct. Finally, all the constructs were reliable, evidenced by Cronbach Alphas greater than 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein 1994), ranging from 0.72 to 0.87. We conclude by saying that the measurement phase of the analysis was supported from all of the tests carried out, affirming validity and reliability.

Results: Structural Equation Modelling Estimation

Phase two of the Gerbing-Anderson approach involves structural equation modelling. Table 1 reports the SEM results. Firstly the data fits the model well, with GFI=0.95, AFGI=0.91, NFI=0.96, all greater than the benchmark of 0.90. With RMSEA=0.064, RMR=0.031 and normed chi-square of 2.48, there was no evidence of misfit between the data and the model. Secondly, all of the paths in SEM are positive as expected and significant at the one percent level (if we include one case where it was

significant at exactly 0.01). Thirdly, if we focus on the determinants of occasional tourist activity we ascertain that city brand attitudes by residents are the strongest influence on such activity, slightly ahead of perceptions of shopping and restaurant facilities. Fourthly, if we focus on the determinants of city brand attitudes only one influence is significant, namely social capital. Fifthly, finally if we have a closer look at the determinants of social capital, nature is by far the strongest influence, although business vibrancy is also highly significant.

Implications for tourism and local government authorities

The most immediate use of the results is in terms of understanding local demand for recreation, entertainment and dining activities. Intention to use such services is stimulated in our sample mainly by city brand attitudes. Nature was seen as the ultimate source of resident motivation, so basing facilities around nature seems the most obvious tourism management approach for a destination like Cairns. This requires priority to sustainability of the environment, ensuring that development does not encroach further. However nature does not operate in a vacuum and complementary aspects like transport access to facilities and shopping and restaurants also need to be well managed by the local authorities. Both local government and tourist authorities have a vested interest in building strong community brands from the residents' perspective. To do this effectively tourist authorities need to work collaboratively with local government authorities, which is sometimes the case. However in a study of seven European heritage cities, it was found that *tourism* management and *urban* management were generally *not* well integrated (Borg, Costa & Gotti 1996).

Table 1: Structural Equation Modelling of Cairn's residents in terms of their city brand attitudes and occasional tourist activity

GFI	0.95
AGFI	0.91
NFI	0.96
<u>Path</u>	<u>Regression Coefficient</u> (<i>t-value in brackets</i>)
Path from brand attitude to occasion tourist	0.35 (3.97)**
Path from shopping & restaurant to occasional tourist	0.29 (3.12)**
Path from social capital to brand attitude	0.92 (25.43)**
Path from nature to social capital	0.84 (14.07)**
Path from business vibrancy to social capital	0.13 (2.57)*

Note: **denotes significant at the 0.01 level.

*denotes significant at the 0.05 level.

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