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Authors	Cardenas, David;Meng, Fang;Hudson, Simon
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Tourism Use History: Market Segmentation to Measure Resident Support for Future Tourism Development

David Cárdenas, Ph.D.
School of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management
University of South Carolina

Fang Meng, Ph.D.
School of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management
University of South Carolina

and

Simon Hudson, Ph.D.
School of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management
University of South Carolina

ABSTRACT

Residents' attitudes toward tourism development in their local community have been examined extensively. However, previous studies have often been inconsistent and very few have included personal behavior as a segmentation tool to better understand resident support of tourism development. The purpose of this study was to expand and strengthen the construct of Tourism Use History (TUH) as a segmenting tool to help predict resident attitudes of future tourism development. Results for the study indicate that past behaviors and TUH can be key indicators when assessing residents support for future tourism development.

Keywords: *tourism use history, resident attitudes, tourism development*

INTRODUCTION

Residents' attitudes toward tourism development in their local community have been examined extensively by examining socio-demographics, and perception/attitude variables. However, previous studies have often been inconsistent (Harrill 2004) and very few have included personal behavior as a segmentation tool to better understand resident support for tourism development (Draper, Woosman, and Norman 2011). Market segmentation has been extensively studied and adopted into the tourism literature and has been an effective tool in predicting and targeting tourists. Schreyer, Lima and Williams (1984) first introduced the term experience use history (EUH), as segmentation tool that incorporated past personal behaviors. They concluded that a greater knowledge base concerning activities have a stronger, and perhaps more affective understanding for evaluating resource settings and use. In essence, the more frequent an individual experiences an activity, the more knowledgeable that person is and therefore perceives the activity as beneficial and worthwhile (Hammit, Backlund, and Bixler, 2004). Thus, EUH has been used as an independent variable that influences how an individual constructs meaning and attachment towards a place (Hammit et al., 2004).

Draper, et al. (2011) adapted EUH to investigate how past tourism experiences, specifically tourist behaviors, had on their attitudes toward tourism development in their community. The new construct was labeled Tourism Use History (TUH) and was used as a segmenting method to identify and classify local residents. The authors focused on resident's

attitudes towards tourism development in their community based on the amount of traveling experienced by the residents. The study, however, indicated that TUH did not have the same predictive power as EUH. The issue with TUH was that the questions asked about general travel experiences were not precise enough thus lacking specificity. Therefore, in order to better use TUH in predicting residents' attitude, specific questions must be addressed in order to segment the market more precisely. More importantly, this study contributes to the knowledge body by investigating the attitudes of residents as major stakeholders within the on-going process of tourism development.

METHODS

Residents of a southeastern community in the U.S. were surveyed during the summer of 2012 to measure their support for a proposed new tourism development project (i.e., an international equine center in this study). Eight random days, times and locations were selected in the community and every 5th person that crossed pre-determine spots was asked to complete a questionnaire. A total of 308 usable questionnaires were completed. The survey was developed based on the literature addressing resident attitudes, tourism planning, EUH and TUH. TUH was operationalized by adapting the questions used by Schreyer et al. (1984), and Draper et al. (2011). Initially five variables were used to operationalize TUH which were compressed and condensed to three variables: (1) Level of equine participation in the last year (Non-Equine, Recreationalist, and Enthusiasts), (2) travel in state for equine event in the last two years (yes-no), and (3) travel nationally and internationally for equine event in the last two years (yes-no). The initial analysis created 12 groups, but because of the small sample size of a few of the segments, the segments were combined into four markets labeled as Non Equine Participants (n=171), Local Equine Recreationalists (n=54), Traveling Equine Recreationalists (n=56), and Traveling Equine Enthusiasts (n=27).

RESULTS

ANOVA tests were conducted to determine if there were differences between the tourism use history segments and respondents' perceptions of possible development of a multi-use international horse park in the community. Significant differences were found between the TUH segments and five perception variables: (1) it is the right choice for the community, (2) the future for the community looks bright because of it, (3) I am against this new horse park, (4) I support this horse park idea in the community, and (5) I would be proud living in a town with a multi-use international house park. Post-hoc analyses were conducted with Games-Howell (because of unequal variances) to determine differences between groups (Table 1). Results indicate that traveling equine recreationalists (M=4.04) were significantly more likely ($p<.000$) to think that building the international horse park was the right choice for their community compared to non-equine participants (M=3.51). Also, non-equine participants (M=2.42) were significantly more likely ($p<.05$) to be against the new horse park compared to traveling equine recreationalists (M=1.89). More interestingly, traveling equine recreationists (M=3.78) were significantly more likely ($p<.05$) to think that the future of the community looks brighter because of the development of the proposed international horse park compared to traveling equine enthusiasts (M=2.89). Consequently, traveling equine enthusiasts (M=2.89) were more against the new horse park development ($p<.05$) than traveling equine recreationists (M=1.89). Additional analysis is forthcoming.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Results indicate that past behaviors and TUH can be key indicators when assessing residents support for future tourism development. Community members that participated in this study that has no experience and participants that has high level of experience were less likely to support

the development of international horse park. While moderate experience participants were more like to favor the proposed development. Additional conclusions are forthcoming.

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