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Introduction

The development of tourism crosses geographical boundaries and promotes communications across racial, ethnic, and cultural differences which all, as tourism characteristics, increases the possibility of exposing racial relations to some extent and opens a window to gaining a better understanding of racism reality around the world (Li et al., 2020). Perceptions of tourists, residents' level of acceptance of tourism magnitude in their community, and relations between tourists and hosts have been identified as key factors in the tourism industry (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004). Consequently, tourists' feelings towards residents and effective intercultural communication for tourist-host relations has been highlighted in the tourist literature (McIntosh & Johnson, 2004). Tourism is often promoted as contributing to international understanding, tolerance, and cultural awareness (Raymond & Hall, 2008). According to Salazar (2006), travel can reduce conflicts by creating cultural dialogue. Similarly, Yu & Lee (2014) suggest that intercultural exchanges and cooperation through tourism have the power to improve cultural understanding among nations and contribute to world peace. As a major variable in the visitors-residents relationship (Yu & Lee, 2014), cultural awareness is an outcome of cultural exchange which is a way of mitigating negative impacts of contact with tourists (Suntikul et al., 2010) and it can be defined as an understanding of the relative nature of cultural norms which leads to an ability to critically evaluate perspectives, practices, and products of one's own culture and other cultures (Baker, 2012). Cultural awareness becomes critical when we interact with people from other backgrounds and cultures (Quappe & Cantatore, 2005). The tourism industry can help promote cross-cultural awareness (Honey, 2009) and it may contribute to respecting the diversity of cultures and lifestyles (Shakouri et al., 2017). As travelers notice that they have adapted their cultural constructs to different international realities, they transform by expanding their worldview and by integrating elements of their experiences when returning to a "blurred home" of new and old meanings. For the purpose of this study, four destination's attributes have been identified to study their impact on the level of cultural awareness including food, lodging, hospitality employees' dress code, and tourist activities.

Literature Review

Previous research investigated the impacts of destination's attributes on tourists' overall satisfaction/dissatisfaction and how destination management organizations can incorporate corresponding attributes to influence tourists' perceptions (Schlesinger et al., 2020; Vareiro et al., 2018). For instance, categorizing destination attributes as "(1) natural, (2) social, (3) historical factors, (4) recreational and shopping facilities, and (5) infrastructure, food, and shelter," Gearing et al. (1974). Cooper et al. (1993) grouped destination attributes into the "four A's" framework (Attraction, Access, Amenities and Ancillary services), which was later developed by Buhalis (2000) to the "Six A's" (Attractions, Accessibility, Amenities, Available packages, Activities and Ancillary services). More recently, many researchers used more destination attributes that have a significant impact on the competitiveness of tourism destinations such as Crouch's (2011) whose research included 36 elements and Moon and Han (2018) who used 33 items regarding local culture, activities and special events, local hospitality, infrastructure, accessibility, destination management, quality of service, and quality of shopping,

among other aspects. For the purpose of this study, four destination's attributes have been identified to study their impact on the level of cultural awareness including food, lodging, hospitality employees' dress code, and tourist activities. First attribute, food is an essential aspect of a society and carries symbolic meanings in the context of traditions and special occasions which makes food a major conduit for tourists to experience the local culture of a destination (Chang et al., 2011). Indeed, consuming local food can provide epistemic value, as tourists generally regard this as something new and are likely to learn about another country's food culture through such experiences (Choe & Kim, 2018). Second attribute, Liu (2020) suggested that the philosophy of theme hotels uses a narrative technique to create an atmosphere that allows consumers to experience and feel the regional special culture more simply and directly. Furthermore, theme hotels form a unique cultural atmosphere, improve customers' cultural experience, and allow customers to gain cultural knowledge, excitement, and joy (Kong & Cheung, 2009). Third attribute, featuring local cultural elements in the design of hotels' different services and products including staff uniforms would enhance customer experience during their stay and promote local culture of a destination (UNESCO). The fourth attribute that will be studied in this study is the tourist activity. The tourist activity will be discussed from the perspective of allocentric tourist activity. McKercher & Cros (2003) suggested that it is possible that someone who is not motivated to travel for cultural reasons but who does participate in some cultural tourism activities could have an unexpectedly deep cultural experience.

Yu and Lee (2014) utilized the contact theory that posits if people of different races, ethnicities, or religion interact with one another on an equal level then stereotyping and prejudice between groups can be reduced. It was suggested that the social contacts between tourists and residents from different cultural backgrounds enhance positive attitudes and mutual understanding toward each other (Amir & Ben-Ari, 1985). To maximize the benefit of intercultural interaction, tourists need to seek a closer relationship between them and residents because it makes tourists feel more favorably towards residents and thus lead to more positive attitude toward them and the destination (Pizam et al., 2000). Cultural awareness is a driving force to develop skills and abilities to overcome cultural differences and it may also include the desire to know about other countries or other cultures through tourism activity (Zhang et al., 2018). Therefore, considering the importance of cultural awareness in tourism, the present study examines, more specifically, the impact of different destination's attributes on the level of cultural awareness of tourists.

Methodology

Purposive sampling, a nonprobability sampling method, will be used to select participants. All participants will be from the same country and the characteristic of interest among them is the cultural homogeneity. Thus, all respondents will be screened, through screening questions, to be culturally homogenous. For the core of our study, participants should be non-Hispanic white since the non-Hispanic white population remained the largest race or ethnicity group in the United States, with 204.3 million people identifying as non-Hispanic white alone (The United States Census Bureau, 2021).

It would be wise to have 1600 research subjects since we have four attributes, and each attribute has two levels which means we have 8 groups for the purpose of this study ($200 \times 8 = 1600$). Put differently, this is a between-subjects design considering that each independent variable has two levels, and every participant will experience only one condition.

The dependent variable, cultural awareness, will be measured using the cultural awareness scale that was developed by Rew et al. (2003). The cultural awareness scale consists of 36 items. A 7-point Likert-type rating scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) will be used for respondents to select their responses (Kumlien et al., 2020; Krainovich-Miller et al., 2008; Mahatmya et al., 2016). “Does not apply” will be considered as one additional alternative response in case the respondent does not want to answer. Lower scores indicate less cultural awareness, and higher scores indicate greater awareness. 5 items will be set up to determine each attribute (lodging, dress code, food, and tourist activities) and all of the variables using 7 – point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Demographic information will also be collected on the participants’ gender, age, sexual orientation, marital status, education level, monthly income, and neighborhood (i.e., urban, suburban, or rural).

Data Analysis

Considering the complexity of this research design, the proposed data analysis technique is utilizing conjoint analysis to determine the preferred levels of each attribute that will be evidenced as individual importance scores, and collective rankings. Conjoint analysis is the optimal market research approach for measuring the value that consumers place on features of a product or service and is commonly used approach combines real-life scenarios and statistical techniques with the modeling of actual market decisions.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study is an attempt to inform the general population that international tourism and the interaction with people from drastically different cultures might increase their cultural awareness and understanding and, in turn, making them more tolerant to people from different backgrounds and encouraging them to live comfortably in diverse communities. The research results might also be implemented in the higher education setting by encouraging students to join travel abroad programs to engage in intercultural dialogues with the local residents of the destinations they travel to. One of the possible important implications of this study is to encourage parents to admit their kids in multiracial schools. This implication is based on the findings of a study conducted by Emerson et al. (2002) on the effects of prior racial contact on current social ties which suggest that attending multiracial school has significant effects on life choices, policies that promote contact between people of different races, especially children, and can be considered as a positive way to improve race relations.

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