

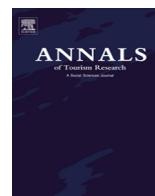


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Modeling locational factors for tourism employment

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to focus attention on developing a workforce development strategy that comprehensively includes the critical determinants of how employees fit a particular job in a particular organization at a particular location. Appropriating the Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) framework, and incorporating person-location with person-job and person-organizational environment fit we present a three-dimensional eight cell model that includes the often neglected influence of job locations on tourism employment decisions. This model, supported by eight propositions, facilitates a multi-level and holistic appraisal of employee fit. The article then discusses the theoretical implications and applications of this model to raise research agendas and practical implications for meeting workforce challenges of tourism organizations, associations and destinations, especially those in remote locations.

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Introduction

Tourism destinations are adept at marketing their attractiveness to visitors. Similarly, many destinations market their attributes to lure residents. From Northeast Ohio, USA to Cornwall Ontario,

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Canada, to Broome, Western Australia, and Liverpool in the United Kingdom, destinations run “Great Place to Live, Great Place to Work, Great Place to Play!” campaigns to promote that destination’s cultural, entertainment, sports, education and other amenities in the hope of attracting people to live, work, and visit in their respective destination. These destination promotion advertisements exemplify the challenges these locations have in attracting and retaining skilled workers. This is especially true for the more remote destinations where the local labor pool may be inadequate to supply the tourism industry with its unique staffing requirements (Rosentraub & Joo, 2009). Lundberg, Gudmundson, and Andersson (2009) observe that weak and/or problematic local labor markets are a characteristic of many regional and remote tourism destinations.

Since there is intrinsic link between tourism industry success and the availability of an appropriate labor supply (Liu & Wall, 2005), employee attraction and retention in tourism and, in particular in remote destinations, is a critical concern for human resource managers. Nonetheless, this topic has been and continues to be a neglected academic research domain in the tourism literature (Ladkin, 2011). Despite predictions of both labor and skills shortages, few destinations have developed a concise and appropriately funded strategy to address these challenges. The purpose of this paper is to focus attention on developing a workforce development strategy that comprehensively includes the critical determinants of how employees fit a particular job in a particular organization at a particular location. We do this by proposing a new, multilevel model that systematically considers the factors in a job, an organization, and a location that influence the employee’s decision to join and stay in that work setting. Building on Schneider’s (1987) attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) framework, our approach is innovative in two important ways. First, it adds consideration of locational factors to the well-accepted theory of person environment fit (P-E). Second, it considers fit as a multilevel decision employees make as they consider not only job and organization but also location. Our model addresses both practitioner and theoretical concerns by adding a person’s fit with a location to other factors that determine the attraction and retention of tourism employees. The issue of attracting and retaining qualified employees is of great importance to tourism organizations everywhere but is especially critical for destinations in remote areas. The model also offers the opportunity to postulate research propositions that can be readily translated into the empirical study of the interaction of these three environmental factors determining P-E fit by considering different combinations of a person’s fit with a job, an organization, and a location. Research propositions derived from the model enable testing the influence of not only the job and organization on the attraction and retention of different persons, but also the location. These propositions provide a pathway for future research and practice implications that enable the development of comprehensive strategies for tourism organizations’ workforce development.

Background

Tourism is often viewed as a vehicle upon which long-term economic growth can be enhanced through investment in new infrastructure, indirect impacts on local economies and increased employment (Beerli, Meneses, & Gil, 2007; Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Further, tourism development in peripheral and remote destinations is considered to be an important path to alleviate poverty and address the Millennium Development Goals in these areas (UNWTO, 2006). In addition, a growing demand for travel to remote destination is enhanced by growing numbers of more sophisticated and affluent tourists seeking independent travel “off the beaten track” to escape urban environments, pursuing special interests such as visiting new frontiers (Laing & Crouch, 2011), participating in adventure activities (Weber, 2001), viewing wildlife (Packer & Ballantyne, 2012), or experiencing cultural heritage attractions (Trauer, 2006). The model developed in this paper provides a new research lens on the dilemma in tourism development when growth in a destination’s attractiveness is not matched with a concomitant growth in the attractiveness of the location to the needed labor pool.

Since the early 1990’s, tourism scholars have noted the absence of research and theoretical consideration of workforce issues (Ioannides & Debbage, 1998). Although there have been a few suggested approaches found in the geography (Duncan, Scott, & Baum, 2013), futures (Solnet et al., 2013) and mobilities (Robinson et al., 2013) literature, scholarly attention to tourism workforce is sparse. In spite

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