Residents' ethnic attitudes and support for ethnic neighborhood tourism: The case of a Brazilian town in Japan

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HIGHLIGHTS

- EFA revealed that Ethnic Attitude scale has two dimensions, consistent with a previous study.
- Residents' *ethnic attitudes* can predict their *attitudes towards the ethnic neighborhood tourism*.
- Residents' socio-demographic factors can predict their *attitudes towards the ethnic neighborhood tourism*.
- Residents' residential factors can predict their *attitudes towards the ethnic neighborhood tourism*.

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ABSTRACT

Studies on residents' perceptions toward ethnic neighborhood tourism have primarily been conducted from the perspective of minority residents whose culture is represented to tourists. This study explored perceptions of Japanese residents living in a Brazilian neighborhood in Gunma, Japan, toward ethnic neighborhood tourism focusing on Brazilian culture. The research examined ways in which residents' ethnic attitudes towards Brazilians influence the same residents' level of support for this unique form of tourism. A survey of 456 households revealed that those who had positive attitudes towards Brazilians perceived ethnic neighborhood tourism as an opportunity to employ, involve and interact with Brazilian neighbors in town. The results also indicated that socio-demographic and residential factors influenced individuals' perceptions about ethnic neighborhood tourism.

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1. Introduction

In multi-ethnic societies, such as those in the United States, Australia, and more recently, in countries throughout Europe and Asia, areas with high concentrations of individuals belonging to the same ethnic group have been developed as tourism destinations. Ethnic neighborhoods that were historically reputed as places to avoid have now become places to celebrate ethnic diversity and to attract tourists. "Chinatowns" across North America, Little Havana in Miami, or Banglatown in London are a few examples of such tourism development. Japan is no exception. Despite the general consensus that Japan is relatively homogenous in terms of ethnicity of its residents, several ethnic neighborhoods, including those with high numbers of Chinese and Korean immigrants and descendants, and most recently Brazilian immigrants and descendants, have emerged as tourism destinations.

Several studies to date have explored local residents' perceptions of ethnic neighborhood tourism in the United States (Santos & Yan, 2008), Europe (Shaw, Bagwell, & Karmowska, 2004), and Asia (Henderson, 2003). These studies have primarily focused on the perspectives of the ethnic minority group whose culture is represented to tourists. Implicit in the literature is the idea that, while the tourism in an ethnic neighborhood is implemented only to attract the tourists from the dominant group, quality of life of the ethnic minority group is ignored in the planning process (Henderson, 2003). That being said, little work has centered on dominant group members' perspectives of the minority group as they pertain to tourism representations. In this study, therefore, the attitudes of Japanese residents (as the dominant ethnic group) living in a Brazilian (as the minority ethnic group) neighborhood will be explored.

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In exploring Japanese residents' attitudes, particular attention will be paid to examine the relationship between residents' attitudes (i.e., "ethnic attitudes") toward Brazilians and the same residents' level of support for ethnic neighborhood tourism focused on Brazilian culture. Over the last two decades, scholars have identified many factors that have influenced the attitudes of local residents towards tourism, including perceived economic and personal benefits, characteristics and identity of residents and the community, and the relationship between residents and tourists (see Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Harrill, 2004; Látková & Vogt, 2012; Lankford & Howard, 1994; Liu & Var, 1986; McCool & Martin 1994; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Teye, Sönmez, & Sirakaya, 2002; Wang & Pfister, 2008; Woosnam, 2012). However, perceptions of inter-ethnic relations within a community have not been examined as a factor that may serve to explain residents' attitudes. Dustmann and Preston (2001) argue that attitudes of members of the dominant ethnic group towards minority group members influence social and economic inclusion/exclusion of immigrants. If so, knowing dominant group's attitudes towards a minority group and how the attitudes influence their perceptions for ethnic neighborhood tourism might be a critical step for this type of tourism to be more inclusive of all community members. Therefore, this study will examine how Japanese residents' attitudes toward Brazilians influence their level of support for tourism development centered on Brazilian culture. This study has three main purposes: (1) to explore the factor structure of the *Ethnic Attitude Scale* (EAS), (2) to examine whether resulting factors from the EAS significantly predict attitudes toward ethnic neighborhood tourism concerning Brazilian culture, and (3) to examine the degree to which attitudes toward ethnic neighborhood tourism concerning Brazilian culture vary among respondents, given socio-demographic and residential variables.

2. Literature review

2.1. Ethnic neighborhood tourism

Ethnic neighborhoods that were once considered bastions of unemployment, crime, and congestion have become marketed as new, "exotic" destinations (Aytar & Rath, 2012; Henderson, 2000; Santos, Belhassen, & Caton, 2008). The reasons behind the boom of ethnic neighborhood tourism in western society and some parts of Asia can be traced to deindustrialization and the spread of western multi-culturalism (Drew, 2011; Santos & Yan, 2008; Zukin, 1993). Most recently, cities with declining manufacturing industries have begun to rely on tourism as a tool for economic and social revitalization (Pang & Rath, 2007). Throughout this revitalization process, the presence of an ethnic neighborhood, which offers food and entertainment with a unique taste of the "Other," has become an asset, rather than a burden, for cities in attracting more tourists. In addition, the shift from the traditional, "assimilation" model to a multi-cultural agenda has changed the way to approach to an ethnic neighborhood (Santos & Yan, 2008). With the new agenda, a multi-cultural society has become viewed as an ideal landscape of harmony, tolerance, and high social cohesion among different ethnic groups—increasing demand for individuals to visit.

Several scholars (see Aytar & Rath, 2012; Drew, 2011; Gordon & Newfield, 1996; Judd & Fainstein, 1999; Santos & Yan, 2008; Shaw et al., 2004) identify problems associated with ethnic neighborhood tourism. For example, Santos and Yan (2008) argue that people in the ethnic neighborhood need to respond to the demand for "exoticised" food, entertainment, and other products, which may reinforce stereo-typical images of the ethnic group. Tourism may also make ethnic neighborhoods "Disneytized" areas that error on the side of meeting the needs of tourists more than those of

community residents (Aytar & Rath, 2012; Judd & Fainstein, 1999). In addition, to attract tourists, an ethnic neighborhood needs to portray and promote an image of itself as being positive, welcoming, with no problems (Gordon & Newfield, 1996; Santos & Yan, 2008). Such representation then may obscure the social reality that the community is actually facing, including ethnic conflicts and prejudice, crime, social inequality, and social isolation.

Despite these problems, positive effects of ethnic neighborhood tourism have also been documented. For example, tourism fuels employment and entrepreneurial opportunities even for people without specialized knowledge and skill (Conforti, 1996; Santos & Yan, 2008). It can also lead to recognition of ethnic minorities by the dominant societal structure (Hitchcock, 1999; Pang & Rath, 2007). Indeed, Scheyvens (2002, p. 102) argues that tourism can be a medium through which a marginalized community can share their experience and past mistakes with tourists and be "rewriting the history books in one sense."

Overall, previous studies concerning ethnic neighborhood tourism illustrate both negative and positive impacts that local communities can experience. However, many of these existing studies, particularly that examine the perspective of the "local community," focus exclusively on the perspective of members of the ethnic minority groups whose culture is represented to tourists. Few studies explore the perspectives of residents within the dominant ethnic group.

2.2. Locals' ethnic attitudes and attitudes toward tourism

Over the last two decades, researchers have attempted to identify factors that explain residents' attitudes toward tourism (Boley & McGehee, 2014; Lankford & Howard, 1994; Liu & Var, 1986; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Sharpley, 2014). The factors include levels of tourism development (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Látková & Vogt, 2012), perceived benefit from tourism (Wang & Pfister, 2008), physical and psychological distance between locals and tourists (Harrill & Potts, 2003; Woosnam, 2012), and community's identity (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012). In addition, various socio-demographic factors have been explored, including age (Cavus & Tanrisevdi, 2003; Huh & Vogt, 2008), income and occupation (Akis, Peristianis, & Warner, 1996; Haukeland, 1984), length of residence (McCool & Martin, 1994), and education (McCool & Martin, 1994; Teye et al., 2002). However, little research has explored levels to which one's ethnic attitudes influence the person's perceptions about tourism development.

Ethnic attitudes can be defined as attitudes held toward a group by non-members of the group (Kalin & Berry, 1982). Considerable research has been conducted concerning formation of ethnic attitudes, given the strong links to concepts of tolerance, prejudice, and social inclusion/exclusion of ethnic groups (Coenders, Lubbers, Scheepers, & Verkuyten, 2008; Jackman, 1977; Mullick & Hraba, 2001). Studies suggest that ethnic attitudes are explained by various factors, such as age, gender, education, and labor market positions (Dustmann & Preston, 2001; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007; Hernes & Knudsen, 1992; Willis, 2009). Amongst these factors, the presence of an ethnic group in a defined area is regarded as one of the most influential factors (Kalin, 1996; Laar, Levin, Sinclair, & Sidanius, 2005; Savelkoul, Scheepers, Tolsma, & Hagendoorn, 2011; Schneider, 2008). In this regards, two general, and contradicting, theories have been applied; namely, ethnic competition theory and intergroup contact theory.

Ethnic competition theory stems from two complimentary theories; specifically realistic group conflict theory and social identity theory (Hernes & Knudsen, 1992; Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). The realistic competition theory argues that competition over scarce resources, which may be economic-, power-, and