



# Dynamic relationships between tourist arrivals, immigrants, and crimes in the United States<sup>☆</sup>



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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Relationships between tourist arrivals, immigrants, and crimes in United States are investigated.
- Our findings affirm the social structural perspectives; immigration and crime go hand in hand.
- Immigrants admitted by Europe, Mexico, and North America to the U.S. are positively correlated with key crimes.
- Tourist arrivals positively influence crime rate in short-run, which affirms the opportunity structural perspectives.
- Immigrants positively influence tourist arrivals, which supports the Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) perspective.

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## ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the dynamic relationships between tourist arrivals, immigrants, and crimes in the United States (U.S.) from 1984 to 2013. Our findings affirm the social structural perspectives (i.e. Merton's Strain theory and Social Disorganization theory), which contain a popular perception about the immigration and crime that they both go hand in hand. Results of bivariate analysis revealed that immigrants admitted by Europe, Mexico, and North America to U.S. are positively correlated with key crimes. Tourist arrivals positively influence crime rate only in short-run, which affirms the Opportunity Structural perspectives (i.e. Routine Activity and Hot Spot theories). Furthermore, immigrants positively influence tourist arrivals, which supports the Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) empirical perspective. Therefore, concerned authorities can focus on environmental design initiative in concerned areas (i.e. immigrants' communities and tourists' cities). Furthermore, future research and implications are discussed.

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## 1. Introduction

Over the decades, tourism demand has grown (WTTC, 2014). Tourism has become one of the leading and fastest growing economic sectors in the world (UNWTO, 2014). It is also an important source for invigorating economic growth (Gunduz & Hatemi, 2005;

Sequeira & Nunes, 2008; Tang, 2012), which, symbolized as main source of exports, income, taxes, and employment (Su & Lin, 2014). Travel and Tourism sector grew by 9.5% and contributed 7 trillion US\$ to world Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2013, reaching a record 4.7 million new jobs, meaning it supported nearly 266 million people (1/11 jobs worldwide) in employments. Travel and Tourism sector also contributed US\$ 448 billion in GDP of United States (U.S.) in 2013 and grew to 2.8% of the U.S. total GDP, 9th among major industries, reaching more than 5.6 million jobs, meaning that ranking as 7th among major U.S. industries, supporting nearly 3.9% of the U.S. total employment base (WTTC, 2014).

International Tourist Arrivals (ITA) grew by 5% worldwide in 2013, ITA increased from 1035 million in 2012 to 1087 million in 2013 (see Fig. 1) with an average annual growth of 3.8%. International Tourism Receipts (ITR) increased from US\$ 1078 billion in 2012 to US\$ 1159 billion in 2013 (UNWTO, 2014).

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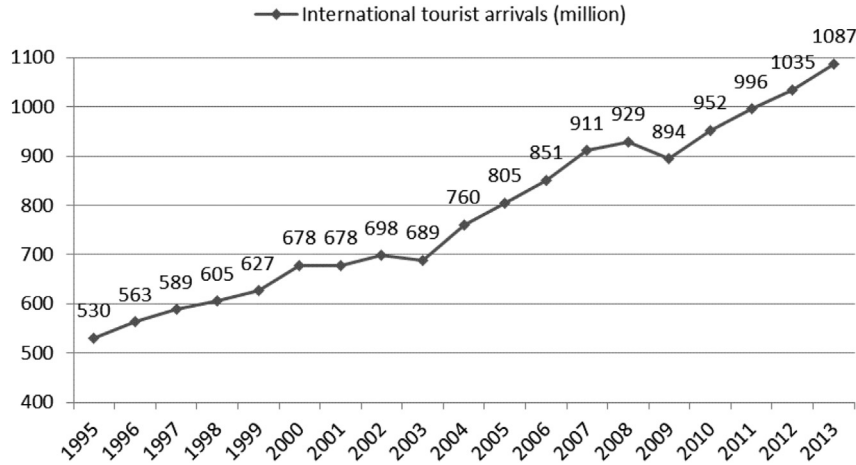


Fig. 1. International tourist arrivals.

In the region of Americas, ITA grew by 3% in 2013, reaching 168 million, up from 163 million in 2012, and ITR grew by 7.5%, reaching US\$ 229 billion, up from US\$ 213 billion in 2012. With this performance, the region maintained its 15% and 20% share of worldwide tourist arrivals and receipts respectively (UNWTO Tourism in Americas, 2013).

Within the region of Americas, the U.S. is the most visited country; among the top 10 rankings by ITA and ITR, the U.S. ranks 1st and 2nd with US\$ 140 billion receipts and 70 million arrivals in 2013, respectively. As in many other countries, tourism in the U.S. is also a main economic force (UNWTO Tourism in Americas, 2013).

Fig. 2 shows the historical trends of tourist arrivals, crime rate and immigrants. According to UNWTO and U.S. department of commerce, tourist arrivals in U.S. increased from 27 million in 1984 to 69.8 million in 2013, representing growth of 3.28% on average per year. Thus, is the upward increase in tourist arrivals in U.S. a factor behind the increase in the U.S. immigration or vice versa and decrease in U.S. crime rate or vice versa? Uniform crime reports of Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) statistics show that crime rate dropped from 12 million in 1984 to 10.2 million in 2013, representing decrease of 0.48% on average per year. Thus, is the downward decrease in U.S. crime rate a factor behind the increase in the U.S. tourist arrivals or vice versa? U.S. Department of Homeland

Security statistics show that the U.S. immigrants increased from 54.2 ten-thousands in 1984 to 99.1 ten-thousands in 2013, representing growth of 5% on average per year. Thus, the growing trends in immigrants appear to suggest that, if the positive effect of immigrants on ITA in U.S. is proved, having such increase in immigrants will lead to increases in ITA in U.S., and vice versa.

The aim of this study is to make an attempt to investigate the relationship between immigration, tourist arrivals, and crime rate in the U.S. over the period from 1984 to 2013. This study also seeks to address a gap, which has been addressed by Seetaram (2012) about the lack of empirical literature on immigration-tourism linkage. The situation in U.S. has become complex due to the recent economic instability. If we concentrate on the following questions by keeping in mind major historical events (i.e. political and economic), the ideas are not pretty straightforward. Does ITA in U.S. influence crime rate and immigrants of U.S.? Does crime rate of U.S. influence the immigrants and ITA in U.S.? Does immigration of U.S. influence the crime rate and ITA in U.S.?

However, there have been a few studies, which provided evidence to address the questions raised above. Because of its economic significance (Gunduz & Hatemi, 2005; Sequeira & Nunes, 2008; Tang, 2012), determinants of tourism activity remained under discussion among several research scholars. Tourist arrivals is

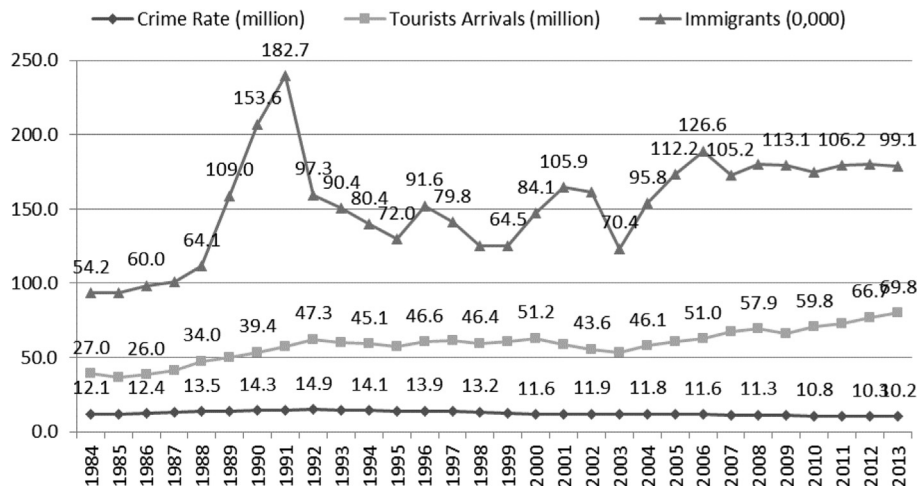


Fig. 2. Tourist arrivals, crime rate and immigrants in United States.

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