

EXPLAINING RESIDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS TOURISM AND TOURISTS: A NEW APPROACH BASED ON BRAND THEORY

Abstract

Considering host communities as brands in the eyes of local people, our study examines how resident attitudes towards tourism and tourists are influenced by two brand factors: 1) equity perceptions related to their communities (i.e. brand equity); and 2) identification with their communities (i.e. brand identification). Our empirical results indicate that resident attitudes towards tourism are positively influenced by equity perceptions and identification, while attitudes towards tourists are positively influenced by attitudes towards tourism and identification with the community. These findings represent a step forward in better understanding how both types of resident attitudes are influenced by non-tourism related factors.

Keywords: Residents, Attitudes, Brand, Identification, Equity

Introduction

Many studies have paid special attention to residents' perceptions of the economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts of tourism in host communities (see a review in San Martín, García-de los Salmones & Herrero, 2017). These perceptions, which significantly contribute to the formation of resident attitudes towards tourism, are conceived as a key factor in the successful development of tourism in host communities (Sharpley, 2014). More concretely, managing these perceptions and attitudes is very important since residents are a critical component in tourism system (Easterling, 2004). Particularly, residents with a positive overall attitude towards tourism play a crucial role as ambassadors of their communities or places of residence (Palmer, Koenig-Lewis & Medi Jones, 2013) since they may engage in positive word-of-mouth communication and, therefore, generate a positive image of the place among potential visitors. At the same time, residents with a positive attitude have a more harmonious relationship with tourists during their interactions or encounters in the host community (Zhang, Inbakaran, R. & Jackson, 2006), thus contributing to more satisfying experiences for visitors.

In this field, Sharpley (2014) conducted a review of research on host perceptions of tourism and he found that most studies have examined how resident attitudes towards tourism in their communities are influenced by tourism-specific factors, such as type of tourism, density of tourists, or dependency on tourism. Under these circumstances, he highlights that more effort is needed to examine how these attitudes are influenced by other variables beyond the tourism domain. With this in mind, our study focuses on studying resident attitudes formation as a process influenced, to a certain extent, by non-tourism related factors. In particular, since cities, regions and countries are increasingly considered as brands that project a set of emotional associations and vital experiences among residents and visitors (e.g. Shafranskaya

and Potapov, 2014; Pike and Bianchi, 2016; San Martín, Herrero and García-de los Salmones, 2018), we aim to generate new knowledge about resident attitudes formation by considering the communities hosting tourism as brands in the eyes of local people. Particularly, our model of resident attitudes includes two especially relevant variables from the Brand Theory: brand equity and identification with the brand. The first variable represents the essence and value of a brand since it includes the notions of awareness, image, quality and loyalty towards the brand (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2003). For its part, identification is considered a keystone in building strong relationships between individuals and brands (e.g. Kuezel and Halliday, 2008; Tuškej, Golob and Podnar, 2013) –in our case, identification would be a key driver of the relationships between residents and host communities–.

In addition, it is necessary to highlight that in the study of resident attitudes most papers have focused on attitudes towards tourism development, which are formed based on the residents' perceptions of the different tourism impacts in their places of residence. More recently, Palmer et al. (2013) emphasize the need of considering the concept of 'affective attitudes towards tourists', which is related to the interactions with tourists in host communities (i.e. host-guest interactions). These interactions have been widely examined in the literature on destination image and tourist satisfaction (e.g. Bianchi, 2015; Herrero, San Martín, Garcia-de los Salmones & Collado, 2016b), but they have been scarcely addressed in previous studies on resident attitudes. Thus, considering the relevance of examining, and subsequently managing, the host-guest interactions in the better positioning and competitiveness of tourist sites, our paper aims to generate new knowledge in the literature by also examining resident attitudes towards tourists and, particularly, how these attitudes are affected by brand equity perceptions and the identification of residents with their communities.

In the next section, we provide some background on resident attitudes and the concepts of brand equity and brand identification. Following this background, we develop the theoretical model of our paper, which is empirically tested in the Spanish region of Cantabria. This region is integrated within the so-called ‘Green Spain’, which is an official brand that is used to promote the north of Spain in international markets. In contrast to the most popular Mediterranean destinations in Spain, the region of Cantabria is distinguished by a tourism based on culture and nature with a low density of tourists –the internationally famous attractions of Altamira Caves and Cabárceno Wildlife Park are its most important tourist resources–. According to the data provided by the Cantabrian Institute of Statistics (ICANE), around 90 percent of tourists visiting the region of Cantabria every year are from Spain (4,168,632 tourists in 2016) and 10 percent are from other countries (382,487 international tourists in 2016, mainly from France and the United Kingdom). For its part, the amount of expenditures (per person and day) is around 41.0 euros for national tourists and 91.9 euros for international tourists (ICANE, 2016). Finally, there are more than 4,500 companies and 10,000 employees in the tourism sector in Cantabria—around 12 percent and 8 percent of the total companies and employees in the region, respectively (ICANE, 2015).

Literature Review

Resident Attitudes

Tourism development generates both positive and negative impacts in host communities (Abdollahzadeh & Sharifzadeh, 2014; Almeida et al., 2015; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Oviedo, Castellanos, & Martín, 2008; Prayag et al. 2013; Vargas, Oom, Da Costa, & Albiño, 2015; Wang & Xu, 2015). For example, the creation of local businesses and employment opportunities, the increase of pride and cultural identity, and the improvement of environmental awareness are some of the main benefits of tourism for host communities. In

contrast, there are some costs such as the rise of local taxes, damage to the cultural heritage, and environmental degradation. According to previous studies, residents will develop their attitudes towards tourism based on a comparison between the positive and negative effects of the tourism activity in their communities (Dyer, Gursoy, Sharma & Carter, 2007; Latkova & Vogt, 2012; Martínez-García, Raya, & Majó, 2017; Zhang et al., 2006). With this in mind, and adopting a traditional approach to attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), we consider that resident attitudes towards tourism are an enduring predisposition towards the tourism development in their communities, that will be positive if residents perceive that the benefits of the tourism activity are greater than its costs or negative impacts over time.

However, Sharpley (2014) argues that host-guest interactions should also be specifically considered in the study of the residents' attitudes formation process. These interactions, which are conceived as the keystone of tourism (Yu & Lee, 2014), can be defined as the encounters between residents and tourists in host communities. In this regard, Palmer et al. (2013) introduce the concept of affective attitudes towards tourists, which are closely related to the host-guest interactions. Particularly, they refer to these attitudes as the residents' feelings –such as pleasure and enjoyment– about the interactions with tourists visiting their communities. For its part, Woosnam and colleagues also incorporate the feelings about tourists in the study of resident attitudes. More concretely, they built the Emotional Solidarity Framework and postulated that residents' affective connections with tourists are mainly determined by the above-mentioned interactions (Woosnam, Norman & Ying, 2009; Woosnam, 2012). In this context, with the purpose of better understanding this complex phenomenon of resident attitudes, our theoretical model also includes the attitudes towards tourists, which are defined as the feelings or emotional states that the encounters with tourists evoke among residents over time.

In addition to analysing the effects of brand equity and brand identification on resident attitudes, which will be established in the next sections, we consider it necessary to also examine the link between attitudes towards tourism and attitudes towards tourists. In this regard, the traditional models (Bagozzi, 1982; Fishbein & Azjen, 1975) represent a useful framework to establish a logical sequence in the formation of both attitudes. According to this approach, the affective evaluations of an attitude object are influenced by the cognitive evaluations of that object. This cognitive-affective sequence of attitudes is also recognized by Russell (1980), who establishes that stimuli are initially interpreted by individuals and endowed with meaning and, on the basis of these cognitive processes, their emotional states are subsequently formed. In a similar way, Lazarus (1991) propounds that consumers develop a sequence of behaviour initiated by a phase of cognitive nature followed by a more emotional phase. With this in mind, and considering the mainly cognitive nature of attitudes towards tourism and the more affective nature of attitudes towards tourists (Palmer et al., 2013), we establish the first hypothesis:

H1: Residents attitudes towards tourism positively influence their attitudes towards tourists.

Residents' equity perceptions related to their communities

As indicated, past research has been concerned with examining the factors that influence residents' perceptions and attitudes regarding the different tourism impacts in their communities. Beyond the tourism domain, one factor that has not been considered up to now in the framework of resident attitudes is brand equity, which is recognized in the literature as a useful and relevant variable to explain attitudes and behaviours in relation to brands.

Specifically, Keller (1993, 2003) and Aaker (1996) developed the model of consumer-based

brand equity (CBBE), related to perceptions, associations and beliefs that consumers have about the brand (Feldwick, 1996). According to Keller (1993), customer-based brand equity provides a conceptual framework of what consumers know about brands and what such knowledge implies for marketing strategies. The power of brands lies in the mind of consumers, and CBBE is based on what they have experienced and learned about the brands over time (Keller, 1993). In the same line, Aaker (1996) refers to the set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, which add to (or subtract from) the value provided by customers to a firm/brand. This set of assets that contribute to the formation of value in the consumers' mind can be grouped in four dimensions: brand awareness, brand image/associations, perceived quality and loyalty (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2003). First, brand awareness refers to the level of knowledge of a particular brand in the marketplace. Second, brand image represents the set of associations that a brand is able to evoke among individuals. Third, brand quality consists of the excellence or superiority of a brand. Finally, brand loyalty is the commitment with a brand in terms, for example, of repurchasing it or engaging in positive word-of-mouth communication about it.

The CBBE framework was initially developed in the field of goods and services although over time it was extended to other fields, such as tourism (Konecnik, 2006; Boo et al. 2009; Kladou and Kehagia, 2014; Pike and Bianchi, 2016; Herrero et al., 2017). In order to highlight the importance of this variable in our study, it is necessary to indicate that destinations are facing increased competition for attracting different targets, e.g., tourists, investors, or foreign students. Under these circumstances, it is widely established that one key element to create strong competitive advantages is developing a place-branding strategy (Kavaratsiz & Ashworth, 2008; Pike, 2009). Thus, a strategy of place branding would aim to reinforce the competitiveness of the place by raising its awareness in the marketplace,

improving its image and perceived quality and, finally, building a stronger loyalty or commitment among the different target groups (Herrero et al. 2016b).

Many recent studies in tourism have been focused on the concept of place-brand equity and its effects on attitudes and behaviours of individuals. Facing the increasing number of studies analysing potential or actual visitors of a tourist destination (Im, Kim, Ellio & Han, 2012; Pike, Bianchi & Kerr, 2010; Yang et al. 2015; Herrero et al. 2016b), Shafranskaya and Potapov (2014) develop a new approach by considering the figure of residents. These authors establish, based on Signalling Theory (Connelly, Certo, Ireland & Reutzel 2011), that the place brand is a signal or promise of quality that should be communicated by local authorities (i.e., signallers) through branding activities targeted to specific groups (i.e., receivers), both external and internal. In particular, internal groups mainly include residents, who are considered a relevant target since they have a critical role as influencers or ambassadors of their communities (Palmer et al., 2013). Under these circumstances, it would be interesting to examine how residents value their communities as places hosting tourism (Chen & Segota, 2016), thus helping to better understand their attitudes towards tourism and tourists. In line with Shafranskaya and Potapov (2014), if the equity related to their communities is positively perceived by residents, then their responses will also be positive and they will develop a brand-building behaviour, both inside and outside those communities (Chen & Segota, 2016). Therefore, we postulate that residents will have more positive attitudes towards tourism and tourists if they perceive that their communities are well known (i.e., high awareness), evoke positive feelings (i.e., positive image), offer high-quality services (i.e., high quality), and are likely to be recommended to other people (i.e., strong loyalty). Thus, the following hypotheses are established:

H2: Residents equity perception related to their communities positively influences their attitudes towards tourism.

H3: Residents equity perception related to their communities positively influences their attitudes towards tourists.

Residents' identification with their communities

According to Tajfel (1978), brand identification can be defined in our research context as the part of a resident's self-concept that derives from his/her knowledge of his/her membership to a community (cognitive dimension), together with the affective significance (emotional dimension) and value (evaluative dimension) attached to that membership. This conceptualization has been developed based on Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986), which explains how people tend to classify themselves and other people within social groups to better understand their social reality (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). These social groups are formed from the identifying features of their members, who perceive a degree of similarity with the other members –i.e., cognitive dimension–, are emotionally involved in the group –i.e., emotional dimension–, and evaluate it more positively than other external groups –i.e., evaluative dimension– (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Abrams, 1998).

The three dimensions of brand identification –i.e., cognitive, emotional and evaluative– are formed based on the three processes that are at the core of Social Identity Theory –i.e., self-categorization, identification and comparison– (Ellemers, Kortekaas & Ouwerkerk, 1999).

First, brand identification requires the residents' cognitive certainty that they belong to a specific local community, which is achieved through a process of self-categorization in that local community. In this regard, the self-categorization process accentuates the perceived similarities in physical and personal stimuli within the community and differences observed

with respect to stimuli belonging to other communities (Hogg et al., 1995). Second, strong brand identification demands that residents' experience an emotional connection to the local community, referring to positive affective feelings derived from their membership to the community (Doosje et al., 1995). As suggested by Ellemers et al. (1999), through the identification process this emotional connection derives into residents' affective commitment, which is the true essence of brand identification. Third, brand identification is complete when residents' start a process of comparison of their local community and other communities and they finally attach a better value to their group membership because it has improved their self-esteem. Therefore, in line with Ellemers et al. (1999), the resident's genuine identification with the community requires not only self-categorization in the community, but also an emotional involvement and a positive evaluation of the membership.

Brand identification also relates to the notions of "relationship to place" and "place attachment", as defined by Chen and Segota (2015). On the one hand, "relationship to place refers to the different ways that people relate to places, or the types of bonds people can have with a place" (Chen and Segota, 2015, p. 145). Relationship to place is usually created instantaneously and often impossible to alter (e.g. one cannot change his/her birthplace or cannot easily alter the place where he/she settles down -even if it is not the birth place- due to work or family ties). Thus, relationship to place is comparable to the cognitive dimension of brand identification because either native or non-native residents can easily categorize themselves in the local community where they live. On the other hand, place attachment refers to the depth and types of attachment to one particular place (Chen et al., 2014). Thus, it is subject to change and may be affected by factors such as satisfaction, length of residence, events and expectations, etc. This idea suggests that place attachment is more closely related to the emotional and evaluative dimensions of brand identification. For instance, native

residents may be expected to experience stronger emotional bonds with the local community because they have been born in it and this fact may increase their affective commitment (Hay, 1998). On the contrary, the affection of non-native residents may be divided into the community where they live and the community where they were born, in such a way that their brand identification with the new community may be lower than for native residents (Hay, 1998).

In tourism research, previous studies have established a link between identification and resident attitudes. In particular, Schroeder (1996) highlights that support for tourism (i.e., an attitudinal variable widely studied in tourism research) is positively influenced by the level of residents' identification with their communities. More recently, work by Palmer et al. (2013) provides empirical evidence concerning a positive link between resident identification with their communities and their affective attitudes towards tourists, as well as a positive relationship between identification and intention to promote inward tourism through word-of-mouth communication. Additionally, these authors suggest that identification with their communities will be greater if residents have the opportunity to share their knowledge with non-locals such as acquaintances and visitors. For their part, Nunkoo and Gursay (2012) establish that residents are more likely to have a deeper identification with their communities if they perceive that benefits gained from involvement with tourism activities, especially economic benefits, exceed the perceived costs. With this in mind, we propose two research hypotheses as follows:

H4: Residents identification with their communities positively influences their attitudes towards tourism.

H5: Residents identification with their communities positively influences their attitudes towards tourists.

Finally, our theoretical model also considers the existence of a close relationship between residents' identification with their communities and their brand equity perceptions.

According to the Brand Theory, if individuals incorporate identification with a product or service into their self-concepts, which is concretized by high levels of personal commitment and emotional involvement, companies will have many opportunities for building brand equity (Underwood, Bond & Baer, 2001). Along this line, Keller (2003) argues that one variable found to strengthen brand associations is the degree of personal relevance linked to a piece of brand-related information. Therefore, residents identifying highly with their communities are more likely to: 1) view community-related information as personally relevant, 2) process it deeply, 3) relate this information to previous knowledge, and, consequently, 4) strengthen the equity perceptions related to their communities. Residents highly identified with their local community are even expected to ignore negative information concerning the destination or the impact of tourism on it because their resilience to negative information –i.e., the ability not to be influenced by events with a negative impact on the community image– will be higher (Marzocchi et al., 2013). Based on these theoretical arguments, the last research hypothesis reads as follows:

H6: Residents identification with their communities positively influences their equity perceptions.

Figure 1 graphically summarizes the research hypotheses.

Figure 1. Theoretical model.

Methodology

In order to test the hypotheses, quantitative research based on surveys was carried out in Spain, the third destination in the world in terms of international tourists incoming (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2017). In 2016, Spain was the most competitive destination worldwide according to the ranking developed by World Economic Forum (2017), thus being a good benchmark for collecting empirical data on resident perceptions and attitudes towards tourism. Specifically, surveys were conducted in the region of Cantabria, which is located in the north of Spain. In this regard, it is important to highlight that although Spain is internationally recognized for its sun-and-beach tourism, this activity sector is very heterogeneous depending on each specific region in the country. While sun-and-beach tourism is predominant on the Mediterranean coast and the Spanish islands, the tourism offer in northern and interior Spain is more based on natural resources and cultural heritage. Therefore, and taking as a reference the extrinsic variables influencing resident perceptions and attitudes, as established by Sharpley (2014), tourism in the region of Cantabria can be defined as a non-mass activity, which is mainly based on the natural resources and cultural heritage of the tourist sites. In consequence, the host community under investigation is not based on an intensive development of sun-and-beach resorts with a potential negative impact in environmental and sociocultural terms. Besides, visitors are mainly from other Spanish regions, and international tourists only represent 15–20% of visitors, which also reduces the negative potential bias with regard to the formation of perceptions and attitudes among residents. Table 1 summarizes the main geographical and socio-demographic characteristics of the region of Cantabria.

Table 1. Geographical and sociodemographic profile of the region of Cantabria.

The target population of the quantitative research consisted of residents over 18. In particular, empirical data was collected using a personal questionnaire that included the following issues: 1) resident attitudes towards tourism and tourists; 2) brand equity, or value of the community as a place hosting tourism, as perceived by residents; 3) resident identification with the local community; and 4) socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. The variables of our theoretical model were measured using multi-attribute instruments (10-point Likert scales) adapted from previous works in order to ensure the content validity. More concretely, ‘attitude towards tourists’ was captured based on the previous works of Teye et al. (2002) and Palmer et al. (2013), while ‘attitude towards tourism’ was measured by using an instrument adapted from a study by Wang, Pfister & Morais, (2006). In particular, respondents were initially required to reflect on the type of tourism development in their community and, more specifically, its positive and negative impacts. Once respondents were aware of these issues, then they were asked about their attitudes. In addition, ‘equity perception’ was captured based on the works of Boo, Busser & Baloglu (2009) and Pike et al. (2010). Finally, ‘identification’ with the community was measured by taking as a reference Palmer et al. (2013) –see Appendix–.

The sample was selected by using two methods: quotas and convenience. Concerning the quota sampling method, we initially used the statistics provided by the Cantabrian Institute of Statistics (ICANE), to determine the distribution (or percentages) of the target population in terms of gender and age. Subsequently, this information was taken into account in order to establish the profile of potential respondents. In a second stage, we used a convenience method to define the geographical scope for data collection, selecting the areas in the region of Cantabria according to the statistics of tourism arrivals provided by ICANE (for instance, the municipality of Santander or the area of Torrelavega were selected for data collection).

With this information, the interviewers were distributed in the different geographical areas and were trained to administer the questionnaire without causing bias in the responses, obtaining a valid sample of 619 residents.

The characteristics of respondents are indicated in Table 2; particularly, the profile of the average respondent is a 30-55-year-old person, worker, and with secondary or university studies. Regarding the distribution of the sample in terms of gender and age of respondents, it is important to indicate that it is very similar to the target population, thus achieving an adequate level of typological representativeness. Additionally, 94.7% of the respondents affirmed to have been living in the area under research for more than 20 years, which implies that the residents had enough time to develop attitudes towards tourism and tourists visiting the area, and to be identified in a lesser or greater extent with the host community.

Table 2. Profile of respondents.

Results

The statistical analyses were developed using the structural equation modelling (SEM) methodology –EQS 6.1 software–. First, the measurement model was estimated with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the psychometric properties of the measurement scales (i.e., reliability and validity). Next, the model was estimated in order to contrast the research hypotheses. Before the results derived from these analyses can be explained, it is necessary to indicate that the Harman’s single-factor test was conducted in IBM-SPSS software to check for common method variance (CMV). In other words, a check was made on whether the correlation among variables was significantly influenced or not by their common source (Chang et al., 2010). The results of the analysis indicate that the items loaded

into more than one factor and, consequently, CMV does not significantly influence this quantitative research.

Estimation of the measurement model

The results obtained for the goodness-of-fit indexes show a correct specification for the measurement model. In particular, there are three main classes of fit criteria: measures of absolute fit, measures of incremental fit, and measures of parsimonious fit (Hair et al., 2010). In this case, the statistics adopted are given by EQS 6.1, widely used in the SEM literature (Hair et al., 2010): Bentler-Bonett Normed Fit Index (BBNFI), Bentler-Bonett Non-Normed Fit Index (BBNNFI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) for the measurement of overall model fit; Incremental Fit Index (IFI) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) as measures of incremental fit; and normed χ^2 for the measurement of the parsimony of the model. The results summarized in Table 3 confirm that the BBNFI, BBNNFI, IFI, and CFI statistics exceed the recommended minimum value of 0.9. For its part, RMSEA is located within the maximum limit of 0.08, and normed χ^2 takes a value under the recommended level of 3.0 (Hair et al., 2010).

The reliability of the measurement scales is evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, compound reliability and AVE coefficients (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). The values of these statistics are, in every case, above the required minimum values of 0.7 and 0.5 respectively (Hair et al., 2010), which supports the inner reliability of the proposed constructs (Table 3). The convergent validity of the scales is also confirmed (Table 3), since all the items are significant to a confidence level of 95% and their standardized lambda coefficients are higher than 0.5 (Steenkamp and Van Trijp, 1991).

Table 3. Confirmatory factor analysis.

In addition, the discriminant validity of the measurement scales is tested following the procedure proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981). This method requires the comparison of the variance extracted for each pair of constructs (AVE coefficient) with the squared correlation estimate between both constructs. The results summarized in Table 4 confirm the discriminant validity in our model since the AVE indicators for each pair of latent variables are greater than their squared correlation.

Table 4. Discriminant validity.

Estimation of the hypothesized structural model

Once the psychometric properties of the scales were adequately examined in the previous stage, the model was estimated using Robust Maximum Likelihood. This method avoids the problems related to non-normality of data by providing the outputs ‘robust chi-square statistic’ and ‘robust standard errors’, which have been corrected for non-normality (Byrne, 1994) and, consequently, guarantee the validity of the estimation.

An initial estimation of the structural model showed that resident’s equity perception has no significant effect on attitude towards tourists, so hypothesis H3 was rejected. Following the strategy of model development suggested by Hair et al. (1998), we made a re-specification of the structural model by eliminating the mentioned relationship. Figure 2 summarizes the results obtained for the re-specified research model, indicating the goodness-of-fit indices of the structural model, R^2 statistics for each dependent variable, standardized coefficients for each relationship, and the values of the t-student statistic (in parentheses) to test significance.

The values observed for the goodness-of-fit indexes support the appropriate specification of the structural model, while the R^2 statistics obtained for the dependent variables support its explanatory ability (Figure 2).

Empirical results obtained in our research show that a resident's attitude towards tourists is positively influenced by his/her attitude towards tourism (H1 is confirmed). In addition, this attitude is positively influenced by the resident's equity perception related to his/her community and, to a lesser extent, by the identification with that community (H2 and H4 are confirmed). The resident's attitude towards tourists is positively affected by identification, but not by equity perception (H5 is confirmed but H3 is rejected). Finally, equity perception is positively influenced by identification with the community (H6 is confirmed).

Figure 2. Estimation of the model.

Conclusions

Our paper aims to generate new contributions in the study of residents by developing a new approach to resident attitudes formation. Despite the fact that many studies have been focused on explaining how resident attitudes towards tourism are formed, we adopted a new approach with two differentiating elements. On the one hand, we consider not only the attitudes towards tourism in host communities, but also the resident attitudes towards tourists, because interactions between these collectives in host communities are drivers of tourist satisfaction and a keystone in building a positive image of the place. On the other hand, we try to explain the formation of both types of resident attitudes with factors beyond the tourism domain: equity perceptions and identification with the community. In this case, we adopt the increasingly stream of research that considers places as brands in the eyes not only of tourists, but also residents.

Theoretical implications

In line with the cognitive-affective sequence of attitudes widely adopted in the traditional models in consumer research, we confirm that resident attitudes towards tourism development in their communities (predominantly cognitive in nature) significantly contribute to the formation of their attitudes towards tourists (mainly affective in nature). This finding represents a new step in tourism research since it empirically demonstrates not only the multidimensional nature of resident attitudes, but also the interrelationship between them. Consequently, future studies in this field should recognize both types of resident attitudes to better explain the responses or behaviours in terms of a more (or less) intense word-of-mouth communication about their communities or a higher (or lower) involvement of residents with the tourism activities organized in their places of residence.

Another interesting finding is the significant role of brand equity and identification with the community in resident attitudes formation. Our results empirically confirm that equity perceptions related to host communities are the main drivers of resident attitudes towards tourism in those places. In addition, identification with the community influences both types of resident attitudes and, to a greater extent, equity perceptions. This finding reveals that other variables beyond the tourism domain should be considered to explain the complex phenomenon of resident attitudes formation. In particular, the study of residents' attitudes towards their communities should include, in addition to equity and identification, other variables from marketing research that would be focused, in this case, on the quality of the relationships between residents and host communities –for example, “satisfaction” with the quality of life or “trust” on policy makers, among others–.

Practical implications

Our findings also have relevant implications from a managerial perspective, especially taking into consideration the importance of host-guest interactions for tourist satisfaction (Yu & Lee, 2014). For example, improving or reinforcing residents' attitudes towards tourism in general will lead to more positive attitudes towards tourists and, consequently, to more satisfying experiences of visitors in host communities. To reinforce these attitudes, our recommendation is that policy makers and private agents (such as business associations that are representative of the tourism sector) jointly develop communication campaigns through conventional and social media highlighting the positive economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts of tourism activities for host communities. At the same time, in these campaigns they should mitigate the possible negative impacts of tourism by putting in value the actions conducted by policy makers to protect the environment or the cultural heritage, among other local resources.

We also recommend reinforcing the residents' identification with their communities, since this variable is a key driver in the formation of both types of attitudes. This ambitious objective requires fostering the involvement of residents in the design of action plans for their communities. More concretely, policy makers should engage residents in such collaborative activities as brainstorming sessions focused, for example, on improving the quality of public services or reinforcing the external awareness and image of their communities. In addition, different types of educational programs should be implemented in order to improve residents' knowledge and emotional links with their communities. In this sense, an action focussed on lower age groups might be the inclusion in education curricula of a wide range of information about distinctive local resources and their implications for successful development of their communities. For older age groups, it could be very interesting to develop activities such as

courses or workshops that transmit the major milestones of their communities. All these initiatives would also improve equity perceptions, since local people would improve the awareness, image, and perceived quality of their communities.

Finally, we consider that these practical implications are especially important for those host communities characterized by a tourism model based on natural resources and heritage, and less so for communities based on sun and beach tourism. In particular, given that traditional sun-and-beach tourism is more standardized and massed, the potential for leveraging resident identification with their communities is more limited than in those cases that base their positioning on specific resources linked to territorial identity (e.g., natural resources, heritage, folklore, or gastronomy). Therefore, we believe that the opportunity to improve resident attitudes towards tourists based on a stronger identification with the community is larger in non-traditional tourism destinations, with a differentiation strategy based on local resources and identity.

Limitations and future research

Empirical research was carried out in a specific Spanish region, which might constrain the generalization of our findings to any host community. In particular, Cantabria is located in northern Spain, a coastal and mountainous area with mild weather, which limits the potential for sun-and-beach tourism. Thus, the local tourism development is more heterogeneous, complementing beach resorts with natural and cultural heritage. While this type of tourism implies that the host community under research can be considered reasonably free of any bias provoked by an intensive development of sun-and-beach resorts, it can also limit the generalization of our findings. For example, residents in areas with a more aggressive tourism development, with heavier environmental and sociocultural impacts, may develop their

attitudes towards tourism and tourists in a different way. Overall, it would be interesting to assess the predictive ability of our model in other communities, with different tourism life cycles (e.g., “non-developed” versus “mature” host communities), density of tourists, or distance between their residents and visitors (e.g., “internationally-oriented” versus “nationally-oriented” host communities).

In addition, the analysis of the role of brand equity and brand identification in the resident attitudes formation has been conducted for all residents considered in our research, not by distinguishing among different types of residents. In this sense, it would be interesting to include different individual factors in the model as antecedents and/or moderator variables in resident attitudes formation. For example, the demographic characteristics of residents may influence their attitudes since these personal features are expected to influence the information processing strategies (Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran, 1991) and the evaluative judgments (Holbrook, 1986) of individuals. In addition, resident attitudes, and more especially those towards tourists, may be influenced by the amount and quality of the interactions between residents and tourists.

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Appendix.

Variable	Items
Attitude towards tourists	Interacting with tourists who visit my community is pleasant Interacting with tourists who visit my community is enjoyable Interacting with tourists who visit my community is funny Interacting with tourists who visit my community is positive
Attitude towards tourism	I believe tourism generates positive benefits in my community I believe tourism is a good activity for my community I believe that tourism has to play a major role in my community I believe tourism should be actively encouraged in my community
Equity perception	My community is a well-known place My community generates positive emotions My community offers high-quality services My community is likely to be recommended to other people
Identification	I am proud to live in my community I identify with others who live in my community I have great respect for my community

Figure 1. Theoretical model.

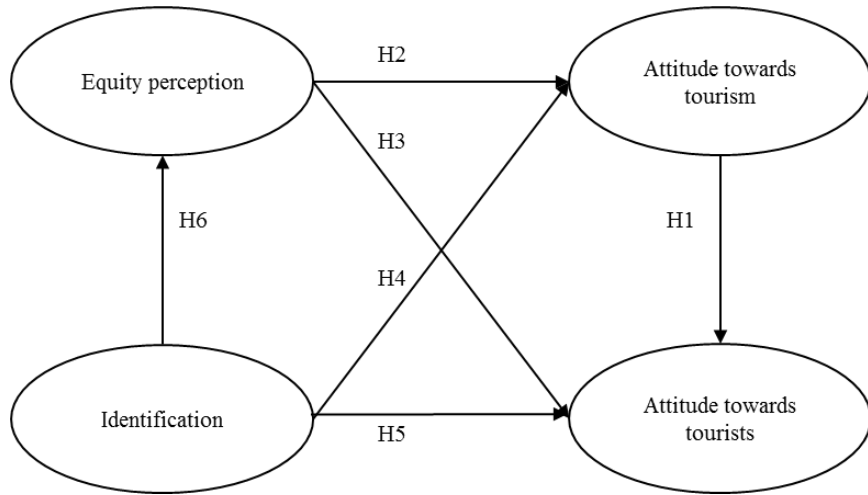


Table 1. Geographical and sociodemographic profile of the region of Cantabria.

Country: Spain

Capital: Santander

Area: 5,321 km² (2,054 sq mi)

Population (2017): 580,140

GDP: 12,539 mill. €

GDP per cápita: 21,553 €



Source: ICANE - Cantabrian Institute of Statistics (2017)

Table 2. Profile of respondents.

Variable	%	Variable	%
Gender		Age	
Male	47.0	Less than 30 years old	27.6
Female	53.0	30-55 years old	46.4
		More than 55 years old	26.0
Level of studies		Occupation	
Without studies	7.0	Worker	44.7
Primary studies	17.2	Student	21.3
Secondary studies	35.3	House wife	12.5
University studies	40.5	Retired/unemployed	21.5

Table 3. Confirmatory factor analysis.

Factor	Variable	Standardized Coefficient	R²	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability	AVE	Goodness of fit indices
Attitude towards tourists	AttTourists1	0.801	0.641	0.925	0.927	0.760	Normed $\chi^2 =$ 2.91 BBNFI = 0.90 BBNNFI = 0.90 IFI = 0.92 CFI = 0.92 RMSEA = 0.07
	AttTourists2	0.938	0.879				
	AttTourists3	0.888	0.788				
	AttTourists4	0.854	0.729				
Attitude towards tourism	AttTourism1	0.661	0.436	0.822	0.832	0.554	
	AttTourism2	0.782	0.611				
	AttTourism3	0.757	0.573				
	AttTourism4	0.771	0.594				
Equity perception	Equity1	0.554	0.307	0.790	0.799	0.504	
	Equity2	0.842	0.709				
	Equity3	0.725	0.525				
	Equity4	0.690	0.477				
Identification	Identif1	0.823	0.677	0.781	0.800	0.573	
	Identif2	0.659	0.435				
	Identif3	0.779	0.607				

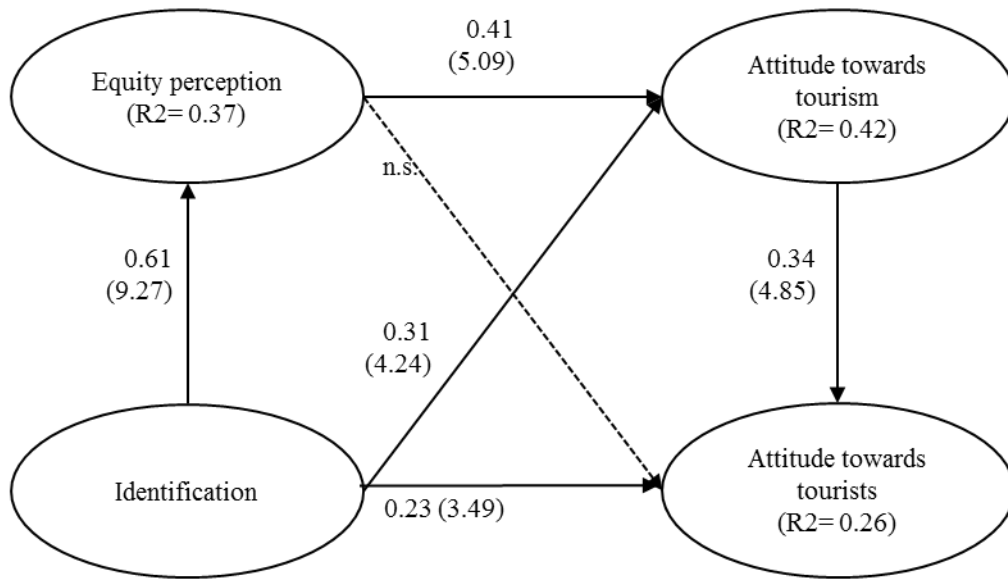
Table 4. Discriminant validity.

	Attitude towards tourists	Attitude towards tourism	Equity perception	Identification
	0.760^a			
Attitude towards tourism	0.187 ^b	0.554^a		
Equity perception	0.158 ^b	0.319 ^b	0.504^a	
Identification	0.172 ^b	0.278 ^b	0.361 ^b	0.573^a

^a Variance extracted for each pair of constructs (AVE coefficient).

^b Squared correlation between pairs of latent variables.

Figure 2. Estimation of the model.



Normed $\chi^2 = 2.79$; BBNFI = 0.93; BBNNFI = 0.94; CFI = 0.95; IFI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.05