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Chang, Seohee; Gibson, Heather; and Sisson, Lisa, "The role of satisfaction and involvement in loyalty: Comparing residents and tourists" (2016). *Travel and Tourism Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally*. 73.  
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# The role of satisfaction and involvement in loyalty: Comparing residents and tourists

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## ABSTRACT

*Satisfaction is commonly considered important in predicting future behavioral loyalty in tourism contexts. However, few attempts have been made to find out if the role of satisfaction intensifies involvement as a factor contributing to loyalty, and if the loyalty process for residents and tourists in the context of cultural and historic festivals is the same. Therefore, this study examined the loyalty process of residents (n=181) and tourists (n=227) who attended the Tulip Time Festival in Holland, Michigan, measuring the relationship between involvement, satisfaction, and likelihood of returning to the festival. The results showed that tourists' loyalty is not assured by satisfaction and as such is different from that of residents. A more dynamic relationship between residents and tourists was suggested to increase tourists' loyalty.*

**Keywords:** *cultural and historic festivals, residents and tourists, involvement, satisfaction, loyalty*

## INTRODUCTION

Cultural exchange through interactions between residents and tourists are inherent in social contexts. Hosting historic and cultural events could be a way to avoid losing authentic values in these interactions as time passes, and might be a way of enhancing local culture and identity (Cohen, 1988). Indeed, studies have shown that festivals and events play an important role in preserving culture (Derrett, 2003). Many studies have shown that residents of local communities holding historic and cultural festivals and events perceive the events yielded many cultural benefits, such as community identity and pride, social interaction and togetherness, and wellness (Besculides, Lee, & McCormick, 2002). Tourists also receive benefits that satisfy their intellectual curiosity through cultural and historic tourism (Nuttall, 1997). Indeed, many people in the United States have taken part in historic and cultural activities and event-related trips (McKercher & Chan, 2005). With growing interest in festivals and events, researchers have focused on either the impacts of festivals and events on communities as perceived by local residents (Besculides et al., 2002; Brunt & Courtney, 1999; Daniels, Backman, & Backman, 2004; Getz, 2007; Kim, Gursoy, & Lee, 2006) or marketing and management to attract more

tourists, based on visitors' profiles and psychological and behavioral patterns (Bowen & Daniels, 2005; Lade & Jackson, 2004). Since the previous studies have investigated either resident perceptions or tourist experiences separately, there is a lack of understanding regarding how involved and satisfied both residents and visitors are with the same historic and cultural festival they experience together. Many researchers have assumed that people who are satisfied with their experiences are more likely to return (Alegre & Cladera, 2006; Baker & Crompton, 2000; Kozak, 2003; Oliva, Oliver, & MacMillan, 1992; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). However, we know little about whether residents' and tourists' loyalty increases in a similar manner through satisfaction. For example, we do not know whether residents' intention to attend is determined by spatial proximity irrespective of their involvement and satisfaction, and whether tourists' intention to return is significantly influenced by satisfaction with a festival.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to compare the loyalty of residents and tourists in regards to the Tulip Time Festival. Since its inception in 1927, the event has become a historic and symbolic annual heritage festival in Holland, Michigan where there are a large percentage of Dutch Americans. During the festival in May, approximately 400,000 people of diverse ages, from children to adults, visit and enjoy a variety of historic events and cultural heritage programs. In particular, many local residents, from children in kindergarten to seniors, not only voluntarily prepare for parades, but also walk in the parades. Of particular interest to this study, is the relationship between involvement, satisfaction, and the likelihood of attending Tulip Time Festival again. These concepts are empirically compared between resident and tourist attendees.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Involvement**

Researchers have found that those who are more involved in events or activities tend to stay longer and spend more at destinations and have more repeat visits to the event (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; MacKay, Adereck, & Vogt, 2002; McGehee, Yoon, & Cardenas, 2003; Stronge, 2000). Involvement is a belief structure in which ego value-oriented perception encourages extreme attitudes (Chang, 2009). Those who have extremely favorable attitudes toward an event are less likely to be interested in looking for new events (Sherif & Cantril, 1947).

Starting with Bryan's (1977) study on recreational specialization with the finding that anglers with higher levels of involvement in fishing tend to spend more on equipment and make more frequent purchases of relevant magazines, many leisure and tourism researchers have extended this work into the importance of psychological involvement (Gross & Brown, 2008; Kyle, Absher, Norman, Hammitt, & Jodice, 2007; Kyle & Mowen, 2005; McIntyre & Pigram, 1989). In particular, leisure and tourism behaviors are intimately blended with individuals' emotional and identity components, which differentiates them from common product-related consumer behaviors (McIntyre, 1989). Therefore, in the leisure and tourism fields, there has been more focus on enduring involvement such as centrality, hedonic values, social ties, and identity, particularly when researchers examine leisure participation and tourism activities (Gross & Brown, 2008; Gross, Brien, & Brown, 2008; Kyle et al., 2007; Kyle & Mowen, 2005; McIntyre & Pigram, 1989).

People in leisure and tourism contexts are involved in the consumption of intangible experiences, distinct from the consumption of tangible products (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). In experience consumption, psychological involvement was found to be an important antecedent

factor reinforcing satisfaction and behavioral intention (Hou, Lin, & Morais, 2005; Gross et al., 2008; Neal, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2007). Kerstetter, Confer, and Graefe (2001) investigated tourists' involvement level with cultural tourism on Bryan's (1977) specialization concept and found that those with high involvement were not only more satisfied with the overall experience, but also more likely to have visited more cultural and historic sites in the community. Likewise, Lee and Beeler (2009) suggested that levels of satisfaction and intention could vary with other attributes and found that involvement was one of the main determinants that significantly influenced satisfaction and future intention. The idea that involvement facilitates or increases satisfaction with activities is also supported by a self-determination perspective (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Huang and Hsu (2010) claimed that it is hard for people to get psychological benefits, such as satisfaction, from the consumption of leisure and tourism experiences without active involvement.

## **Satisfaction**

Satisfaction has been deemed one of the most important determinants in the decision making process (Bigné, Andreu, & Gnoth 2005; Cole, Crompton, & Willson, 2002). Those who are more satisfied with their experiences were found to be more likely to participate in activities or events again, or return to events or places (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Kozak, 2003; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Cole and Illum (2006) found that satisfaction with a festival has a significant influence on people's behavioral intention to return to the festival. However, one of the major debates in defining and measuring satisfaction is should it be considered as an outcome of cognitive judgment or as affective arousal. From a cognitive perspective, Oliver (1980) suggested the expectation-disconfirmation model in which satisfaction arises when consumers' experiences with actual performance are better than their expectations. Focusing on tourism destinations, Yoon and Uysal (2005) examined the relationship between motivation, satisfaction, and destination loyalty. Specific satisfaction items included perceived experience based on expectation, worthiness compared to invested time and effort (Oliver & Swan, 1989), perceived experience compared to other competing destinations (Francken & van Raaji, 1981), and the overall satisfaction at the destination, and found a significant relationship between satisfaction and destination loyalty.

The affective approach to satisfaction uses either automatic mood-congruence or emotion-based judgments. Moods such as relaxed or tense (i.e., affect without direction toward an object or affect toward different objects) are distinguished from emotions (i.e., affect toward an object) such as disappointed or liking (Frijda, 1993; Schimmack & Siemer, 1998; Sirakaya, Petrick, & Choi, 2004). Attending an event in a good mood may increase emotions such as liking the event, but later returning to and attending the same event in a bad mood is likely to result in the opposite emotion (Schwartz & Clore, 1983). On the other hand, people use their emotions as an indirect cue to retrieve knowledge about liking, stored in their memory, or as direct information (Anderson, 1981). When people are asked to retrieve stored evaluations about a festival from memory, one might say "Since I enjoyed the entertainment portions of the event, I liked the event" (i.e., indirect cue), whereas other people would state "It was pleasurable" (i.e., direct information).

However, the tourism experience is too broad to specify all the objects associated with satisfaction. Because tourism is an entity comprised of far more complex and dynamic interactions (Pearce, 1988), there are too many ambiguous and complex situations to distinguish

whether or not satisfaction derives from cognitive judgment, or mood misattribution, or affective judgment (Saleh & Ryan, 1992). Not only may the emergence of cognitive or emotional satisfaction with tangible and intangible services of certain components of a destination such as accommodations or restaurants not signify tourists' loyalty to the destination itself or events in the destination (Laws & Ryan, 1992), but also real-time emotional satisfaction (or cognitive satisfaction) may not be identified with post hoc cognitive satisfaction (or emotional satisfaction) and vice versa (Panther & Farquhar, 2004; Stewart & Hull, 1992). Ryan (1995) suggests that satisfaction should be understood by multi-attribute theories, or a plurality approach. Perhaps in some cases, a single dimensional approach to overall satisfaction may allow more room for plurality, embracing all different aspects, and the overall experience, involving the passage of time, at a macro level. At times, this may be a more accurate method to assess satisfaction because satisfaction is the overall outcome generated from the total experience, mingled with cognitive and affective components.

## **Loyalty**

Some research has found that satisfaction with tourism experiences resulted in more positive behavioral intentions to revisit tourism destinations (Bearden & Teel, 1983; Kozak, 2001; Petrick, 2004; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996), conferences, (Severt, Wang, Chen, & Breiter, 2007), or festivals (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Cole & Illum, 2006; Cole & Scott, 2004). Whereas, other researchers found that loyalty does not vary with satisfaction levels (Oliva, Oliver, & MacMillan, 1992) as well as satisfaction does not necessarily lead to revisit (Gitelson & Crompton, 1984; Jago & Shaw, 1999; Oppermann, 1999).

In consumer behavior and marketing research, loyalty originating from the brand insistence concept (Copeland, 1923) has been used to explain why consumers purchase the same product or brand repeatedly (Aspinwall, 1958; Bucklin, 1963; Howard & Sheth, 1969). To examine the commitment-loyalty link in identified service contexts with commitment-relevant theories, Pritchard, Havitz, and Howard (1999) employed resistance to change, position involvement, volitional choice, and informational complexity to measure commitment, and used perceived identity as a loyal patron, and choice among alternatives for loyal attitudes, and the frequency of use per year, for loyal behavior. Iwasaki and Havitz (1998, 2004) also assumed that commitment would cause loyalty to a recreation agency. They employed the same components of commitment used by Prichard et al. and found the significant relationship between commitment and behavioral frequency in the loyalty process.

Somewhat different from leisure and recreation research, tourism research has focused on tourism destination loyalty and used familiarity with a destination, propensity to visit, and satisfaction as the core antecedents having the impact on individuals' revisit intention (Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998; Milman & Pizam, 1995; Petrick, 2004). Nevertheless, several researchers claim that studying loyalty is more difficult in the tourism context (Gitelson & Crompton, 1984; Jago & Shaw, 1999; Oppermann, 1999). For example, satisfaction with one's experiences does not guarantee a return visit because seeking new experiences is a strong motivation for tourists, whereas loyalty focuses on reducing novelty (Gitelson & Crompton, 1984). Riley, Niinien, Szivas, and Willis (2001) also pointed out that because tourism decision making is affected by situational and external constraints such as weather, transportation, time, and companions, it is difficult to gain tourists' loyalty. Taking this into consideration, Morais, Dorsch, and Backman (2005) suggested a dynamic model including tangible (i.e., money) and intangible resources (i.e.,

gratitude, social recognition, status, love, self-esteem, and symbolic interaction) as valuable assets to be mutually exchanged among people in order to increase loyalty in the tourism context.

## METHOD

The purpose of this study was to examine the loyalty of residents and visitors toward a historic and cultural festival. Loyalty was conceptualized as a process that included involvement, satisfaction, and the likelihood of attending again. The following hypotheses were generated and applied to both the residents and visitors: H1) Involvement with the festival has a direct effect on satisfaction with the festival, H2) satisfaction with the festival has a direct effect on the likelihood of attending future festivals, and H3) involvement with the festival has an indirect effect on the likelihood of attending future festivals mediated by satisfaction. This theoretical model is presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. The Relationship between Involvement, Satisfaction, and Likelihood**

The study population consisted of the 2010 Tulip Time Festival attendees ( $N=400,000$ ) as estimated from the previous year's number. Based on this population size, the sample size ( $n$ ) with  $\pm 5\%$  precision where the confidence level is 95% and  $p=.5$  was approximately 700 (Kish, 1995). Out of 523 randomly intercepted attendees, 424 completed the survey with an 81.1% response rate, yielding a final usable sample size of 412. Miles traveled and residence information, involvement, satisfaction, and the likelihood of attending again were included in the questionnaire and measured as follows: 1) 50 miles (one-way trip) to distinguish between residents and visitors considering the square miles of Ottawa County including the city of Holland, Michigan and the tourism literature (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2003); 2) Chang's (2009) modified version of involvement scale (a 5 point Likert type scale, 1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree) (i.e., hedonic, central, self-identity, social identity, and social factors) adapted from those used by Kim, Scott, and Crompton (1997), Gahwiler and Havitz (1998), Pritchard, Havitz, and Howard (1999), and Kyle et al. (2004a, 2004b); 3) the overall satisfaction perceived by residents and visitors (1=very satisfied, 5=very dissatisfied); and 4) the likelihood of attending the Tulip Time Festival again in the next three years (1=very likely, 5=very unlikely). Approximately 44% of the sample were residents and 56% were visitors. Of the residents, 73.6% were female with an average age of 43 years ( $SD=19.15$ ); 70.2% of visitors were female and their average age was 59 years ( $SD=16.70$ ). Descriptive statistics, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM) were used for data analysis. The measurement model underwent model specification, model assessment, and model respecification.

## RESULTS

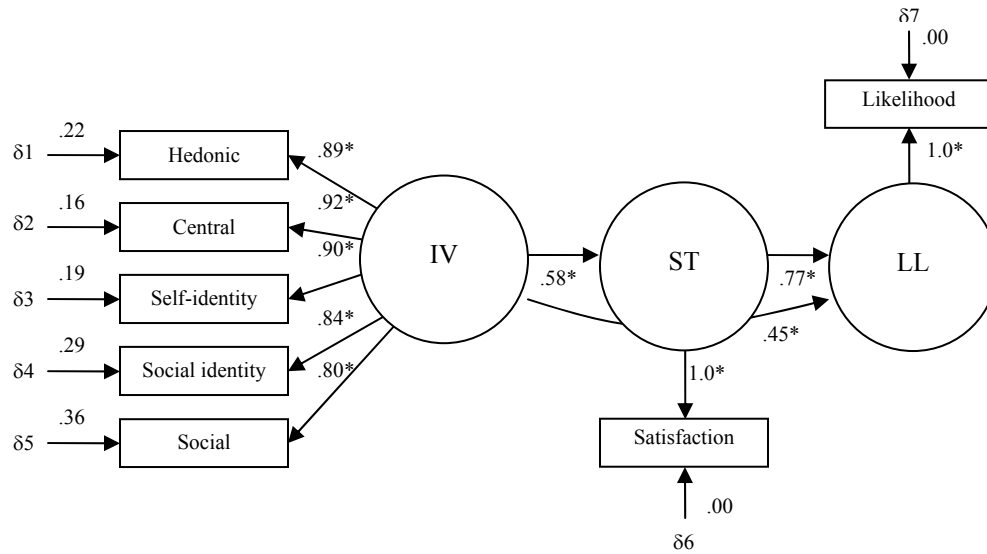
CFA was conducted to test for model fit, reliability, and validity of five involvement factors of residents and visitors, respectively. For residents, the initial specification model had a

good model fit (Satorra-Bentler Scaled Chi-Square  $\chi^2=219.22$ ,  $df=94$ ,  $p=.00$ ; NNFI=0.98, CFI=0.98, RMSEA=0.086, SRMR=0.063), as NNFI and CFI values should be 0.95 or greater to be acceptable (Hu & Bentler, 1999), whereas RMSEA and SRMR values less than 0.10 are considered acceptable (Browne & Cudeck, 1992). Five factors showed reasonable Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (*Hedonic*, CR=.81, AVE=.59, *Central*, CR=.88, AVE=.64, *Self-Identity*, CR=.91, AVE=.76, *Social Identity*, CR=.82, AVE=.61, *Social*, CR=.76, AVE=.51), as CR to assess construct reliability should be greater than 0.6 to achieve an adequate level and AVE greater than 0.5 is deemed reasonable to achieve construct validity (Bagozzi, 1994). Factor loadings of all the items ranging from 0.55 to 0.92 were at the significant level with z-scores above  $\pm 1.96$  for convergent validity. All the correlations were between 0.37 and 0.84 which were less than 0.85 as an acceptable level for discriminant validity (Kline, 2005).

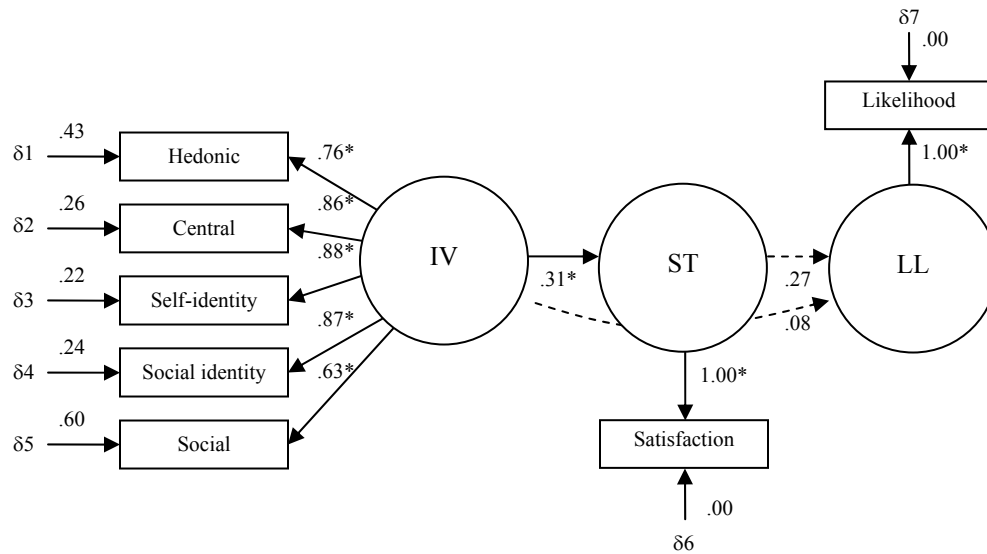
For tourists, the initial CFA did not have a good fit with very low factor loadings for the following three items: "I attach great importance to the Tulip Time Festival in Holland" ( $\lambda = 0.47$ ) of *Centrality*, "I enjoy discussing my Tulip Time Festival experiences with my friends or family" ( $\lambda = 0.18$ ) of *Social*, and "Participation in the Tulip Time Festival is enjoyable" ( $\lambda = 0.48$ ) of *Hedonic*. For respecification, the three items were removed and the respecified model had a good fit (Satorra-Bentler Scaled Chi-Square  $\chi^2=118.69$ ,  $df=55$ ,  $p=.00$ ; NNFI=0.98, CFI=0.99, RMSEA=0.072, SRMR=0.073). Five factors of involvement had acceptable CR and AVE even though *Social* had a slightly lower AVE (*Hedonic*, CR=.76, AVE=.63, *Central*, CR=.72, AVE=.52, *Self-Identity*, CR=.83, AVE=.64, *Social Identity*, CR=.78, AVE=.57, *Social*, CR=.61, AVE=.44). Factor loadings ranged from 0.22 to 0.74 at the significant level. All of the correlations were between 0.37 and 0.84.

For residents, the measurement portion of the SEM model showed that the target model fits (Satorra-Bentler Scaled Chi-Square  $\chi^2=13.99$ ,  $df=13$ ,  $p=.37$ ; RMSEA=0.021, SRMR=0.040, NNFI=1.00, CFI=1.00) with good reliability and validity (involvement, CR=.94, AVE=.76; satisfaction and likelihood, automatically, CR and AVE=1.00) (Figure 2). Factor loadings were also very high: *Hedonic*,  $\lambda=0.88$ , *Central*,  $\lambda=0.93$ , *Self-Identity*,  $\lambda=0.90$ , *Social Identity*,  $\lambda=0.84$ , *Social*,  $\lambda=0.80$ . However, the correlations were between 0.37 and 0.84 with the exception of a slightly higher correlation between *Central and Self-identity* ( $R=0.88$ ). For the structural portion of SEM, the direct effect of involvement (IV) with the festival on satisfaction (ST) with the festival was significantly strong ( $\gamma=.58$ ). As well, the direct influence of satisfaction with the festival on the likelihood (LL) of attending future festivals was much stronger ( $\beta=.77$ ). The indirect effects of involvement on the likelihood of attending the festival again was also significant (indirect=0.45).

For tourists, the measurement portion of SEM had an acceptable fit (Minimum Satorra-Bentler Scaled Chi-Square  $\chi^2=31.42$ ,  $df=13$ ,  $p=.003$ ; RMSEA=0.072, SRMR=0.032, NNFI=0.98, CFI=0.99). The CR and AVE of involvement were adequate (CR=.90, AVE=.65). Factor loadings for convergent validity were also considered acceptable: *Hedonic*,  $\lambda=0.76$ , *Central*,  $\lambda=0.86$ , *Self-Identity*,  $\lambda=0.88$ , *Social Identity*,  $\lambda=0.87$ , *Social*,  $\lambda=0.63$ . Discriminant validity was obtained by the correlations between 0.11 and 0.77. However, the structural portion for the visitors was different from the residents. Although the direct effect of involvement (IV) with the festival on satisfaction was significant ( $\gamma=.31$ ), the direct impact of satisfaction (ST) on the likelihood (LL) of repeat attendance was not significant ( $\beta=.27$ ). The effect of involvement on this likelihood was also not mediated by satisfaction (indirect=0.08).



**Figure 2. Loyalty Process of Residents**



**Figure 3. Loyalty Process of Tourists**

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The utility of multidimensional enduring involvement constructs comprising hedonic, centrality, self-identity, social identity, and social components (Chang, 2009) for both residents and visitors in the cultural tourism context was supported by these findings. In addition, as Huang and Hsu (2010) claim, it is hard for people to attain psychological benefits such as satisfaction without active involvement in leisure and tourism consumption. This study corroborated the significant effect of involvement on satisfaction supporting previous studies



(Hou et al., 2005; Gross et al., 2008; Kerstetter et al., 2001; Lee & Beeler, 2009; Neal et al., 2007).

However, the loyalty process between residents and visitors was found to be different. Besculides et al. (2002) found that residents have different perceptions toward tourism, depending on their experiences and backgrounds. Simpson and Siguaw (2008) also note that even residents may be unlikely to attend their local festivals if they are dissatisfied with the negative impacts of local festivals. This may be different from what has been commonly thought. Residents' loyalty is not assured by the fact they live close to tourism attractions. Supporting this point of view, the findings showed that those with high involvement in the festival are more likely to attend the next festival, but this relationship was significantly mediated by satisfaction.

However visitors' satisfaction did not lead to this same likelihood, which differs from previous research that showed a significant relationship between satisfaction and likelihood (Cole & Illum, 2006). Possible reasons may be explained by several researchers' arguments: Tourist satisfaction is a very temporary and current state (Ryan, 1995). Accordingly, tourists' responses that they were satisfied with the onsite short term experiences do not necessarily mean they become repeat, loyal visitors (Alegre & Cladera, 2006). Rather, tourists tend to seek novelty by switching to new events, festivals, or destinations and thereby, achieve satisfaction through a variety of experiences (Gitelson & Crompton, 1984; Riley et al., 2001).

For future implications, it is suggested that festival and event organizations develop and offer novel options within the familiar context of long-established historic and cultural values. Specific motivations and preferences of tourists and residents should be further investigated in relation to loyalty processes to understand the differences and similarities among these two festival patrons with tourists likely motivated by novelty and residents by socializing with other community members. As Cohen (1988) noted, culture is not static in the social context and rather its value could be enhanced through more dynamic interaction. To increase the likelihood of interaction between residents and tourists, there needs to be more experiential programs for tourists to actively engage with local residents as well as to be influenced by residents and their loyalty. As such, several researchers have suggested that a dynamic relationship may increase loyalty in tourism contexts (Morais et al., 2005; Woosnam, Norman, & Ying, 2009) encouraging feelings of ownership and strong emotional attachment. This may lead to on-going post satisfaction among tourists, particularly in cultural tourism contexts, which may mitigate the tendency to visit only once, even though they experience satisfaction with the festival.

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