Temple University
School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management
The U.S.-Asia Center for Tourism and Hospitality Research

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Does participation in domestic and international tourism activities affect life happiness?

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Introduction

happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life as well as the whole aim and end of human existence.

Life happiness has been prioritized by human beings as one of the eternal pursuits (Wang et al., 2021).

Tourism participation has been perceived as a pivotal way for individuals to escape the stress of work and life, relax themselves, and seek happiness (Peng et al., 2023).



Introduction

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The meaning of life happiness is also extended to the overall assessment of the quality of life after traveling

Some studies consider happiness as hedonic obtainment that results from immediate enjoyable sensory experiences (e.g., Su et al., 2020),

Existing literature primarily focuses on the individual-level analysis of life happiness by adopting survey-based approaches with cross-sectional data

Several studies recognize the impact of the cognitive evaluation of destination components (e.g., destination image and service quality) on tourist happiness (e.g., Chen & Li, 2018).

Kwon and Lee (2020) identifies how travel prolongs tourists' happiness by meeting their travel expectations and experiencing serendipity during travel.

Introduction

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We utilized modern econometric methods to rigorously analyze a longitudinal data set of 3,128 U.S. counties from 2011 to 2019.

Contribution 1

With the dynamic information in the longitudinal data set, the casualty was scrutinized from the differenced model

Contribution 2

with the nationwide sample, we provide empirical results from a nationally representative sample that can yield more reliable and convincing insights

Contribution 3

we conduct a more meaningful moderator analysis that helps shed light on the contextual factors moderating the tourism-happiness relationship

Literature review

Two theoretical lenses of life happiness:

- happiness consists of cognitive life satisfaction and affective (i.e., positive and negative) emotions (Chen & Li, 2018; Nawijn et al., 2010).
- life happiness consist of hedonic and eudaimonic components (Ahn et al., 2019; Sirgy & Uysal, 2016).

Tourism studies have utilized survey data to explore how tourism activities affect happiness from the perspectives of both tourists and residents (Chen & Li, 2018; Peng et al., 2023; Rivera et al., 2016).

Literature review

Tourism participation broadly refers to the degree to which individuals participate in tourism activities (e.g., information search, attraction visitation, destination dining) in the travel setting (Gupta et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2013).

Tourists travel domestically or internationally for various purposes, and their tourism participation shows unique characteristics according to specific travel purposes (Lehto et al., 2001).

Literature review

Spillover theory of happiness

- A person's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in one domain hierarchically flow into the other domains and vice versa (Sirgy, 2019).
- When an individual is satisfied with such domains as personal health, work, family, and leisure, they are likely to become satisfied with their life in general.

Literature review

Self-determination theory

Personal growth and well-being can be attained in the activities that individuals participate in if their three psychological needs are satisfied (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

H1: Domestic tourism participation has a positive impact on life happiness.

H2: International tourism participation has a positive impact on life happiness.

Literature review

H3: Housing expenditure positively moderates the impact of a) domestic and b) international tourism participation, such that the positive impact on life happiness is larger in counties with higher housing cost.

H4: Education attainment positively moderates the impact of a) domestic and b) international tourism participation, such that the positive impact on life happiness is larger in counties with a more educated population.

H5: Leisure activity participation negatively moderates the impact of a) domestic and b) international tourism participation, such that the positive impact on life happiness is larger in counties with less leisure activity participation.

H6: Social media usage positively moderates the impact of a) domestic and b) international tourism participation, such that the positive impact on life happiness is larger in counties with a larger share of social media users.

Research methods

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We use a unique panel data set of 3,129 U.S. counties from 2011 to 2019 to understand the impact of tourism activities on the life happiness of individuals

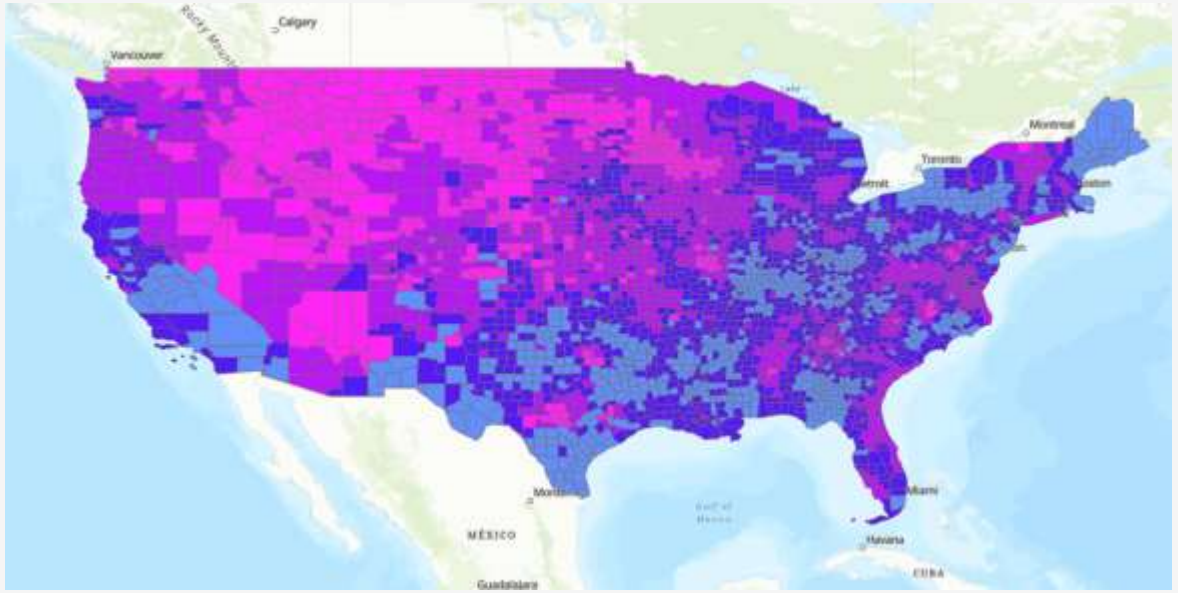
- The major data source we used is the SimmonsLOCAL data, and each year's data reflects the Simmons National Consumer Survey.
- The social demographic data were obtained from the American Community Survey data by the U.S. Census Bureau
- We resorted to the survey data from Easy Analytic Software, Inc (EASI) to collect the leisure activity participation data

Research methods

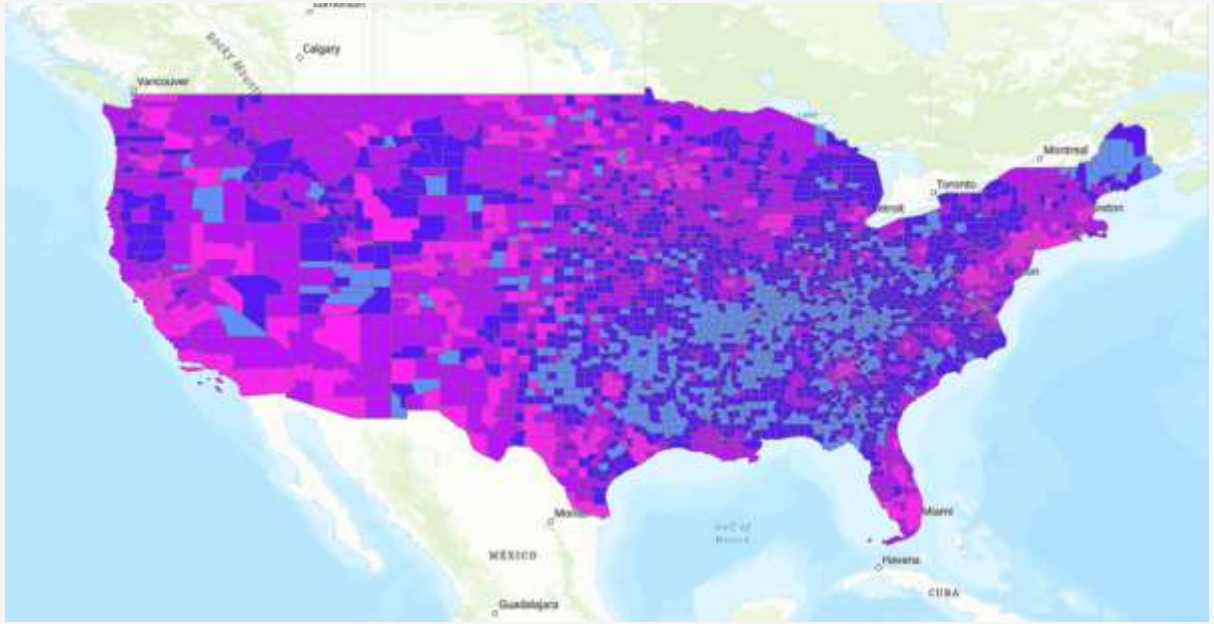
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Domestic participation % in the past 12 months



Domestic participation % in the past 3 years



Source: SimmonsLOCAL

Research methods

We propose the following empirical model to understand the impact of tourism activity participation on the change in resident life happiness over the year.

$$\Delta y_{it} = \rho y_{i,t-1} + \beta x_{it}^{D} + \gamma \Delta \mathrm{Z}_{it} + \mu_i + \tau_t + \varepsilon_{it}$$

where $\Delta y_{it} = y_{it} - y_{i,t-1}$ indicates the change of average life happiness of residents in county *i* between year *t-1* and year *t*.

As the variable we used measures the international tourism participation in the past three years, we use the three-year-differenced average life happiness as the dependent variable as following:

$$\Delta^3 y_{it} = \rho y_{i,t-3} + \beta x_{it}^{I} + \gamma \Delta^3 \mathrm{Z}_{it} + \mu_i + \tau_t + \varepsilon_{it}$$

where dependent variable and control variables take the form as the three-year-differenced value for county *i* in the year *t*.

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Variable	Definition	Sample size	Mean	Standard Deviation
happiness	Average happiness score of residents in the county at the year.	24,961	3.676	0.110
tourism_dom	percentage of residents with domestic tourism experience in the past 12 months	24,961	0.694	0.073
tourism_dom_bus	percentage of residents with domestic business tourism experience in the past 12 months	24,943	0.053	0.022
tourism_dom_pers	percentage of residents with domestic personal tourism experience in the past 12 months	24,961	0.217	0.041
tourism_dom_vac	percentage of residents with domestic vacation tourism experience in the past 12 months	24,961	0.393	0.069
tourism_int	percentage of residents with international tourism experience in the latest 3 years	24,961	0.362	0.057
tourism_int_bus	percentage of residents with international business tourism experience in the latest 3 years	24,631	0.015	0.010
tourism_int_pers	percentage of residents with international personal tourism experience in the latest 3 years	24,918	0.038	0.018
tourism_int_vac	percentage of residents with international vacation tourism experience in the latest 3 years	24,961	0.161	0.050
housing_cost	Average monthly housing cost of residents in the county	24,961	754.489	274.435
bachelor_and_above	Percentage of residents with bachelor and above education achievement in the county.	24,961	0.210	0.093
household_inc	Average annual household income in the county.	24,961	49402.600	13326.690
household_size	Average household size in the county	24,961	2.433	0.218
median_age	Average median age in the county	24,961	41.075	5.296
work_hours	Average number of weekly working hours in the county	24,961	39.310	1.871
leisure_participation	Percentage of resident participated major leisure activities in the county	24,961	0.778	0.009
social_media_uers	Percentage of social media users in the county	24,961	0.701	0.055

Estimation results

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	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
tourism_dom	0.426***			
	(0.043)			
tourism_dom_bus		0.119		
		(0.095)		
tourism_dom_pers			0.130**	
			(0.062)	
tourism_dom_vac				0.435***
				(0.039)
happiness (t-1)	-1.058***	-1.061***	-1.060***	-1.050***
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)
constant	3.594***	3.876***	3.857***	3.677***
	(0.070)	(0.064)	(0.066)	(0.065)
County effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	21810	21795	21810	21810
AIC	-68763.3	-67924.1	-67990.0	-68671.9
BIC	-68675.4	-67836.2	-67902.1	-68584.0
r2	0.635	0.621	0.621	0.633

Estimation results

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	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
tourism_int	-0.303			
	(0.260)			
tourism_int_bus		0.916		
		(0.788)		
tourism_int_pers			-0.190	
			(0.490)	
tourism_int_vac				-0.350
				(0.289)
happiness (t-3)	-1.072***	-1.056***	-1.066***	-1.074***
	(0.083)	(0.086)	(0.084)	(0.084)
constant	4.052***	3.853***	3.917***	4.005***
	(0.322)	(0.316)	(0.308)	(0.314)
County effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	15550	15234	15513	15550
AIC	-3818.2	-3960.4	-3827.7	-3815.2
BIC	-3734.0	-3876.4	-3743.5	-3731.0
r2	0.154	0.158	0.154	0.154

	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14	Model 15	Model 16
tourism_dom	0.303***	0.287***	11.27***	0.350***				
	(0.052)	(0.055)	(1.470)	(0.106)				
tourism_int					-0.502	-0.880***	15.53**	1.275*
					(0.326)	(0.326)	(6.399)	(0.699)
tourism_dom*housing_cost	0.000108***							
	(0.000)							
tourism_dom*bachelor_and_above		0.479***						
		(0.128)						
tourism_dom*leisure_participation			-13.92***					
			(1.872)					
tourism_dom*social_media_users				0.0910				
				(0.121)				
tourism_int*housing_cost					0.000186			
					(0.000)			
tourism_int*bachelor_and_above						2.080**		
						(0.948)		
tourism_int*leisure_participation							-20.15**	
							(8.143)	
tourism_int*social_media_users								-1.925**
								(0.770)

Conclusion

- The results recognized domestic tourism participation as a vital contributor to the change of life happiness score over the year, confirming the significant social benefits of tourism to individual well-being.
- For international tourism participation, our study failed to identify any significant effect of tourism participation on life happiness change.
- Several moderators were recognized, such as housing cost, education attainment, and leisure participation.

Implications

- Uncover the causal relationship between tourism participation and life happiness by leveraging the dynamic information in the longitudinal data.
- Extend the understanding of the spillover theory of happiness and self-determination theory
- Shed light on tourism research by illuminating the influence of domestic tourism participation on life happiness
- Add new insights into the tourism-happiness nexus by uncovering the moderating roles of contextual factors

Limitations

Cultural difference?

More comprehensive measure of tourism participation?

Contact

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