

Can Nationality Explain Economic Tourist Behaviour? A Thematic Review

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Numerous studies focus on the determinants of choices regarding tourism consumption utilizing several methods, different data sources, with diverse results. And the notion of considering nationality as an influential factor in tourism expenditure has been considered very often in the literature. This work examines this relationship between nationality and tourism expenditure by means of a thematic review approach. The results suggest the critical role played by nationality in understanding the determinants of tourism expenditure.

Keywords: tourism expenditure, spending patterns, country of origin, residence

Introduction

Tourist behaviour has been debated in the literature relating to many aspects, from many perspectives, and utilising different techniques and methods (Farahani & Mohamed, 2013). Several studies have focused on tourism spending patterns and tourist behaviour, providing an idea of how the market could be segmented in assisting policymakers and a given destination (Soteriades & Arvanitis, 2006).

Thus, the analysis of factors affecting the economic behaviour of tourists is a frequent issue in scientific debate, with tourist expenditure being the main effect and measure of economic behaviour. There are several classifications regarding the key factors relating to tourist behaviour. Moreover, Hudson's classification (2008) of tourist behaviour is composed of eight critical factors: motivation, culture, age, gender, social class, lifestyle, life cycle stage, and reference groups.

Of the aforementioned factors, the role of nationality as an influential factor in expenditure behaviour has been specifically investigated in the literature. The country of origin and country of residence, or nationality are similar expressions used in several studies (Thrane & Farstad, 2012a). And, since the 1990s, many studies in the literature have been dedicated to analysing and understanding how the country of origin/nationality can play a specific role in tourist choices.

However, nationality reveals different results depending on the available data, destinations, and travel typologies. Some authors have considered nationality as an important and significant factor in the differences in spending behaviour, but not sufficient to enhance our understanding of tourists' spending levels (Flognfeldt, 1999; Pizam & Sussmann, 1995). With reference to the literature review conducted by Soteriades and Arvanitis (2006), there can be said to be two categories of factors in the literature: sociodemographic and travel related

(Soteriades & Arvanitis, 2006). Nationality, as an explanatory factor for economic behaviour, is considered a sociodemographic factor.

This study will focus on tourist nationality, a related component of which is the notion of tourist distance, which has long been debated in the literature (Ahn & McKercher, 2018; Xue & Zhang, 2020). The concept of distance applied to tourism has been summarized by Ahn and McKercher (2018) from four points of view: physical, psychic, social, and cultural. Some studies in the scientific literature are dedicated to cross-cultural research, and their aim is to measure and understand consumer behaviour and marketing studies. The cultural characteristics of a given group are determining factors, which can explain, albeit in part, consumers' behaviour and their significant differences (Özdemir & Yolal, 2017). As defined by Özdemir and Yolal, a specific culture associated with nationality is one of the most frequent approaches to studies regarding consumer behaviour in the literature. The importance of cultural background (i.e., national identity) in tourist behaviour has also been studied directly and indirectly in the literature (Pizam & Sussmann, 1995). Finally, the relationship between cultures in general and tourism (particularly the cultural differences between tourists) has been widely debated in the literature (Pizam & Sussmann, 1995; Özdemir & Yolal, 2017). Bearing in mind the comments, the aim of this paper is to understand if nationality can be considered an important and determinant factor regarding levels of tourism expenditure. A thematic review of the more important studies, which have been conducted in assessing the relationship between tourism expenditure and nationality, will be undertaken in accomplishing this aim.

Methodology

As described by Kim, Bai, Kim, and Chon (2018), a thematic review can be qualitative or quantitative. In the study outlined in this paper, a qualitative, thematic approach was deployed with the specific aim of integrating and comparing different findings, as gleaned from the relevant literature. The Scopus search engine was used to collect articles of interest. A step-by-step procedure was adopted for this study: The first stage was a paper collection, according to the research protocol described below (Table 1). The latter commenced with a combining of relevant keywords, through synonyms and different links, and a combining of various keywords. Thereafter, the papers were read in their entirety, to arrive at 19 articles for further study. Finally, a precise subset of 11 papers was selected for consideration. Details regarding the search protocol are reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Search Protocol

Keywords and exclusions steps	N
TITLE-ABS-KEY ((tourism OR tourists OR tourist) AND (expenditure OR spending OR money OR economic behaviour) AND (nationality OR country of origin OR country of residence OR nationalities))	90
AND (EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "MEDI", "ENVI", "ARTS", "COMP", "ENGI", "AGRI", "EART", "MATE", "MATH"))	69
After reading and screening of abstracts	44
After reading the articles	19
Final paper set, according to quantitative research approach (sample survey, use of several regression models, including nationality as a regressor)	11

The Scopus database allows users to enter advanced search queries through operators and field codes. It was evident that the constraints placed on the search protocol produced a relatively low number of articles.

However, the selected set, which was sufficiently representative and corresponding to the purpose of this article and the thematic review approach, was retained. The main criteria for the exclusion of articles are defined in Table 1, in particular: Subject areas not related to the tourism sector and socio-economic disciplines were excluded; papers were also excluded; and finally, journals not dealing with these topics were excluded. As for the inclusion criteria, the main ones included reading the keywords and authors' abstracts, and finally, all those papers were included that presented: extensive survey, use of several regression models, including nationality as a regressor.

Result and Discussion

Some authors have observed no relationship between economic and tourist behaviour, and nationality (Archer & Fletcher, 1996; Sampol, 1996). The analysis conducted by Archer and Fletcher in 1996 in the Seychelles revealed that the differences in economic impact between the various tourists in terms of country of origin were not significant. Flognfeldt (1999) has demonstrated that the tourist market segmentation, which is based on nationality, is of some utility to the researcher in this field. In the opinion of the authors of this study, country of origin can be used as a discriminating factor with other related factors. Moreover, the relationship between country of origin and tourism expenditure can be considered as a function of the length of stay. Indeed, De Menezes and Moniz (2011) have found differences regarding the length of stay, which also affect tourist spending. Similar results have also been obtained by Wicker (2012), who considers nationality as a driver of tourist spending. The papers selected for this study, with reference to the authors, year of publication, Destination country, and sample size, are detailed in Table 2 below. All the selected studies show the significance of nationality, albeit in a diverse and limited way. In Table 3, they were taken into consideration in the statistical information of the articles: regression model used, main covariates¹, and response variable.

Table 2

Paper's Description for Authors, Publication Year, Destination, and Sample size

ID	Authors	Destination	N
1	So and Morrison (2004)	Taiwan	1,429
2	Brida and Risso (2010)	Costa Rica	893
3	Anderson (2010)	Spain	843
4	Thrane and Farstad (2012)	Norway	2,895
5	Thrane and Farstad (2012)	Norway	4,286
6	Brida et al. (2013)	Colombia	1,361
7	Sung et al. (2015)	Taiwan	249
8	Marrocu et al. (2015)	Italy	1,445
9	Marksel et al. (2016)	Slovenia	357
10	Gargano and Grasso (2016)	Italy	5,500
11	Mortazavi and Cialani (2017)	Italy	7,330

¹ I: income; G: gender; A: age; O: occupational status; P: previous visits; H: hours away from the ship; N: nationality; L: length of stay; ACC: accommodation; SIZE: group size; M: marital status; T: transport; PL: place visited; SAT: satisfaction; EXP: expenditure; EXPDAY: exp. per day; MOT: motivation; ED: educational level.

Table 3

Information About the Papers Selected for Regression Model, Main Covariates, and Response Variables

ID	Regression model	Main covariates	Response variable
1	GLM	I, G, A, O, P	Total expenditure
2	Cross-sectional	A, H, N, I, EXP	Total expenditure
3	OLS	G, A, I, L, ACC, SIZE	Average daily expenditure
4	OLS	N, A, PL, SAT, P, EXPDAY	Length of stay
5	OLS	MOT, L, PL, SIZE, A, T	Group and per person expenditure
6	Logit and Tobit	A, H, N, I, EXP	Average daily and category expenditure
7	Factor and cluster analysis	G, A, ED, M, N, I, EXP	Motivation for trip
8	Quantile, linear models	SIZE, L, ACC, T	Average daily and category expenditure
9	Categorical data analysis	G, A, N, L, PL, SAT, MOT	Expenditure
10	LM, concomitant finite mixture	G, O, L, PL, SAT	Total expenditure
11	OLS	A, G, SIZE, T, EXP	Length of stay

The articles selected, over the 2004-2017 period, have different sample sizes. Regarding the tourist destination involved in the study, many of them can be found scattered throughout Europe (Italy and Spain for instance). About the statistical information obtained from the thematic review, the three main pieces of information obtained, namely the regression model used, the covariates present in the study, and the response variable used, allowed the construction of Table 3.

Most of the studies use generic OLS models, the most popular covariates being income, age, use of the transport, and gender. The most frequent response variable in the models is total expenditure, followed by average daily expenditure and expenditure by category. A popular response variable is the length of stay, i.e., the time spent by the tourist in the tourist destination. This variable is particularly used in models because some authors have observed that, given the same conditions and geographical distances, some nationalities tend to stay longer or shorter in certain tourist places (for example, the length of stay of Japanese in Italy is greater than that of Chinese). As for the summary of the results, Table 4 lists the main results grouped in five different sections:

- The significant relationship between nationality and tourist expenditure.
- Different nationality for different length of stay.
- Different levels of income determine different level of expenditure.
- Nationality can be used for market segmentation.
- Cruise passengers expenditure is a specific tourist segment for different nationalities.

Table 4

Principal Results by Thematic Review

ID	Role of nationality
[1]-[11]	All analysed papers show a significant but general relationship between nationality and tourist expenditure. However, different authors have explained this correlation by considering different intervening variables.
[4]; [11]	Length of stay: Different nationalities are correlated with different length of stay. Consequently, the total expenditure level differs among tourists.
[1]; [3]; [8]	Income level: There are differences in mean expenditure among different nationalities. For instance, tourists from the USA (characterized by a higher level of income) tend to spend more than other nationalities.
[6]; [7]	Nationality is used as a segmentation criterion (<i>ceteris paribus</i>).
[2]; [5]; [7]; [9]; [10]	Nationality is analysed with reference to specific tourist segments, including, for example, the economic behaviour of cruise passengers.

Conclusions

Tourism promotion strategies at the local, regional, and national levels require apposite strategies at the level of market segmentation. Some segmentation analyses focus on demographics, the motivation for a particular visit, and the country of origin. This work has focused on the latter factor because it is the authors' opinion that tourist behaviour in general and economic specifically is differentiated in the various tourist segments, which in turn are based on nationality (Baum & Mudambi, 1996). In conclusion, final remarks are warranted. Many of the papers herein reviewed demonstrate a significant relationship between tourist expenditure (a dependent variable) and a set of variables, which can be variously termed, but which can be included in the same category (regressors): country of origin, nationality, country/place of residence, distance traveled, and first language of the tourists. However, despite the identified statistical association, the reasons accounting for this relationship are manifold. When discussing the relationship between nationality and tourism economic behaviour, various specifications should be considered: (a) the exact definition of the response variable (total expenditure vs. total expenditure per day, per capita, per group, or per person per day; overall total expenditure vs. expenditure on specific items, such as shopping, food and beverages, transportation, entertainment, etc.). All these possible response variables are related in different ways to the nationality of the tourist and related concepts; (b) nationality, country of origin, and distance traveled could all play a different role in explaining the relationship with tourist expenditure. This role could describe indicators for cultural distance (social, religious, racial, ethnic habits), economic distance (in terms of purchasing power, cost of living, income, etc.), and geographical distance (in terms of intention to return, traveling costs, ease to travel, etc.); (c) consequently, several variables and those having a differing effect could play a moderating or intervening role in the relationship between nationality and tourist economic behaviour. If appropriately controlled and/or used with other variables, these variables could enhance our understanding of tourist behaviour (Pizam & Sussmann, 1995, p. 905) in terms of: length of stay, level of income, trip motivation/purpose, previous travel experiences, etc. Thus, the authors of this study hold that many variables can markedly influence the relationship between tourist expenditure and tourist behaviour. Furthermore, these same authors are also convinced that a meta-analysis could support the existing literature by applying meta-regression techniques, as applied to the topic of tourist behaviour, in understanding to what extent nationality is a significant variable across the various studies regarding this topic.

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