Place solidarity: A case of the Türkiye earthquakes
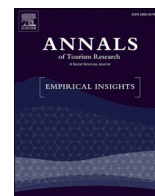
This is the Published version of the following publication

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Annals of Tourism Research Empirical Insights

Place solidarity: A case of the Türkiye earthquakes

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1. Introduction

The United Nations labelled the earthquakes that struck Türkiye and Syria in 2023 as the most significant catastrophe of the century for the Middle East (*Reuters*, 2023). NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg tweeted "full solidarity" and the global community rallied to support these two suffering countries. T-Mobile and A&A waived fees for calls to the region. FedEx and Coca-Cola pledged support for recovery efforts (*CCC*, 2023) and, worldwide, citizens swiftly responded to support the crisis (*FTC*, 2023; *The New Arab*, 2023).

These actions may be explained by place solidarity, or "an individual's compassion and sympathy with a place, resulting from an observation of relative suffering", which was first employed to examine tourists' attitudes toward Ukraine's suffering during the war between Ukraine and Russia (Josiassen, Kock, & Assaf, 2022). It has been identified as key factor in understanding tourists' behaviours and attitudes toward a suffering place and vital to understanding tourist behavior in response to global crises. Building upon the burgeoning place solidarity literature, this research is focused on Türkiye. This work echoes the findings of Josiassen, Kock, Assaf, and Berbekova (2023), where affinity was identified as a facilitating factor to forming solidarity, suggesting that positive attitudes toward a nation influence tourist behaviours and perceptions.

1.1. Place solidarity research model

Place solidarity expands traditional theories on solidarity (Durkheim, 1984; Marx, 1964) and help-giving behaviours (Levine, Prosser, Evans, & Reicher, 2005). It reflects the idea that solidarity can emerge in response to events affecting any defined geographical or socio-cultural 'place', such as cities like New York during 9–11, or regions struck by natural disasters. Solidarity relates to favouritism and attitudes borne from group affiliation (Hogg & Smith, 2007), spans a personal-inclusive spectrum (Brewer & Gardner, 1996), and may be contextually influenced (Turner & Rojek, 2001). When confronted with significant distress, individuals can see themselves connected to impacted groups. This empathetic connection can be a powerful driver of solidarity, stimulate the motivation to persuade others, and drive advocacy through an instrumental bias reliant on group cooperation (Scheepers, Spears, Doosje, & Manstead, 2006).

Inspired by Josiassen et al. (2022), the Place Solidarity Research Model (Fig. 1) consists of seven outcomes: intent to visit, resident hospitality, philanthropic tourism engagement, recommendation intentions, impact distance preference, donations, and actual solidarity actions. For impact distance preference, we suggest a bidirectional hypothesis. Place solidarity may prompt tourists to visit affected

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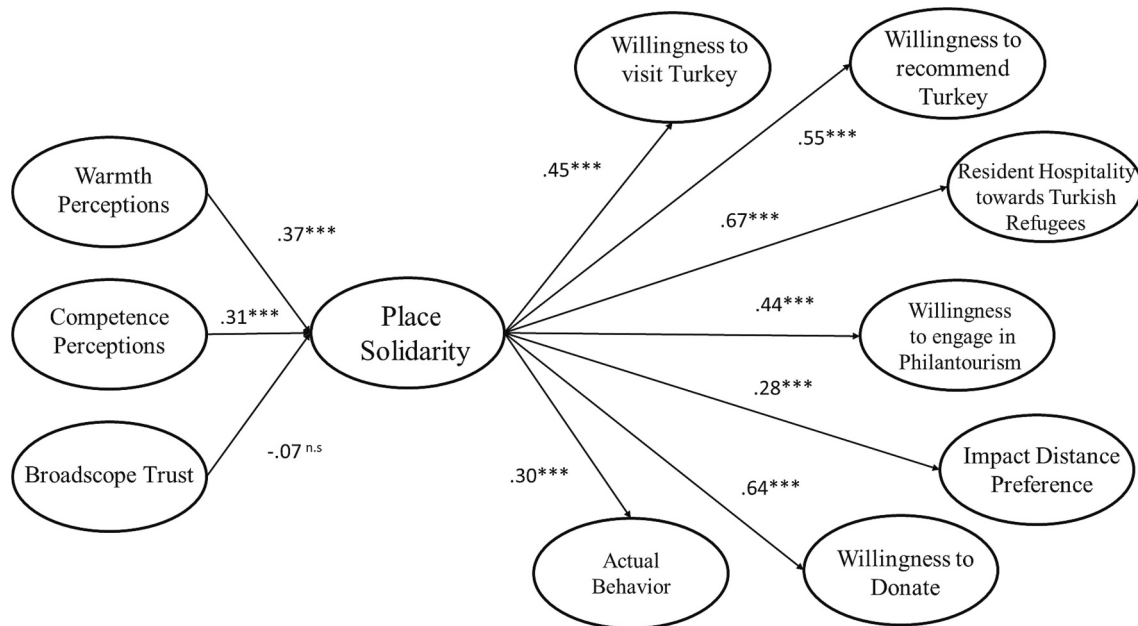
Fig. 1. The place solidarity research model: results.

destinations and support residents or deter them out of respect for residents, recovery efforts, or a belief in more effective distant support while acknowledging potential local risks. Here, we focus on whether place solidarity has a positive or negative effect on the willingness constructs.

Impressions of others are formed using perceptions of warmth and competence (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007). Perceptions of warmth and competence are also used in the formation of impressions of government agencies (Kervyn, Bergsieker, & Fiske, 2012; Laustsen & Bor, 2017). Friehs et al. (2022) suggest that the warmth and competence of governments can play a critical role in human behavior. Our nomological model includes three antecedents relating to perceptions of the Turkish authorities: warmth (i.e., friendly/hostile); competence (i.e., capability of enacting its intentions); and broad-scope trust (BSP). We propose that higher levels of trust are associated with increased place solidarity, through the mechanism of Social Exchange Theory (Ap, 1992).

2. Methods and results

Data ($n = 321$) were collected on the Mturk platform in March 2023 from a sample of U.K. residents (i.e. outsiders/potential tourists) resembling the population. After data cleaning, the final sample was $n = 314$. The psychometric properties of the questionnaire scales showed good reliability, convergent and discriminant validity (See Table 1). We analysed the unmodified measurement model using AMOS 28 - goodness of fit indices: $\chi^2/df = 2.193$; CFI = 0.945; RMSEA = 0.062; SRMR = 0.040. The structural model is presented in Fig. 1. Men exhibited higher place solidarity (M = 5.51 vs. 5.11, SD = 0.96 vs. 1.39, t(312) = 2.75, $p = .006$) and latent trust scores (M = 4.31 vs. 3.74, SD = 1.35 vs. 1.55, t (312) = 3.28, $p = .001$) than women. Neither place solidarity or trust differed across age or education.

3. Discussion

This study demonstrates the significance of place solidarity in understanding tourism-related behaviours and solidarity tourism (see, Higgins-Desbiolles, 2022; Nautiyal & Polus, 2022) as well as the value of investigating place solidarity in relation to natural disasters. Our analysis reveals a significant and positive effect of perceptions of the Turkish government's warmth and competence on place solidarity suggesting that respondents may demonstrate stronger solidarity when they believe that the recovery intentions of local authorities are genuine and there is the ability to act on them. An unexpected finding, which challenges the assumption that more positive predispositions lead to approach tendencies, is that respondents exhibiting higher levels of place solidarity were less inclined to stay close to impacted areas when compared with respondents with lower levels of solidarity. These findings suggest that a nuanced approach to solidarity, emphasizing diverse forms of support beyond physical presence, can enhance disaster recovery strategies by tailoring communications, encouraging remote assistance, and fostering community resilience. A comparative study on Syria, also impacted by the earthquakes, would be useful, as would other places impacted by other types of disasters. A promising area for future exploration is ecological crises, like endangered habitats or threatened reefs, to extend our understanding beyond human-centered suffering.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Alexander Josiassen: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Anne-Marie Hede:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Conceptualization. **Metin Kozak:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft. **Florian Kock:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft. **Albert Assaf:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft.

Table 1

Construct measures used in the nomological model.

Constructs/Items	Factor Loadings	CR	AVE
1. Place solidarity (Josiassen et al., 2022)		0.95	0.69
1. We should support the suffering Turkish people financially.	0.80		
2. I have a feeling of solidarity with the Turkish people.	0.81		
3. Each of us can play a positive role in alleviating the consequences of the earthquake in Türkiye.	0.78		
4. We should unite with the Turkish people in the face of the earthquake.	0.86		
5. It is our common responsibility to help the Turkish people.	0.85		
6. Türkiye is having a hard time, which was not self-inflicted; hence, we should help.	0.80		
7. We should show solidarity with the Turkish people.	0.89		
8. I want to show my commitment to helping the Turkish people.	0.88		
2*. Warmth Perceptions		0.95	0.77
1. Good-natured.	0.84		
2. Cooperative.	0.86		
3. Likable.	0.84		
4. Honest.	0.91		
5. Trustworthy.	0.91		
6. Well-intentioned.	0.90		
3*. Competence Perceptions		0.91	0.67
1. Capable.	0.89		
2. Cooperative.	0.93		
3. Efficient.	0.88		
4. Influential.	0.74		
5. Persistent	0.62		
*Friehs, Kotzur, et al., 2022			
4. Broad-scope Trust (Grimmelikhuijsen & Knies, 2017)		0.96	0.92
Benevolence			
1. If citizens need help, the Turkish government will do its best to help them.	0.85		
2. The Turkish government acts in the interest of citizens.	0.95		
3. The Turkish government is genuinely interested in the well-being of citizens.	0.93		
Intention			
1. The Turkish government approaches citizens in a sincere way.	0.92		
2. The Turkish government is sincere.	0.97		
3. The Turkish government is honest.	0.95		
5. Willingness to Recommend Türkiye (Arnett, German, & Hunt, 2003)		0.95	0.85
1. I will bring up Türkiye in a positive way in conversations about holiday destinations.	0.93		
2. In social situations, I intend to speak favourably about Türkiye as a tourist destination.	0.93		
3. I will recommend Türkiye as a tourist destination to other people when asked.	0.92		
6**. Willingness to visit Türkiye			
1. When possible, I would consider visiting Türkiye as a tourist.			
7**. Resident Hospitality Toward Turkish Visitors		–	–
1. I will be extra helpful to Turkish tourists in my home country.	–		
8**. Willingness to Engage in Philantourism		–	–
1. I am willing to rent an AirBnB in Türkiye and not make use of it to offer financial support.	–		
9**. Impact Distance Preference		–	–
1. If I visit Türkiye in the future, I would prefer to stay far away from the area that was hit by the recent earthquake.	–		
10**. Willingness to Donate		–	–
1. I am willing to donate to Türkiye.	–		
(** Josiassen et al., 2022)			
10. Actual Behaviours (Klein, Ettenson, & Morris, 1998)		–	–
1. Asking whether respondents already have spread positive WOM about Türkiye, bought more Turkish products, and donated money to Türkiye.	–		

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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