

Modeling residents' WOM behavior toward tourism through altruism and the theory of reasoned action

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Abstract

Residents are a key figure in the tourist and leisure experience because through their words and actions, they can become ambassadors for their locality and provide a distinctive image of the tourist destination. They are often motivated by the altruistic purpose of helping others or promoting their locality as a tourist destination.

To determine if true altruism influences the attitudes, intentions and WOM behavior of residents, a model based on Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was tested in a small coastal city in southwestern Spain. The results show that the altruistic values of the residents directly and positively influence their attitudes toward WOM behavior and, though to a weaker degree, their WOM behavior. The research corroborates the basic postulates of TRA regarding the attitudes-intentions-behavior sequence and advocates the inclusion of the residents' attitudes towards pro-tourism behavior in TRA-based models instead of the traditional attitude toward the object (tourism or tourist).

Keywords: WOM behavior, altruism, Theory of Reasoned Action, residents, attitude toward a behavior.

Introduction

Currently, from a practical perspective, tourism and leisure are part of a continuum (Carr, 2002). Their activities are interrelated to the point that it is not always possible to state precisely when an individual engages in one or the other (Chang & Gibson, 2011). Tourism and leisure are connected through the key terms “experience” and “authenticity” (Cohen, 2010). The tourist gains experiences related to the destination through the social touch points, that emphasizes the interactions that the tourist can have with other tourists or with local residents at any point of their experience (Chen et al., 2021). In this context, “who the residents are and what they do is inherently connected to how destinations are experienced by visitors” (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017, p. 243). From a tourism and leisure perspective, the role of the resident is recognized as consumer, brand ambassador and supplier (Braun et al., 2013).

Studies of residents in the tourism setting, which have traditionally focused on the analysis of the perception of the impacts of tourism and its relationship with attitudes, have begun to complement/shift the focus of attention toward the relationship between residents’ attitudes and their behaviors (Lepp, 2007). As Jackson and Inbakaran (2006) note, the great challenge facing resident studies and tourism development is to focus on the question of whether residents act on their attitudes toward tourism. Delving into this idea, Chen et al. (2018) state that “at present, there is a (...) lack of research on residents’ psychology and behavior” (p.1). Somewhat timidly, the research has begun to go beyond residents’ attitudes toward tourism to analyze their intentions (Erul et al., 2020; Kwon & Vogt, 2010; Moghavvemi et al., 2017; Wang & Chen, 2015) and pro-tourism behaviors (Martin et al., 2017; Strzelecka et al., 2017).

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), which was incorporated into tourism studies in the early 1990s (Ulker-Demirel & Ciftci, 2020), offers a better understanding of the behavioral determinants that influence residents’ behavior in a tourist

context (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2010). In the tourism field, some of the studies of residents that expressly reference the TRA as a theoretical foundation use its postulates as a basic line of argument to test partial models that generally do not include all the variables of the original TRA model (Çelik & Rasoolimanesh, 2021; Chen & Raab, 2012; Prayag et al., 2013; Ribeiro et al., 2017). Typically, these studies measure the attitude toward tourism (i.e., attitude toward an object) in trying to predict a pro-tourism behavior, although Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) show that the attitude toward the behavior (e.g., attitude toward residents' pro-tourism behavior) was a much better predictor. Additionally, Ulker-Demirel and Ciftci (2020) highlight two other limitations in the TRA-based tourism models that have been carried out to date. First, such studies rarely address the motivational aspects of behavior; second, they typically use intentions as the final variable, with few studies analyzing the direct effect of intentions on actual behavior.

Residents' pro-tourism behaviors can take many different forms (Chen & Šegota, 2015; Wang et al., 2014). Among these, residents' desire to tell others about the benefits of their locality is probably one of the most relevant indicators of pro-tourism behavior (Strzelecka et al., 2017). For this reason, residents' voluntary WOM, especially positive WOM, deserves greater attention from researchers (Šegota et al., 2022), and psychological theories, such as the TRA, "are natural candidates for furthering the understanding of WOM in the tourism industry" (Confente, 2015, p. 618). On the other hand, the WOM behavior of residents could represent a connection point between tourism and leisure (Stebbins, 2015). In this sense, WOM behavior could be conceptualized as a type of casual leisure, whose central activities are materialized in the actions necessary for having friendly conversations with friends, family and strangers in order to altruistically provide information about the benefits of their locality. When it comes to supporting the global image of a destination, positive WOM means that residents' involvement must go beyond their individual interests (Hendrik et al., 2017).

Šegota et al. (2022) encourage researchers to explore if personality attributes, such as openness, sincerity, cheerfulness and confidence, could determine the potential of residents to engage in WOM behavior. Altruism could be another of salient personality attribute, linked to the motivations of helping others (Alexandrov et al., 2013), concern for others (Henning-Thurau et al., 2004) or even helping the business when the intended impact of WOM is the success of the tourist destination (Sundaram et al., 1998). To date, few studies have expressly included altruism as an antecedent of WOM (Alexandrov et al., 2013; Puspitasari et al., 2019; Reimer & Benkenstein, 2016; Sundaraman et al., 1998). Scarcer still are those that analyze this variable in a tourist context and from the perspective of residents (Hendrik et al., 2017).

In our study, a multivariate statistical technique of covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) was applied to test a theoretical model in which WOM behavior of the residents of the coastal town of El Rompido (Andalusia, Spain) was related to their attitudes, the intention to engage in such behavior, and their altruistic values. The aim of this research is to address the recent call by Ulker-Demirel and Ciftci (2020) for the application of the TRA model in tourism studies to address the motivational aspects of behavior and to analyze the direct effect of intentions on actual behavior. This work is novel in that, in consonance with the recommendation of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), it employs residents' attitude toward WOM behavior (instead of residents' attitude toward tourism) as an antecedent of their intention toward WOM behavior. To the best of our knowledge, no previous study has applied the TRA to the sequence "residents' attitude toward WOM behavior-residents' intention toward WOM behavior-residents' actual WOM behavior". Finally, this article analyzes the influence of true altruism (as a personal value) on residents' attitude, intention and WOM behavior. The WOM considered in our work is traditional (not via the internet), positive (highlights the strengths of a product/service and encourages the consumer to adopt it) and one-to-one (the message is generated by one person and communicated to another person or to a small group of friends or family in private through face-to-face

conversation, telephone, etc. (Chen et al., 2014)). In this type of WOM, the residents can adopt either the role of gratuitous referral or that of brand ambassador (Morhart et al., 2009).

Literature review

Residents' WOM behavior and TRA

According to Braun et al. (2013), WOM behavior is the third way in which place communication is materialized. For Arsal et al. (2010), viewing the resident from this perspective enhances the relevance of the resident-tourist bond, transcending the traditional view of the resident as the agent who is most affected by tourism development. When residents serve as goodwill ambassadors, it not only positively affects the image of the destination (Simpson & Siguaw, 2008), but it also increases awareness of the location for those who are unfamiliar with it (Philips et al., 2013). It should be noted that tourism products are experience goods that are impossible for the consumer/tourist to evaluate before experiencing them, which leads them to rely on the recommendations of others (Arsal et al., 2010). For travelers, residents are important because they have considerable first-hand knowledge about the destination (Arsal et al., 2010). Visitors give residents greater credibility, perceiving them as people who do not have a direct interest in or benefit from "selling" the destination (Chen & Šegota, 2015).

The study conducted by Confente (2014) provides an overview of the tourism and hospitality research regarding WOM for the period 1987-2013. It is worth noting that of the 46 articles reviewed, only two (Arsal et al., 2010; Simpson & Siguaw, 2008) considered the role of residents in WOM. The work by Simpson and Siguaw (2008) explores the effects of satisfaction and identity prominence on word-of-mouth promotion, and the differences in these variables between tourists and local residents. Arsal et al (2010) analyze the influence of residents on potential tourists' travel decisions and the types of decisions and compare their

influence with respect to other communication channels (family members, political leaders, etc.). In the last decade, there has been a substantial increase in the number of publications focused on residents' voluntary WOM. These studies have been developed under very diverse approaches and theories: community attachment, self-congruity, place evaluation, self-expressiveness (Styvén et al., 2020; Šegota et al., 2022); social identity (Wang et al., 2014); perceived responsibility (Hendrik et al., 2017); and perceptions of the image of a city destination (Papadimitriou et al., 2018). However, so far as we are aware, there are no articles that expressly analyze residents' pro-tourism WOM behavior based on the TRA and that link attitudes and intentions toward the behavior with the actual behavior itself.

According to the TRA, a person's behavior is determined by his or her intention to conduct a specific behavior, while a person's intention is, in turn, determined by his or her attitude toward the behavior and his or her subjective norm (Zhang et al., 2006). Although the "TRA has been successfully used in an effort to provide a better understanding in linking residents' attitudes to support/opposition for tourism development" (Ribeiro et al., 2017, p. 525), few tourism studies have been conducted in this regard (Çelik & Rasoolimanesh, 2021; Chen & Raab, 2012; Kwon & Vogt, 2010; Prayag et al., 2013; Ribeiro et al. 2017; Schnitzer et al., 2021). Prayag et al. (2013) propose a model of residents' support for the 2012 Olympic Games to empirically demonstrate that the overall attitude toward the Games mediates the relationship between tourism impacts and residents' support for the Games. Ribeiro et al. (2017) examined the relationship between the attitudes of residents of the Cape Verde Islands regarding tourism impacts and their intentional pro-tourism behaviors, and they find a direct and positive relationship. Schnitzer et al. (2021) showed that residents' overall attitudes toward sports events mediate the relationship between the perceived fit and event support. Çelik and Rasoolimanesh (2021) focus on the role of residents' cost-benefit attitudes in mediating between residents' attitudes toward tourism and their support for tourism development. Several authors have shown the existence of significant and positive

relationships between attitudes toward tourism and residents' behavior (whether intentional or actual) (Jackson & Inbakaran, 2006; Kwon & Vogt, 2010). Lepp's (2007) qualitative study demonstrated a positive relationship between residents' attitudes and pro-tourism behavior, and Martin et al. (2017) found that pro-tourism behavior (more specifically, recommendations to other people and behaviors related to participation in tourism activities in the community) is similarly influenced by attitudes toward tourism development and attitudes toward tourists.

The studies mentioned above expressly use residents' attitudes toward tourism/tourists (attitude toward the object) as a predictor of residents' pro-tourism behavior. They do so despite the cautionary words of the authors of the TRA (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) with regard to the need to consider the attitude toward a behavior rather than the attitude toward the object as a predictor of behavior. Similarly, Erul & Woosnam (2022) note the low predictive value of attitudes toward tourism when determining behavioral intentions. In like fashion, the work of Kwon and Vogt (2010) examines the relationship between residents' attitudes regarding place marketing and their intentional behavior to support place marketing activities and future tourism product development and confirms the existence of a positive relationship between the two. Additionally, Chen and Raab (2012) propose an interesting theoretical model to explain residents' "attitude toward interacting with tourists" and the relationship this has with "the intention to interact with tourists" and the actual behavior of "interacting with tourists". However, their research only involves a review of the literature and defines the methodology to be followed for mining the data – it does not present the subsequent results.

On the other hand, although in psychology intentions are considered to be one of the main predictors of behavior, in the tourism field, few studies analyze the direct effect of behavioral intentions on actual behavior (Ulker-Demirel & Ciftci, 2020). More specifically, in resident studies, the work of Erul and Woosnam (2022) identifies a positive and significant

relationship between behavioral intention and behavioral support for tourism development. Similar results are reported by Jin et al. (2011) in their study of actual behavior regarding resident support for the 2008 Beijing Green Olympic Games.

Regarding the use of the TRA in studies of residents' pro-tourism WOM, some have focused on certain variables making up this theory in isolation, for example, residents' intention to engage in positive WOM (Deb & Lomo-David, 2021; Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017; Papadimitriou et al., 2018; Stylidis & Dominguez-Quintero, 2022;; Styvén et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2014) or residents' actual WOM (Blasco-López et al. 2020; Chen et al, 2018; Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017). Other studies have considered the relationship between residents' attitudes toward tourism (that is, attitudes toward the object) and their WOM intentions or behaviors. Thus, Stylidis and Dominguez-Quintero (2022), using Social Exchange Theory (SET) and social representation theory, expressly analyze the potential relationship between residents' attitudinal support for tourism and their WOM intentions, and they find a direct and positive relationship. For their part, Blasco-López et al. (2020) analyze the same relationship but from the opposite direction to study the impact of residents' WOM intention on their attitudes toward tourism support and find a positive and direct relationship. Additionally, Wang et al. (2014) analyze the relationship between residents' attitudes toward tourists and residents' propensity for tourism advocacy via WOM, and find that it was not significant.

In light of the above arguments, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: There is a direct and positive relationship between residents' WOM attitudes (ATWOMB) and residents' WOM behavior (WOMB) toward tourism.

H2: There is a direct and positive relationship between residents' WOM attitudes (ATWOMB) and residents' WOM intentions (ITWOMB).

H3: There is a direct and positive relationship between residents' WOM intentions (ITWOMB) and residents' WOM behavior (WOMB).

Altruism and pro-tourism behavior

As with other complex concepts, altruism, a social phenomenon that is the opposite of selfishness, has been analyzed from different theoretical perspectives. For the psychologist Daniel Batson (2011) altruism "is a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing another's welfare" (p. 4) and adds that this can be considered authentic or true only when the desire to help another is the main concern (even when this concern has not materialized in a concrete action). The key element is the intention behind the action. For other authors, such as Monroe (1996), good intention alone is not enough to indicate the presence of altruism; it is also necessary to act for the good of another.

During the last two decades, different approaches have emerged that seek to explain the role that altruism plays in those cooperative behaviors in which, although self-interest is not ruled out, selfishness does not seem to prevail. To understand this type of paradoxical behavior, they utilize the concept of reciprocal altruism (Trivers, 1971). Reciprocal altruism is a type of mutual cooperation that is based on "the expectation of a return favor" (Fennell, 2006, p. 109) so that both actors benefit. Reciprocity in this type of behavior implies an exchange of resources between individuals or groups that interact. For some authors, this condition of "return favor" involved in reciprocal altruism indicates that it is not actually altruism (Sober, 1988).

Moreover, the interest from various academic fields in clarifying whether altruism is part of human nature or just a mere strategy for survival has given rise to numerous attempts to measure this value through scales. Thus, several psychometric instruments have been

developed to assess individual and intergroup differences in altruistic behavior, to identify its antecedents, and to learn about its origins and consequences. Sometimes altruism has been measured as one more dimension of a more general construct (Caprara et al., 2005; Penner et al., 1995; Van, 1999; Wrightsman, 1964), while at other times a specific scale has been constructed for this type of latent variable (Cheng et al., 2017; Khanna et al., 1993; Rushton et al., 1981; Yavuzer et al., 2006). In this regard, the works of Pierce (1975) and Price et al. (1995) are particularly noteworthy.

Morris (1956) was one of the first researchers to apply the scientific method to values. One of his main contributions was the development of "a cross-cultural intervals scale for measuring values" (Morris, 1956, p. 184). He called this instrument "Ways to Live" and listed thirteen value orientations, each of which was described in a paragraph.

Gorlow and Barocas (1964, 15) constructed a scale with 63 proposed values, drawn almost entirely from the thirteen descriptive paragraphs of Ways to Live, with the intention of reducing the complexity of Morris' descriptions. Subsequently, Pierce (1975) built on the Gorlow and Barocas (1964, 1965) scale to formulate a 7-item measure of altruistic service. To validate this construct, he compared the altruism scores obtained by various groups of professionals who differed in their degree of affectivity (Price et al., 1995).

Price et al. (1995) developed a simplified 5-item version of the Pierce (1975) scale, which preserves the validity and reliability of the original scale, to assess the altruistic tendency of consumers in the marketplace. Based on content validity and parsimony, two of the items were eliminated.

In the tourism and leisure literature, altruism has been studied in relation to volunteering. Volunteering has been defined as "any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or cause" (Wilson, 2000, p. 215). According to Stebbins (2015), "Altruism is a central component of volunteering, which is the main leisure activity in which

this behavior/attitude is found” (p.83). Wearing (2019) considers voluntary tourism to be the most representative experience of this type of behavior. However, this phenomenon has been widely examined in relation to volunteer tourists, but it has been insufficiently examined in terms of volunteer hosts (Paraskevaidis & Andriotis, 2017). The research on voluntary tourism has primarily focused on the motivations that drive this type of cooperative or helping behavior. Regarding volunteer tourists, studies reveal that among their motivations, in addition to altruism (e.g., being able to contribute and helping the local population), selfish motivations have also been found (e.g., self-interest and self-gratification) (Han et al., 2019; Olsen, Vogt & Andereck, 2017). However, volunteer tourists who act to satisfy their own interests also benefit the hosts and the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in which they participate (Wearing, 2019).

Regarding host volunteers, this type of behavior is associated with diverse and complex motivations, altruistic and instrumental (e.g., professional and personal development) (Paraskevaidis & Andriotis, 2017; Qi, 2020). It should be noted that the academic interest in altruism in host communities has not extended much beyond formal volunteering. However, the remaining community members, in a certain way, also act as volunteers every time they advise, inform or help a visitor. Unlike formal volunteering, this type of behavior arises individually and spontaneously and not as an organized action or movement within an institution. At an academic level, recognition of the suitability of reciprocal altruism as an explanation for the altruistic behavior of residents toward tourists (Fenell, 2006) has prompted the analysis of this phenomenon. However, few studies explore true altruism in local volunteering (Paraskevaidis & Andriotis, 2017). Paraskevaidis and Andriotis explored the altruistic behavior of the members of two voluntary tourism associations, with the aim of determining whether these actions are based on true or reciprocal altruism, concluding that the motivation to participate in this type of institution was more in line with reciprocal altruism. In this regard, Ryan et al., (2017) argue that people who firmly believe in the

existence of altruistic motives are more likely to act prosocially. In their study of a green hotel, Teng Wu and Lui (2013) confirm that altruism directly and significantly influences the attitudes of tourists and, although not as strongly, also influences their intentions to visit a green hotel.

Several authors agree in defining personal values as criteria that people use as a guide to choose one action over another or to evaluate certain behaviors or events (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). Bardi and Schwartz (2003), on the other hand, show that “overt behavior is a particularly important potential consequence of values, worth extensive research” (p. 1207). However, thus far, the tourism research has paid little attention to the explanatory power that personal values, specifically altruism, may have on the specific pro-tourism behaviors of residents within their local community and outside voluntary organizations. Our work addresses this question in relation to traditional, positive, one to one WOM. This kind of WOM is characterized by the altruism with which residents share their knowledge about the rewarding possibilities offered by their location (e.g., products, services, events, leisure activities) with other people.

The literature indicates that people prefer to choose courses of action that promote and are consistent with the highest values of their personal hierarchy, although sometimes they are not even aware that they act under its influence (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003; Rokeach, 1973). Additionally, numerous scientific studies show that perceptions, attitudes, intentions, evaluations and decisions are affected by personal values (Schwartz, 1994). The findings of Deschamps and Finkelstein (2012) confirm the existence of a link between altruism, which is considered a personal value, and prosocial behaviors, especially volunteering. On the other hand, several studies reveal that personal values are related to a wide variety of behaviors and intentions towards specific behaviors (Karp, 1996; Sagiv et al., 2011; Sosik et al., 2009; Stern, 2000). Sagiv et al. (2011) find that the values of universalism and benevolence are positively related to cooperative behavior. Sosik et al. (2009) obtained the same results in relation to

altruistic and prosocial behaviors, although in the workplace. Karp (1996) find significant correlations between the values of the Schwartz scale (1992) and various pro-environmental behaviors. However, as Schwartz (2017) points out, barring some exceptions, the correlation between values and specific behaviors is not very strong, as attitudes tend to mediate this relationship.

In short, values can help us predict attitudes and behavioral intentions (Dietz et al., 2005; Hirsch & Terlau, 2015; Stern & Dietz, 1994; Woosnam et al., 2022). The influence of personal values can be explained by the model proposed by TRA, in which the relationship between attitudes and behaviors is mediated by behavioral intentions.

According to the previous arguments, the following hypotheses are established:

H4: There is a direct and positive relationship between altruistic values (ALT) and WOM attitudes (ATWOMB).

H5: There is a direct and positive relationship between altruistic values (ALT) and WOM intention (ITWOMB).

H6: There is a direct and positive relationship between altruistic values (ALT) and WOM behavior (WOMB).

Figure 1 summarizes the theoretical model to be tested:

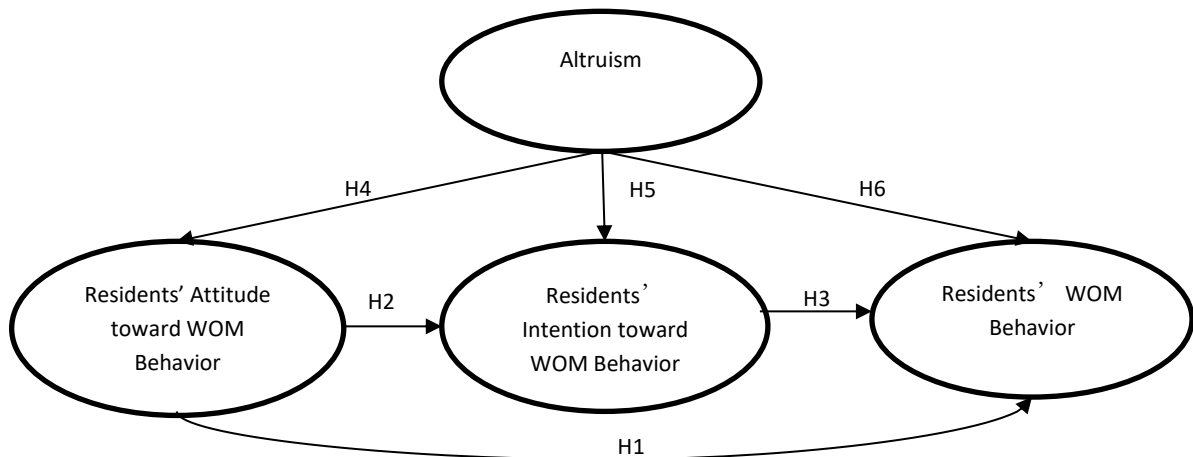


Figure 1: Theoretical model to be tested. Source: Authors' own elaboration

Methodology

Location of the study

El Rompido is a fishing village in the municipality of Cartaya (Huelva), which is located in the southwest of Andalusia, Spain. Its population, although small and relatively young, has experienced rapid growth, going from 808 inhabitants in 2000 to 1832 in 2017. Both the history and the culture of this town have been linked to the sea and fishing for generations, and this connection is reflected in its architecture, which is characterized by the presence of low, white houses. Additionally, the economy of this population was linked to marine activity until the 1980s, when the village experienced a transition toward tourism; the primary focus of tourism has been on golf tourism and water sports following a model of low tourist density. This transition from one economic activity to another has been so thorough that it is estimated that, currently, only one in 10 inhabitants are engaged in marine activity. However, the area has three marinas, various golf courses, numerous hotels, several restaurants specializing in fish and shellfish and a shopping center located next to two adjoining lighthouses (one of them dating from the 19th century). A unique attraction of this locality is the "Flecha de El Rompido", one of

the few growing deposition bars in Europe, and part of a protected natural area, which can only be accessed from the port of El Rompido through a daily ferry service.

Figure 2: Aerial Photograph of El Rompido (Andalusia, Spain). Source: Marinas de Andalusia - Association of Leisure Ports.



Sample and data collection

The studied population comprised the permanent residents of El Rompido who were aged 20 years or older, a total of 1572 people in 2018. To obtain a representative sample of the population these people were grouped by gender and by age group according to four age bands: 1. (20-29); 2. (30-44); 3. (45-64); 4. (65 or over).

For the calculation of the sample size, two aspects were taken into account: (1) its adequacy to the population size and (2) its suitability for applying CB-SEM. First, it was established that a sample of size 290 would offer a margin of error of $\pm 5.2\%$, at a confidence level of 95% and for a population variance of 50%. Next, to calculate the lower bound sample size for a structural equation model, we used the calculator provided by Soper (2022)

according to the formulas provided by Westland (2010). Taking into account 1) the complexity of the model (number of latent variables and number of observable variables; and 2) the size of the desired effect to be detected (medium), the minimum sample required was 166 people.

A structured questionnaire was auto-administered between December 2018 and January 2019 (low season) to avoid the overrepresentation of occasional residents, who are much more frequently present during the summer, and to ensure that all those surveyed were permanent residents. For the sample to be representative of the population in terms of gender and age band, we followed the procedure described below:

Because of the inherent challenges in accessing a fifth of the total population, 70% of which was middle-aged (i.e., between 30 and 64), we decided to send a letter and questionnaire to every family nucleus of the only state school in town, and requested self-completion by one adult (20+) of the nucleus. Thus, we obtained 210 questionnaires. Because the number of questionnaires was insufficient, and age bands 1 and 4 were underrepresented, a second round of surveys was undertaken. This was carried out by delivering the questionnaires by hand to targeted residents, selected according to the desired gender and age band, with the aid of two interviewers familiar with the locality. The questionnaires were completed as before and later collected. This allowed us to obtain a further 114 completed surveys. The total number of questionnaires collected was 324. Of these, incomplete questionnaires were eliminated, leaving 298 valid questionnaires without missing data. Before these were eliminated, it was verified that the nonresponse distribution was random and that the representativeness by age and gender of the sample was not distorted.

Fifty-six percent of the respondents were women, 70% were between 30 and 64 years old, and the average residency was 18 years. A third of those surveyed have lived in the locality for less than 10 years, and half of the respondents have lived in the locality for 15 years or

more. The data collected were analyzed using the statistical programs STATA 14 and AMOS 25.

Measurement instrument

The resident questionnaire consisted of a total of 16 variables corresponding to five thematic blocks (Table 1). For the preparation of the questionnaire, several variables used in previous studies on resident support were adapted in line with the research context. The sociodemographic profile was measured by three categorical variables: gender, age and number of years residing in the locality. Altruism (ALT) was measured as a personal value with the seven-item scale used by Price et al. (1995), who based their measure on a scale constructed by Pierce (1975) and on the work of Gorlow and Barocas (1965). Attitude toward WOM behavior (ATWOMB), Resident's intention toward WOM behavior (ITWOMB) and WOM behavior (WOMB) were measured on a five-point Likert scale. These items were adapted from Palmer et al. (2013), Papadimitriou et al. (2018) and Wang et al. (2014) in the case of the ITWOMB variable, and from Jeuring and Haartsen (2017), Park and Petrick (2011) and Zenker et al. (2017) for WOMB. Given the lack of literature on the ATWOMB variable, the two items used here were reformulated from the ITWOMB items, and rephrased in terms of the degree of importance given by the resident to adopting WOM behaviors.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and reliability and validity. Source: Authors' own elaboration.

CONSTRUCTS AND ITEMS	Mean	Standard Deviation	λ	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Altruism (ALT)^a				0.899	0.904	0.659
ALT1: Importance given to Helping other people	6.07	1.293	0.782			
ALT2: Importance given to Serving humanity	5.60	1.404	0.769			
ALT3: Importance given to Sharing what you have	5.72	1.339	0.950			
ALT4: Importance given to Giving to others	5.70	1.324	0.933			
ALT5: Importance given to Being selfless	5.63	1.651	0.564			
Attitude toward WOM behavior (ATWOMB)^b				0.930	0.930	0.869
ATWOMB 1: Importance placed on talking about the benefits of the locality as a tourist destination	4.00	1.040	0.934			
ATWOMB2: Importance placed on encouraging other residents to talk about the benefits of the town as a tourist destination	3.89	1.063	0.931			
Intention toward WOM behavior (ITWOMB)^c				0.944	0.943	0.892
ITWOMB1: Intention to talk about the benefits of the locality as a tourist destination	3.80	1.188	0.930			
ITWOMB2: Intention to encourage other residents to talk about the benefits of the town as a tourist destination	3.65	1.219	0.959			
WOM behavior (WOMB)^d				0.924	0.922	0.748
WOMB1: Whenever I have the opportunity, I talk about the benefits of my locality to friends/family/tourists to promote my locality	4.07	1.111	0.836			
WOMB2: Whenever I have the opportunity, I talk about the benefits of my province to friends/family/tourists to promote it	4.08	1.020	0.796			
WOMB3: Whenever I have the opportunity, I encourage other residents of my locality to speak well of it to promote tourism	3.73	1.264	0.913			
WOMB4: Whenever I have the opportunity, I encourage other residents of my locality to speak well of the province of Huelva to promote tourism	3.78	1.244	0.910			

^aItems measured on scale of 1-7 (1 = very unimportant; 7 = very important).

^bItems measured on scale of 1-5 (1 = not important; 5 = very important).

^cItems measured on scale of 1-5 (1 = no intention; 5 = total intention).

^dItems measured on scale of 1-5 (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

Results

Assessment of the measurement model

Prior to estimating the CFA model, the multivariate normality of the data was analyzed using the Doornik–Hansen test for multivariate normality (Doornik & Hansen, 2008). The result obtained ($\chi^2(26) = 787.936, p < 0.001$) ruled out the multivariate normality of the data. However, the outputs provided by AMOS showed that the item values were below the recommended threshold of 2 and 3 for skewness and kurtosis, respectively (Ribeiro et al., 2017). Thus, the data are not excessively abnormal. Therefore, the estimation method used in the CFA model was the maximum likelihood (ML), and the standard errors were calculated based on the robust estimator of Satorra-Bentler (1990), which takes into account the deviation of multivariate normality.

The fit indices showed a significant chi-square of 208.11 ($df = 59, p < 0.001$); this measure is very sensitive to sample size (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). The ratio of the chi-square to degrees of freedom ($\chi^2/df = 3.53$) is below the maximum threshold of 5.0, as recommended by Hooper et al. (2008). The comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.94 and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.93 were above the threshold of 0.92 established by Hair et al. (2006), while the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.04 was well below the maximum threshold of 0.08 established by those same authors, revealing a good fit in this regard.

Regarding the individual reliability of the items (Table 1), all the standardized factorial loads yielded values greater than 0.707 (Carmines & Zeller 1979) and significant ($p < 0.001$). Only the variable ALT5 had a standardized factorial load below 0.7 ($\lambda = 0.56$), but we chose to keep it in the model for three reasons: (1) the value is above 0.4, (2) it contributes to the content validity, and (3) it does not affect the internal consistency and convergent validity of the construct of which it is a part. The reliability of the constructs and the scale, or internal consistency, was measured by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) (Table 1). All the

constructs present in the model had values equal to or greater than 0.9, a value that far exceeds the 0.7 recommended (Nunnally & Bernstein 1994). We can therefore conclude that the observed variables measure each associated latent variable with great rigor.

The convergent validity, measured by the average variance extracted (AVE) (Table 1), demonstrates the unidimensionality of each construct as all latent variables have values equal to or greater than 0.65 when the minimum desirable threshold is 0.5. Finally, the discriminant validity (Table 2) reveals that the amount of variance that each construct captures from its indicators (AVE) is greater than the variance that this construct shares with the rest of the constructs of the model. Therefore, the four constructs of the model fulfill discriminant validity.

Table 2. Discriminant validity. Criterion of Fornell and Larcker (1981). Source: Authors' own elaboration.

	ALT	ATWOMB	ITWOMB	WOMB
ALT	0.659			
ATWOMB	0.115	0.869		
ITWOMB	0.104	0.572	0.892	
WOMB	0.133	0.470	0.676	0.748

Note: The bold diagonal elements are the square roots of each AVE; construct correlations are shown off-diagonal.

Assessment of the global structural equation model (and the structural model within it).

The goodness of fit for the global SEM model is the same as that obtained for the CFA, so we repeated the aforementioned steps and found a satisfactory model fit. Regarding the path coefficients, the model confirms a strong and significant regression coefficient with a positive sign that relates the variable ATWOMB with ITWOMB ($\beta = 0.731$; $p < 0.001$); this supports H2. Hypothesis H3, which presumes the existence of a significant positive relationship between ITWOMB and WOMB ($\beta = 0.694$; $p < 0.001$), is also confirmed. The same is not true for hypothesis H1 (the hypothesis that a more favorable ATWOMB will lead to a greater frequency of WOMB), since the regression coefficient obtained was not statistically significant

($\beta = 0.128$; $p > 0.1$). Regarding the altruism hypotheses, the results of the study revealed a moderate and positive significant regression coefficient for the relationship between the variable ALT and ATWOMB ($\beta = 0.339$; $p < 0.001$), confirming hypothesis H4. Similarly, a positive but much weaker relationship between ALT and WOMB confirms hypothesis H6 ($\beta = 0.099$; $p < 0.05$). However, the results do not confirm hypothesis H5 (that ALT is directly and positively related to ITWOMB); although the regression coefficient is positive, it is not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.074$; $p > 0.05$).

Table 3. Hypothesized relationship between the constructs of the initial structural model. Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Hypothesized relationship	β	t statistic	Supported?
H1: ATWOMB \rightarrow WOMB	0.13	1.38 ^{ns}	No
H2: ATWOMB \rightarrow ITWOMB	0.73	19.69***	Yes
H3: ITWOMB \rightarrow WOMB	0.69	8.21***	Yes
H4: ALT \rightarrow ATWOMB	0.34	5.58***	Yes
H5: ALT \rightarrow ITWOMB	0.07	1.66 ^{ns}	No
H6: ALT \rightarrow WOMB	0.10	2.23*	Yes

Note: ns = not significant. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

In addition to these direct effects, tested from the six starting hypotheses, it should be noted that there are three indirect effects: the effect of ALT on ITWOMB through ATWOMB, the effect of ALT on WOMB through ITWOMB and the effect of ALT on WOMB through ITWOMB. These indirect effects have values of 0.25, 0.27 and 0.51, which represent 71%, 80% and 84% of the total effects, respectively. To analyze the possible existence of mediating effects, bootstrapping was carried out. The results show two effects of full mediation and one of complementary partial mediation. Regarding hypothesis H6, it is evident that ATWOMB fully mediates the relationship between ALT and ITWOMB (the indirect relationship is significant,

but the direct one is not). The same occurs in the case of hypothesis H1, where ITWOMB completely mediates the relationship between ATWOMB and WOMB. Finally, regarding hypothesis H6, there is evidence of a complementary partial mediation of ITWOMB in the relationship between ALT and WOMB (both the indirect and direct relationships are significant and positive) (see Table 4).

Table 4. Analysis of the significance of direct and indirect effects. Source: Authors' own elaboration.

	95% Bootstrap confidence intervals			
	Direct Path	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	Significance ($p < 0.05$)
ALT → ITWOMB	0.075 ^{ns}	-0.022	0.164	$p = 0.083$; No
ALT → WOMB	0.100 [*]	0.005	0.193	$p = 0.028$; Yes
ATWOMB → WOMB	0.127 ^{ns}	-0.054	0.307	$p = 0.168$; No
	Indirect Path	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	Significance ($p < 0.05$)
ALT → ITWOMB	0.248 ^{**}	0.170	0.372	$p = 0.001$; Yes
ALT → WOMB	0.266 ^{**}	0.170	0.376	$p = 0.002$; Yes
ATWOMB → WOMB	0.506 ^{**}	0.376	0.647	$p = 0.006$; Yes

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

The model explains 69% of the variance in WOMB, 58% of ITWOMB and 12% of ATWOMB. An analysis by construct (Table 5) attributes 96% of the explained variance in ITWOMB to ATWOMB. Additionally, 82% of the explained variance in the WOMB construct is attributed to ITWOMB. These results reinforce the postulation of TRA that such behavior is conditioned by intention, and intention is conditioned by attitude.

Table 5. Decomposition of the explained variance. Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Dependent variable	R square	Antecedents	Path coefficients	Correlations	Explained variance	%
ATWOMB	0.115					
		ALT	0.339	0.339	11.5%	100%
ITWOMB	0.577					
		ALT	0.074	0.322	2.39%	4%
		ATWOMB	0.731	0.756	55.26%	96%
WOMB	0.694					
		ALT	0.099	0.365	3.61%	5%
		ATWOMB	0.128	0.686	8.78%	13%
		ITWOMB	0.694	0.822	57.05%	82%

Discussion and implications

Discussion

The results lead us to accept four of the six hypotheses proposed: two within the TRA (H2, H3) and two within the theoretical framework of true altruism (H4, H6). Although the presence of direct relationships between altruism and WOM intention and between attitudes and WOM behavior was discarded, the existence of significant indirect relationships is demonstrated in both cases through the variables attitude and intention, respectively. These results are fully consistent with the postulates of the TRA by corroborating the logical sequence whereby values affect attitudes, which in turn affect intentions, and the latter affect behavior. It is noteworthy that altruistic values not only directly influence residents' attitudes in this case but also influence their WOM behavior, which demonstrates that one of the motivations for developing WOM behavior is that of "helping other people" or "helping the destination" in a disinterested way.

We found a model with great explanatory power, by virtue of the high r-squared obtained for WOM intention and WOM behavior. The use of only three explanatory variables or antecedents in the case of behavior, and two in the case of intention, contributes to the parsimony and simplicity that are desirable in any model. As an example, we must note that

the abovementioned model proposed by Teng et al. (2013) achieves only slightly more explanatory capacity than ours for the intention variable (64% vs. 58%) but uses double the explanatory variables. The relatively low explanatory power of the attitude variable in the proposed model is mainly due to the fact that we used only one predictor variable (altruism).

Theoretical and practical implications

The overall results support the validity of the TRA as a theoretical framework for explaining WOM behavior to the extent that the main factor that seems to influence a residents' pro-tourism behavior is their intention to engage in it, which corroborates the results of Chen et al. (2018), and Howe and Krosnick (2017). In turn, the main factor that triggers this intention is the resident's attitude toward WOM behavior, as previously suggested by Jin et al. (2020). Although attitude does not directly affect the WOM behavior of residents, contradicting the results of Martin et al. (2017) and Ribeiro et al. (2017), it does indirectly affect the intention variable, reinforcing the TRA's postulates.

Another aspect supported by the results of this study is that the application of the TRA in the field of tourism requires the inclusion of the variable "Attitude toward pro-tourism behavior". The "Attitude toward tourism and/or the tourist" (attitude toward the object) has typically been present in most of the scientific literature addressing residents' pro-tourism behavior as a final variable; this situation may be due to the fact that SET has been the predominated theoretical approaches to date, and when attempting to go further, and study behavior, there has been some degree of inertia by which residents' attitude towards tourism has remained.

The results of our study also confirm that the true altruism of the residents of El Rompido directly and favorably influence their attitude toward WOM and their actual WOM behavior. True altruism does not directly affect the intention toward WOM behavior, but it

does so indirectly through attitude. These results only partially corroborate the studies of Dietz et al. (2005), Stern (2000), Stern and Dietz (1994), and Terlau and Hirsch (2015), which report that values can help us predict attitudes and behavioral intentions. These findings make complete sense within the TRA model, in which values are presented as antecedents of attitude (Dietz et al., 2005; Hirsch & Terlau, 2015; Stern & Dietz, 1994; Woosnam et al., 2022). Likewise, the significant influence of altruism on WOM behavior supports the assertion that values play a fundamental role in the explanation of specific behaviors, as noted by Karp (1996) and Sosik et al. (2009). Similar to the work of Teng et al. (2013), which links the altruism of tourists with their attitude toward and intention to carry out prosocial consumption behaviors, our study, which focused on the WOM behavior of residents, reveals that the influence of altruistic values on attitude is much greater than its influence on intention. Finally, the results of this research suggest that altruism, as a personal value, is one of the triggers of WOM behavior.

From a practical perspective, it should be highlighted that altruistic values are translated into small acts of spontaneous generosity that can favor and stimulate positive interactions within a tourism and leisure context, promote enriching experiences, reinforce mutual trust, generate a greater sense of interdependence and promote cooperation in the community (Filep et al., 2017). Human cooperation, as a manifestation of altruistic values, is an indispensable resource for the management of public and common goods on which the development of leisure and tourism depends (e.g., nature, landscape, cultural heritage, infrastructure) (Ostrom, 1990). As such, it would be interesting to introduce the teaching of altruistic values in the educational system, not as an addition to the rest of the subjects but as the basis on which the curriculum is built.

Limitations and directions for future research

This work, despite being a good starting point, is not exempt from limitations that open the possibility of new future tourism and leisure research.

(1) We believe, supported by recent literature (Dash & Paul, 2021; Hair et al., 2021; Rigdon, 2017; Hair Jr et al., 2017), CB-SEM is superior to PLS in this case because: 1. the research objective is theory testing and confirmation, 2. the measurement philosophy follows a factor-based model and 3. CB-SEM is better at providing model-fit indices. Nevertheless, considering the advantage of PLS-SEM when working with small samples, the use of consistent PLS-SEM would represent an equally valid approach. Literature suggests it affords very similar results to CB-SEM (Dash & Paul, 2021).

(2) In order to reduce the sampling error to below 5%, and also to detect smaller effects in the SEM model, it would be desirable to work with a larger sample. However, the already small population size of the locality under study makes this potentially difficult, and the most feasible solution would be to replicate the model in nearby localities with a larger population.

(3) It focused on the values-attitude-intention-behavior sequence. To deepen the application of the TRA, subjective norms should be incorporated as an antecedent of attitude. It would also be interesting to incorporate new variables derived from other theories (such as community attachment, SET) to better explain the variable "attitude toward pro-tourism behavior". (4) Behavior was measured by self-reporting instead of using direct and independent observation. It would be prudent to contrast and complete the quantitative results with qualitative research. (5) Finally, the current research would need to be extended to additional sites or contexts so that the robustness of the findings could be more broadly tested.

Additionally, following the recommendation of Stebbins (2015), it would be interesting to incorporate other variables in the field of positive psychology such as resilience, optimism and flourishing, and explore whether the relationships between altruism, attitudes, intentions and WOM behaviors are moderated by any employment link between the resident and tourism. Such efforts could also verify whether, in addition to altruistic values, other non-philanthropic factors, such as the search for direct or indirect personal benefits, guide this attitude. Finally, we would also like to extend the model to include an understanding of other types of pro-tourism behaviors.

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