

Are you Judging Me? Exploring Legitimacy from the Lens of Black Travelers

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the focus on the Black travel market has increased exponentially. While some may consider this to be a new market segment, Black travelers have been in the travel industry for years, however their legitimacy as a viable market segment has been questionable. This dissertation uses a three article approach to further the scholarship on Black travelers. The first paper uses a qualitative approach to explore the evolution of the Black travel market as represented in Black print media from 1920-2020. It further uncovers the tensions that exist between the socio-cultural and political norms of the times. The second article develops a valid and reliable measure of legitimacy using cognitive, pragmatic, and relational dimensions. The third article uses an experiment to investigate Black travelers' perceptions of racial justice advocacy statements made by destination marketing organizations (DMOs). Results from this dissertation indicate the longstanding engagement in the travel industry primarily through entrepreneurial endeavors. It also showcases Black travelers' ability to disrupt institutions and systems due to their willingness to share personal accounts of discrimination and through activism travel. As it relates to the evaluations of the tourism industry, Black travelers like to be recognized and represented in tourism-related products and services. Thus, their evaluations of DMOs' response to racial justice warranted a more detailed approach than what was often displayed.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the past, present, and future of the Black travel movement and the ways in which the tourism industry can develop more inclusive products and services. Three papers make up this dissertation. The first uses three forms of Black print media to understand how Black travel was represented between 1920-2020. The second develops a measurement scale to explore the dimensions that make up legitimacy from the perspective of Black travelers. The final article uses elements of that scale to measure the Black travelers' perceptions of racial justice advocacy statements.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is based on the three-article research format. Each article is connected through the use of legitimacy theory and centers the experiences of Black American travelers. Legitimacy is commonly defined as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). This proposal takes two approaches to examine legitimacy and the Black traveler. The initial phase seeks to uncover the societal dynamics used to evaluate the legitimacy of the Black traveler and the subsequent actions Black travelers took to be perceived as legitimate. The second approach flips the legitimation process to explore the legitimacy judgements of tourists.

In the first study, a historical analysis of the Black travel market is undertaken. Previous research on Black travel can be found across many non-tourism disciplines but is surprisingly limited in hospitality and tourism journals. While interest in this area is growing, there continues to be a number of opportunities for investigation related to this demographic, one of which is met through the examination of the legitimation of the Black travel market over a 100-year period.

The next two studies explore the re-emerging concept of legitimacy judgments. Rather than focus on the strategies organizations use to gain legitimacy, this approach centers the individual’s judgements as to “the extent to which an entity is appropriate for its social context (Tost, 2011, p. 688). Study two develops a scale based on the typology of legitimacy judgements: cognitive legitimacy, pragmatic legitimacy, and relational legitimacy. The third study empirically tests the scale to examine the legitimacy judgements of racial justice advocacy statements made by destination marketing organizations.

CHAPTER 1: The Evolution of the Black Traveler

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Abstract

Recent interest in the U.S. Black travel market comes after persistent questions related to the equity and inclusion of this demographic in the tourism industry. This study examines the historical and contemporary interactions between legislation and the representation of travel in Black press, specifically *The Crisis*, *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, and *Ebony Magazine*. This study offers theoretical implications for critical race theory by linking the legislation and minority voices to better understand the social systems in place that interact with and impact travel representation within the Black community. Additionally, the study adds to legitimacy theory by identifying ways in which legislation and social norms impacted legitimacy of the Black consumer market. The findings also give clues to ways destination leaders can authentically engage the Black traveler market.

Keywords: Black/African American Travel, Legitimacy, Critical Race Theory

INTRODUCTION

The connection between travel in the United States and Black Americans has a long history that belies tensions between a system of socio-economic segregation and space for resistance, innovation, and self-determination (Bay 2021; Dillette & Benjamin, 2021; Hine, 2003). Previous examinations of race and tourism expose the exclusion and misrepresentation of participation of the Black traveler (Alderman, 2013; Dillette & Benjamin, 2021). The

homogenous representation of tourism across media has a normative and narrowing effect on what it means to be American, reflecting and supporting the dominant socio-cultural and political hegemony of who has the right to exist in certain spaces (Carter, 2008; Rosa-Salas, 2019). This systemic phenomenon has not been without both individual and collective resistance. For example, Black print media have historically found ways to provide resistance, representation and information for Black travelers, both to authentically represent the Black travel experience and to ensure their safety while traveling (Dillette & Benjamin, 2021; Floyd & Mowatt, 2014). While not a new phenomenon, Black travel is gaining attention academically and in the mainstream.

A combination of the shifting racial makeup of the United States and recent events centering racial injustice have led to focused attention on understanding how race impacts the tourism industry. The Black travel market has been central to this conversation. Black Americans spent an estimated \$109.4 billion on leisure travel in 2019 (Benjamin & Dillette, 2021). Despite this level of economic contribution, insights related to this traveler segment have been neglected. While the Black travel market may be new to some, it has been an active component of the tourism industry for over a century. It is, however a sorely under-studied market from a historical perspective.

Limited research on Black travel can be found across many disciplines. Historians have investigated Black travel during Jim Crow through the lens of travel and outdoor experiences (Foster, 1999), access to accommodations (Armstead, 2005; Bottone, 2022), and automobility (Seiler, 2006; Sorin, 2020). Another stream of research has described behaviors of Black travelers and compared those behaviors to other racial groups (Carter, 2008; Philipp, 1994). Work in tourism is somewhat limited but has investigated the lived experiences of Black

travelers through roots tourism (Dillette, 2021) and descriptions of experiences on social media (Dillette, Benjamin, & Carpenter, 2019). Dillette and Benjamin (2021) and Benjamin and Dillette (2021) have also explored the Black Travel Movement and its role in creating social change within the tourism industry. Research seeking to understand differences in travel behavior based on race has been linked to concepts of marginality and ethnicity (Washburne, 1978), discrimination (Philipp, 1994), and racialized space (Carter, 2008). This study seeks to answer calls from previous work which suggest that in order to better understand the travel experiences of Black tourists today, we must gain a better understanding of the evolution of travel for them over time (Butler, Carter, & Brunn, 2002; Carter, 2008; Dillette et al., 2019). One aspect of that understanding is analysis of the depiction of and support for Black travel in print media and its relationship with socio-cultural and political norms of the time.

To fully understand the history of the Black traveler, both the socio-cultural and political aspects of race should be considered, as both interact to impact the travel industry and the traveler. As a socio-cultural concept, race commonly categorizes people based on phenotypical traits like skin color, an inescapable reality that impacts daily lives and agency. As a political act, race categorizes “people and resources into a relatively stable global hierarchy...and varies considerably by place” (Crockett, 2022, p. 3). This perspective is important when analyzing systems and institutions like tourism that reinforce this hierarchy. In this paper, both the socio-cultural and political aspects of race are recognized throughout three eras in U.S. history over the past 100 years: Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and Black Lives Matter. While Black travel in the U.S. certainly existed before these eras, this timeframe coincides with the explosion of modern travel in the United States in the early 20th century, including automobile production, highway network development, commercial air travel, motel chains, and attractions.

Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and Black Lives Matter have been acknowledged by historians as specific time frames that impacted Black Americans' mobilities and travel habits (Bay, 2021). The Jim Crow Era can be traced from the end of Reconstruction, roughly 1877, to the mid-1950s (Floyd & Mowatt, 2014) during which time the mobility of Black Americans was restricted due to racial segregation (Alderman, Williams, & Bottone, 2019). While there is debate as to the dates that mark the Civil Rights era (Fairclough, 1990), the most common range is 1954-1965 (Floyd & Mowatt, 2014). The Black Lives Matter movement began in 2013 (Black Lives Matter Movement, n.d.). Each of these eras has a legislative component. While Jim Crow and the Civil Rights eras have established political legacies, Black Lives Matter, while an undeniable phenomenon, is a work in progress. It should also be noted that while the period after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 until 2013 was considered for this project, it is a time characterized by ambiguity and disagreement amongst experts. As a result, we opted to focus on time periods which clearly correspond to landmark cases and present-day events impacting Black travel in the U.S.

This study reflects a critical analysis of Black print media used to explore the following research questions: What are the experiences of the Black travel market in the U.S. as portrayed in Black print media during the Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and Black Lives Matter eras? How were the tensions between the socio-cultural and political norms in each era and Black print media expressed and depicted? As the tourism industry recognizes the need to address issues of racial inequity, there is urgency to understand the experiences of Black travel in a meaningful way that includes its portrayal in Black print media. This study combines critical race theory and legitimacy theory to examine the interplay between the socio-cultural and political norms of each era and the portrayal of Black travel experiences found in three examples of print media during

each of the eras. This work is vital for the tourism industry. As the industry seeks to center equity and inclusion, tourism related organizations must gain a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between Black Americans and the business of travel (Stodolska, Shinew, Floyd, & Walker, 2014).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Influence of political policy on Black travel

Mobility and freedom to travel are core ideals associated with America. However, for certain groups of people, the path to such freedom has been arduous, often due to political policy over the past century (Bay, 2021; Seiler, 2006). While this research considers a number of laws, legal cases, and acts which originated between the years 1920-2020, we acknowledge the work of previous historians, most recently Sorin (2020) and Bay (2021), that recognize political policy has been a persistent concern of Black Americans before this time.

The landmark “separate but equal” decision of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case in 1896 is a prominent example of the impact of political policy on the freedoms of Black people that mark the early days of Jim Crow. This ruling upheld an existing state law permitting the racial segregation of citizens on intrastate railroads so long as the facilities provided were separate and equal (Bay, 2021). These laws set the stage for formal and legal discriminatory practices that would extend to nearly every part of day-to-day life during the Jim Crow era (Floyd & Mowatt, 2014). During this time, racial segregation expanded to public spaces such as parks, restaurants, and accommodations (Benjamin & Dillette, 2021). If public facilities were available, they were separate but they were most certainly not equal (Armstead, 2005; Floyd & Mowatt, 2014).

To combat inequitable facilities and subpar service during Jim Crow, a number of Black professionals developed businesses that addressed the travel needs of their peers (Armstead,

2005). For example, Black owned travel companies organized domestic and international travel experiences (Butler et al., 2002; Foster, 1999). Other early entrepreneurs opened restaurants and hotels to ensure the needs of Black travelers were met. Tangible resources like *The Negro Motorist Green Book (The Green Book)*, the longest published travel guide created for Black travelers, provided a list of businesses (e.g., gas stations, restaurants) ready to serve Black patrons. Each of these actions, among others, helped Black travelers strategically navigate racially marked spaces to ensure their safety. These recommendations, along with those made by family and friends, created organized travel networks (Butler et al., 2002; Carter, 2008; Foster, 1999).

Black Americans lived under the oppressive Jim Crow systems until the ruling of the *Brown v. Board of Education (Topeka, Kansas, USA)* case of 1954 which ruled that state laws permitting racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional, ushering in the Civil Rights era. The ruling expanded beyond education and laid the groundwork needed to desegregate other public leisure spaces such as parks and beaches (Floyd & Mowatt, 2014). Although the legislative practices shifted, freedom of mobility continued to be constrained due to the deeply engrained normative practices established during Jim Crow (Alderman, 2018; Floyd & Mowatt, 2014). However, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, making discrimination unconstitutional, gave Black Americans hope of a new landscape (Floyd & Mowatt, 2014).

Today, Black travelers continue to engage in travel during the Black Lives Matter era, which began in 2013 and is defined by efforts to continue the path towards justice for Black individuals and communities. The phrase was first used in response to the death of Trayvon Martin after the announcement of an acquittal verdict. With subsequent, highly publicized deaths of more Black Americans, what first began as an affirming social media hashtag

(#BlackLivesMatter) has grown into an international movement and organization designed to fight against anti-Black violence (Black Lives Matter Movement, n.d.). Their legislative work began with the introduction of the BREATHE Act, designed to reimagine approaches to public safety, but the entry into political action has been met with mixed success to date (Black Lives Matter 2020 Impact Report, 2020). The organization's efforts extend that of earlier civil rights movements aimed at raising awareness of the "dangers of traveling Black" (Bay, 2021, p. 318).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory has been described as both a movement and an analytic framework (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Dillette et al., 2019). In the mid-1970s, legal scholars recognized the intersection of law and identities and began to challenge the ways in which the law was being taught and researched. Scholars argued that the existing legal structure was based on power and as such the legal system would never be fair for marginalized people (Ladson-Billings, 2009). These frustrations led to the creation of critical race theory which centered race and racism into the scholarship of legal ideology in the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

While variations exist in the usage of this theory, there are certain propositions scholars generally agree upon (for a full list see Ladson-Billings, 2009; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The theory acknowledges that race is socially constructed and woven into the makeup of the U.S., "embedded in our psyches, culture, systems, and institutions" (Poole, Grier, Thomas, Sobande, Ekpo, Torres, Addington, Weekes-Laidlow, & Henderson, 2021, p. 129). Given this permanence, race impacts all members of society in different ways and times. Value is placed on the unique voice and experiences of people of color. Storytelling and counter-narratives are commonly used as sources of knowledge production which centers the role of race in an attempt to better

understand the lived experiences of marginalized individuals (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). This theory has recently emerged in tourism literature as a way to center the experiences of Black travelers. For example, Dillette et al. (2019) analyzed the experiences of Black travelers on Twitter whose stories illustrated the persistence of racial discrimination while also highlighting their zest for exploring new places. Lastly, it contains a strong social justice component which emphasizes the desire not only to understand but to transform unjust systems (Poole et al., 2021). Benjamin and Dillette (2021) demonstrate this quest for justice through their investigation of Black travel leaders whose actions aid in social change. For these reasons, critical race theory is ideal as a framework to expose and analyze the tensions between the socio-cultural and political systems that support racism and the depiction of travel in Black print media.

Legitimacy Theory

Research on critical race theory suggests that it is best used with other theoretical perspectives in support of the sense making process of matters of race (Poole et al., 2021). This study combines the aforementioned theory with legitimacy theory to extend our understanding of race in tourism studies. First introduced by sociologist Max Weber, legitimacy is considered an important aspect of maintaining power structures thus adherence to and inclusion in social norms and the law leads to legitimacy (Weber, 1978). Today, legitimacy is commonly defined as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). Legitimacy theory includes a number of dimensions: cognitive, normative, regulative, and relational (Table 1) (Suchman, 1995; Tost, 2011).

Table 1**Dimensions of legitimacy**

Dimensions of legitimacy	Properties associated with legitimacy
Cognitive	An entity is accepted and operates with a taken-for-granted status (Suchman, 1995)
Normative (Moral)	Associated with moral status of an entity; Judgment is based on an entity's adherence to societal norms; considered to be desirable, proper and appropriate (Suchman, 1995; Tost, 2011)
Regulative	An entity adheres to authorities, rules, and laws (Tost, 2011)
Relational	An entity affirms an evaluator's social identity to "ensure that individuals or groups are treated with dignity and respect" (Tost, 2011, pp. 693-694)

Legitimacy can be evaluated at both individual and institutional levels. If institutionalized practices like racism are to be challenged, the various dimensions of legitimacy must be considered to facilitate change. The Black travel market must be incorporated into and accepted by society, thereby justifying its existence (Humphreys, 2010). This acceptance manifests in the social, cultural, and political environments in which the market exists (Humphreys, 2010). This current work uses legitimacy theory as a framework to analyze depictions of Black travel found in Black print media to expose the strategies used to gain legitimacy within the industry and society.

METHODOLOGY

Critical race theory requires the researcher to consider positionality as it relates to the given research topic (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). As the primary investigator in this work, I

acknowledge my experiences as a Black female traveler, intersecting race and gender. The travel stories that were passed down to me by generations of Black family and friends led to my interest and desire to engage in this research. My co-authors bring a different experience: one is White, female, and Appalachian, with advanced degrees in sociology and a passion for issues of equity and diversity. The third author is a Black male traveler and scholar, who has studied race, including its intersections with leisure/tourism, for most of his professional career. This work is grounded in a transdisciplinary approach in keeping with the ontological and epistemological origins of both theories.

There is an absence of focus on the interaction between the Black print media and the socio-cultural and political norms of the major Black social movement eras of the past 100 years within the context of travel and tourism. We selected three major sources of print media: *The Green Book*, *Ebony magazine*, and *The Crisis*. Our purposeful aim was to have varied sources: one with a strong focus exclusively on travel and tourism (*The Green Book*), one with a strong political bend (*The Crisis*), and one popular press item (*Ebony*). For practical research purposes, the documents needed to be accessible, manageable, and have maintained a critical readership across most, if not all, of the time allotted. Other sources considered included *The Chicago Defender*, *Jet*, and *Essence*; these were eliminated as possible sources due to inaccessibility and unavailability in a form that could be easily analyzed. Print media was also targeted due to greater accessibility to readers of a wide variety of socio-economic backgrounds. All three publications were available across most of the United States. Data analyzed for this study included visual image analysis of publication covers, as well as textual analysis of articles and advertisements. This provided multi-faceted and inter-related data that provide a more sophisticated analysis than using only one source.

Each publication shares information from the Black perspective (Fay, 1999). *The Crisis* was founded in 1910 and was edited by W. E. B. Dubois, a renowned author and activist. The goal of *The Crisis* was to demonstrate the dangers of racism in America, particularly for Black people (Johnson, 1928). The publication quickly established itself as a trusted source among Black readers and by 1919 reached a monthly circulation of 100,000 (Rodriguez, 2019). It continues today as the official publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). *The Green Book* was co-founded by Victor and Alma Green in 1936 (Jackson, 2020) and was considered the top resource for safe travel information for Black Americans. The publication ceased circulation shortly after the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Alderman & Inwood, 2014). *The Green Book* had an exclusively travel and tourism focus and as such is crucial for this study. *Ebony* was established in 1945 by John H. Johnson who patterned it after its successful counterpart, *Life* magazine (Chambers, 2016). By the 21st century, *Ebony's* total circulation was roughly 1.7 million (West, 2020). In recent years, *Ebony* has seen a rebrand and continues to highlight Black culture through its new digital platform (Ghee, n.d.). In total, 541 issues of *The Crisis*, 22 issues of *The Green Book*, and 587 issues of *Ebony* were assessed. Theoretically, intentional inclusion of Black print media is supported by critical race theory which centers the voices of people of color and acknowledges the role of lived experience as a form of knowledge creation (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). These sources also conform to the perimeters of legitimacy theory, as publications serve as “an indicator of legitimation by society-at-large and as a source of legitimacy in their own stead” (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008, p. 8).

Part I: Publication Covers

First, publication covers for *The Crisis*, *The Green Book* and *Ebony* were examined using qualitative multimodal content analysis (MMCA) as a way to conceptualize and analyze visual illustrations and photographs as well as text which aid in meaning making (Serafini & Reid, 2019). Each available cover was visually assessed for aspects related to travel and tourism (e.g., images or words related to transportation and destinations). *The Crisis* included the least number of travel-related covers (n=1). These covers typically featured general photographs of Black Americans or cultural artwork rather than travel experiences. Given its exclusive focus on travel, all available *Green Book* covers were included (n=22) while only specific tourism-related covers of *Ebony* (n=24) were analyzed, bringing the total number of covers to 47 (see Appendices A, B, and C). The analysis followed the guidelines presented by Kachorsky, Reid, & Chapman (2020) and utilized four analysis categories: compositional, ideational, ideological and intermodal (Table 2).

Table 2
MMCA Analysis Categories

Categories	Mode of Analysis
Compositional	Composition of visual elements; framing techniques used to interpret text
Ideational	Image(s)- who, what, and how information is represented
Ideological	Text production and interpretation
Intermodal	Relationship between the image and the text

An interpretivist approach was used to analyze the covers because it allowed for the constant review of the data as a means of developing claims about the data set (Erickson, 1986;

Serafini & Reid, 2019). Categories were constructed which offered a clear way to identify similar data represented across the sample (Serafini & Reid, 2019). The construction of themes was conducted in a manner consistent with qualitative research, using coding and analysis to generate themes (Kachorsky et al., 2020). The theme development process considered the research questions in conjunction with the characteristics found during the category creation stage (Serafini & Reid, 2019) while operating within the theoretical framework. The final themes were determined using the thematic analysis of the covers, the articles, and advertisements.

Part II: Articles and Advertisements

The second portion of the study used thematic analysis to examine the articles and advertisements in *The Crisis*, *The Green Book*, and *Ebony* magazine. Defined as “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 79), the typical process of thematic analysis was applied.

When coding, familiarization with the data occurs through the process of reading the data repeatedly while noting initial ideas, then focusing in on specific themes. Given the large amounts of data generated from this study, a management system was developed using Word and Excel documents to track data and codes (Nowell et al., 2017). Articles were selected using a keyword search based on their relevance to the research question. To obtain appropriate advertisements, publications were independently scanned. When developing initial open codes, the researcher constantly referenced the data. Excerpts that aligned with specific codes were noted on an Excel spreadsheet (Nowell et al., 2017). Using the Excel spreadsheet, the researcher grouped codes along similar topical areas (themes) by color. The Excel spreadsheet contains a color key to indicate which colors belong to which themes (Fig. 1). Next, the researcher engaged in axial coding to reveal sub-themes within each major theme, continuing the use of the

theoretical foundations as a framework. To establish credibility and confirmability, the themes were reviewed to ensure that the coded excerpts aligned (Braun & Clarke, 2006) then further refined to clarify “each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). Lastly, excerpts that relate to the initial research question and are representative of the information gleaned from the data set were incorporated into the final report. To ensure transferability, thick descriptions that gave detailed depictions of a situation were used (DeCrop, 2004).

Code Color Key		
Codes	Excerpt	Source
Travel Instructions	<p>"Single delegates are urged to ride [in] limousine[s]; then transfer to a taxi downtown for several blocks to the auditorium."</p> <p>"Bus travelers will come into terminals just a few blocks away from the auditorium. A short taxi or trolley ride will bring them to the convention headquarters."</p>	On to San Francisco 1956
Activism while traveling	<p>"NOTICE TO DELEGATES & VISITORS San Francisco Yellow Cabs Do Not Hire Negro Drivers The local NAACP is waging a "Don't Ride" campaign" Your cooperation is solicited"</p>	On to San Francisco 1956
Public transportation legislation	"The Interstate Commerce Commission prescribed rules on September 22, 1961, to prohibit racial discrimination in interstate bus transportation."	ICC Issues to Ban Discrimination in Interstate Bus Transportation The Crisis, Nov. 1961

Fig. 1. Sample Excel code sheet.

FINDINGS

An analysis of the data revealed the tension between the socio-cultural and political norms of each era and the resistance, adaptation and innovation depicted in Black print media. Data from each publication presents examples of the cultural norms that emerged from major political policy (e.g., Jim Crow; Civil Rights Act, Black Lives Matter political action) representing the intersections of race, class, and travel. The socio-cultural and political tensions

exemplify what is referred to as the paradox of embedded agency whereby individuals (i.e., Black citizens) engage with and seek to change the system(s) that shape their existence (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Examples from print media show Black travelers engaged in the tourism industry, often constrained by political policy, while also making efforts to eradicate oppressive institutions and systems.

The findings from both analyses are organized thematically, exposing complimentary themes and sub themes in keeping with the theoretical framework of critical race theory (Engaging in Institutions and Systems) and legitimacy theory (Disrupting Institutions and Systems) (see Fig. 2). For the theme of Engaging in Institutions and Systems that support systematic racism, critical race theory supports the sub-themes of Participation Through Travel and Participation Through Entrepreneurship as represented through both theories. For the theme of Disrupting Institutions and Systems, a legitimacy strategy, the sub-themes of Raising Awareness of Transportation Discrimination (both theories) and Activism Travel (Legitimacy) have emerged. Within each theme and sub-theme, we discuss how and if the findings varied across eras, using both the cover analysis and the print media content, and how each of the theoretical perspectives interact with the work.

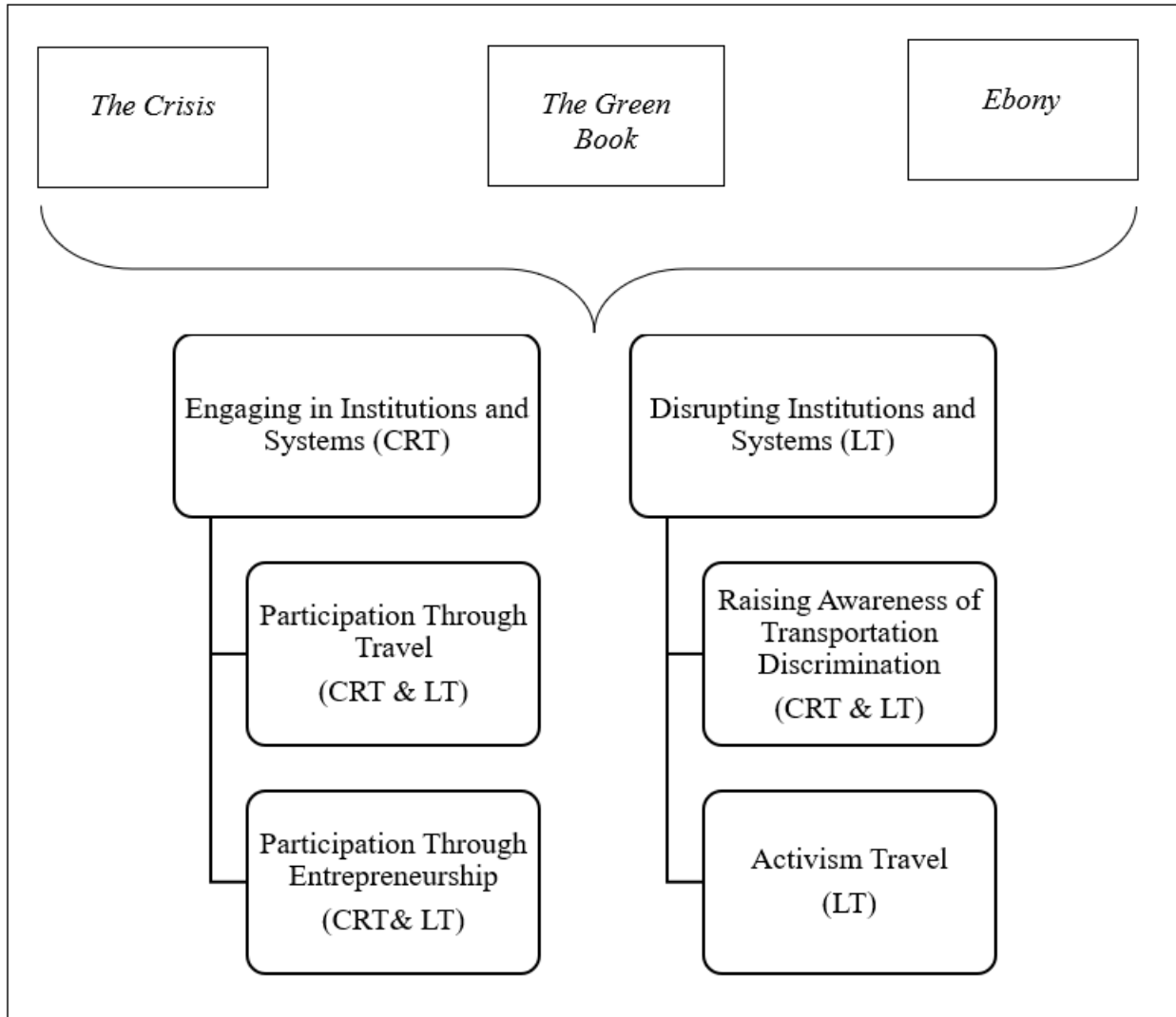


Fig. 2. Thematic findings and theoretical connections from Black print media

Note: CRT refers to critical race theory and LT refers to legitimacy theory.

Engaging in Institutions and Systems

The covers, articles, and advertisements of all three forms of print media include numerous examples of Black travelers working within and resisting the institutions and systems of their times. For example, the covers of *Ebony* and *The Green Book* during the Jim Crow and Civil Rights era portrayed Black Americans engaged in travel institutions from which they were often excluded, including snow skiing (see Fig. 3), beach travel, and golf (see Fig. 4).

Advertisements in *The Green Book* during Jim Crow promoted a number of travel related businesses, including those that promoted safe and accessible accommodations (see Fig. 5).

During the Black Lives Matter era, *Ebony* featured articles showcasing the use of social media to facilitate travel discussions and experiences. Additionally, *Ebony* articles highlight Black participation in hospitality entrepreneurship. Deep analysis of these items revealed sub-themes of Participation Through Travel and Participation Through Entrepreneurship.

Participation through travel

Throughout each era, *The Green Book* and *Ebony* reveal publication covers that depict engagement with institutions and systems through imagery of Black people participating in the travel industry. All but three of *The Green Book* covers include a human or illustrative image, while all of the *Ebony* covers contained human images with 14 out of 24 featuring Black women. This is not surprising, as it was (and still is) common for publications to feature women. Theoretical analysis suggests that the use of Black middle-class women on the cover signaled relational legitimacy meant to connect with the identities and aspirations of their desired reader (Tost, 2011). Such representation breaks down previous stereotypes of non-participation, projecting an image of Black travel legitimacy (Carter, 2008). The inclusion of representations of the Black middle-class also signals examples of respectability, an ideology thought to aid in the legitimization of Black citizens (Crocket, 2017). Each cover represents but also challenges the dominant “white spatial imaginary” that is prominent in certain leisure spaces (Harrison, 2013, p. 320).

The articles and advertisements from all three publications present varied travel-related experiences that showcase participation despite discrimination (Jim Crow era), exposure to resources and new forms of travel participation (Civil Rights era), and the influence of

technology (e.g., social media) on Black travel participation (BLM), all forms of legitimacy-building. All three publications indicate that despite the restrictive mobility policies during Jim Crow, Black Americans sought out leisure travel. Jim Crow travel was mostly domestic, and as such *The Green Book's* primary purpose was to provide information on safe car travel. Stories commonly offered details about the travel route, destination descriptions, and reviews of accommodations and food service. In his role as editor of *The Crisis*, W.E.B. DuBois would sometimes contribute travel reviews. To use current parlance, DuBois was a major influencer of his time; his comments aided in legitimizing travel for the Black community. Detailing trips to Hopkinsville, Kentucky, Chicago, Illinois, and Idlewild, Michigan, DuBois (1921) wrote that it took him “twelve hours of Jim Crow” (p.158) to reach the first destination, but it was worth it. He raved about his breakfast: “tiny, hot, buttered biscuits that couldn't be counted; steaming, pleasing coffee; fried and salty ham; pancakes glistening and melting; fried potatoes” (p. 158). After staying at Idlewild (Fig 5), the famed resort for prominent Black Americans located in Idlewild, Michigan, USA, DuBois wrote:

For sheer physical beauty—for sheen of water and golden air, for nobleness of tree and flower of shrub, for shining river and song of bird and the low, moving whisper of sun, moon, and stars, it is the beautifullest stretch I have seen for twenty years (p. 158).

As presented in DuBois’ statements, Jim Crow travel experiences demonstrate how privilege and oppression are experienced in everyday settings (Poole et al., 2021). Even prominent figures like DuBois were not exempt from socio-cultural norms and political policies. In fact, many aspects of Jim Crow were aimed at middle- and upper-class Black travelers (Bay 2021).

Given the increase of the Black middle class, the number of Black travelers saw considerable growth during the Civil Rights era. *Green Book* Editor, Victor Green indicated an increase in cognitive legitimacy, stating: “we have established ourselves in the minds of the traveling public” (Green, 1955, p. 1). The groundwork laid during Jim Crow resulted in

increasing excitement for travel as a new sign of status during the Civil Rights era. Featured stories helped to ease concern by emphasizing safe spaces. For example, an *Ebony* article encouraged Black families to try camping, describing it as a “bias-free budget vacation” (Allen, 1963, p. 127). International travel also saw an increase as illustrated through articles and advertisements in *Ebony* and *The Crisis*. A 1962 article details a European vacation taken by a young Black couple who stated that their trip was a delight made possible due to the “complete absence of racial discrimination and segregation” (“Europe on a Budget”, 1962, p.61). Advertisements during the Civil Rights era featured international trip packages to destinations such as Europe and the Caribbean as well as domestic destinations. The emphasis each publication placed on sharing travel narratives and providing resources to make travel attainable for more Black people helped to debunk myths of non-participation associated with Black travelers (Dillette et al., 2019).

Despite the major legislative wins achieved by the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and continued growth of the market for over 60 years, the experiences of Black travelers remain largely absent from mainstream media (Dillette et al., 2019). In the current era, Black print media remains an important way to share the experiences of Black travelers. Of the three publications, *Ebony* (print and digital) offered the most coverage of Black travel. Articles portrayed travel to a wider array of destinations, from budget to luxury travel, the latter a topic not often discussed in relation to Black travel experiences. Detailing her trip to the United Arab Emirates, Danielle Pointdujour shared: “from the moment you arrive, by helicopter or chauffeured Rolls Royce-your choice, you feel the exclusivity and luxury all around you” (Pointdujour, 2017, para. 2). Often informing such articles is the rise of social media and its role in sharing travel experiences. Of particular importance is *Ebony’s* coverage of online travel

communities centering Black travelers, displaying the intersection between technology and tourism. *Ebony* highlights two well-known communities, Nomadness Travel Tribe and Travel Noire. Nomadness Travel Tribe creator Evita Robinson embodies the systems and strategies established by the theoretical framework when explaining that the goal of Nomadness is about “shattering the mindset of what a traveler is supposed to look like” (Peck, 2013, para 4). Travel Noire creator Zim Ugochukwu stated “it’s about more than fancy trips and travel hacks, it’s about verbally and visually obliterating stereotypes, it’s about community engagement, it’s about us” (#TeamEbony, 2014). These virtual gathering spots further illustrate the value of sharing stories and hint at the need to do more than engage in such institutions.



Fig. 3. 1949 Ebony cover from The New York Public Library (<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/8bb13aa0-813c-0135-85b3-69e77fc1d0f0>)



Fig. 4. 1959 *Green Book* cover from The New York Public Library
<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/89ed7cc0-8486-0132-e7b6-58d385a7bbd0>



Fig. 5. 1938 *Green Book* accommodation advertisement from Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library. (1938). *The Negro Motorist Green Book: 1938* Retrieved from
<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/f56e0d60-847a-0132-8e19-58d385a7bbd0>



Fig. 6. 1955 *Crisis* European tour service from [Google Books](https://books.google.com/books?id=p1sEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_s ummary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false) (https://books.google.com/books?id=p1sEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_s ummary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Participation through entrepreneurship

Our analysis revealed that Black owned travel related businesses were necessary to ensure the safety of Black travelers and to provide service options while traveling through racialized spaces created through systems. During the Jim Crow era, Black print media presented entrepreneurship to challenge the existing systems of racial power while also supporting Black travelers and illuminating their legitimacy. Not surprisingly, *The Green Book* consistently featured Black owned businesses through its indices and advertisements. Accommodations were especially important inclusions because they were often difficult to locate. In addition to hotels, Black home owners listed rooms for rent (Sorin, 2020), a practice later analyzed as both hospitable and a form of resistance in the fight against white supremacy (Bottone, 2022). *The Crisis* included articles and advertisements promoting existing businesses as well as opportunities for ownership. For example, DuBois shared an opportunity to develop land owned

by White men who worked with Black sales agents to sell plots to Black individuals or families.

DuBois (1921) urges:

Now comes our turn. The lots are nearly all sold. It is our duty to develop, beautify and govern it. It must be a center of Negro art, conference and recreation. Its whole future is being turned over to a democratic Lot Owners' Association, composed exclusively of colored folk. Behold the day and the chance (p. 160).

SPEND YOUR VACATION AT
Beautiful Idlewild

The most wonderfully ideal spot where young and old cast aside for the time all the cares and worries of their strenuous, nerve-racking routine lives and romp and play once more as children and enjoy to the full nature in all her wondrous glory. The waters of the lake and surrounding trout streams are fairly teeming with game fish of the best varieties.

Do you enjoy bathing, boating, fishing, hunting?
Do you enjoy roaming through the woods picking wild flowers and wild berries?
Do you want a place to go where you can build up your health, vitality, energy and business efficiency?
Do you enjoy mingling with the active, thinking, progressive people of the day—people who do things?
Do you believe in progress and do you want to have a part in one of the most progressive movements of the time? Surely!

Then you will be interested in, and want to own a lot of your own in Beautiful Idlewild, Michigan. If you act at once you can secure a beautiful lot for only \$35.00 each; \$5.00 cash; \$1.00 per week. When your payments are completed the lot will be transferred to you by an absolute warranty deed with abstract showing clear title.

Good live energetic agents wanted

Idlewild Resort Company
1110 Hartford Bldg
So. Dearborn St.
Chicago, Ill.

Idlewild Resort Company, Chicago, Ill.
1110 Hartford Bldg., Chicago, Ill.
Without cost to me please send me full particulars
Name
Address
State
WRITE PLAINLY

Fig. 7. 1920 *Crisis* advertisement for Idlewild from Google Books (https://books.google.com/books?id=HFoEAAAAMBAl&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=Idlewild&f=false)

DuBois realized that this transfer of landownership was critical to the success of Black travel businesses as a way to fight existing systems. He used his influence to legitimize this opportunity for Black entrepreneurs. These types of personal endorsements were also useful in

another outcome of legitimacy, expanding access to resources needed to sustain existing business (Suchman, 1995). For example, the 1940 edition of *The Green Book* acknowledges a partnership with the United States Travel Bureau. The 1949 *Green Book* includes an interview with Wendall P. Alston and James A. Jackson, executives of Esso Standard Oil, highlighting the partnership between the publication and the oil giant, one of the few mainstream establishments to serve Black patrons. Such partnerships helped to add to the visibility and viability of the Black travel market as entrepreneurship continued to grow during the Civil Rights era.

The Civil Rights era showed signs of slowly shifting racial acceptance. For example, in 1960, *The Green Book* removed “Negro” from its title and proceeded as *The Green Book Guide for Travel and Vacations*. Advertisements in *Ebony* and *The Crisis* shifted focus from general lodging to accommodations labeled specifically as vacation properties or resorts. Despite signs of progress, there continued to be a need for Black owned travel-related businesses and increased industry engagement was still desired. Victor Green shares:

By being such an important piece of literature, white business has also recognized its [The Green Book] value and is now in use by the Esso Standard Oil Co., The American Automobile Association, and its affiliate automobile clubs throughout the country, other automobile clubs air lines, travel bureaus, travelers aid, libraries and thousands of subscribers (Green, 1955, p. 1).

These types of partnerships were instrumental in increasing legitimacy of Black owned travel businesses, largely because they could be leveraged in the quest for industry and societal inclusion (Sorin, 2020).

Of the available publications during the Black Lives Matter era, *Ebony* featured Black Americans engaged in hospitality entrepreneurship, including two Black hotel owners who were inspired by their personal travel experiences to join the industry to pay it forward. Given

continued accounts of discrimination while traveling, providing top tier hospitality services remains a goal (Dillette et al., 2019).

Representations of the sub-themes of participation through travel and entrepreneurship under the theme of engaging in institutions and systems in Black print media are influential in a number of ways. First, these examples offer a viewpoint of Black Americans that is not shaped through the common lens of victimhood. Centering the analysis by era contributed to our understanding of the resilience of Black Americans and the fortitude to rightfully engage in activities regardless of their race (Gilroy, 1993). Second, each publications' representation of engagement in institutions and systems supports both strategies associated with racial uplift meant to counter the negative imagery of Black Americans (Crocket, 2017). Third, the representation of traveling Black Americans affirmed their identity as travelers and resulted in increasing representation of relational legitimacy throughout each era (Tost, 2011). These actions, while impactful, do not represent that of collective action (Crockett, 2017). Intentional efforts to engage in large-scale actions designed to deinstitutionalize existing systems and create institutional change are discussed in the following section.

Disrupting Institutions and Systems

The deinstitutionalization of systems that discriminate against one or more groups often begins when stakeholders actively disapprove (Tost, 2011). The analysis of *The Crisis*, *The Green Book*, and *Ebony* revealed numerous examples of disapproval of discriminatory systems. Analysis revealed a theme of Disrupting Institutions and Systems and two subthemes: Raising Awareness of Transportation Discrimination and Activism Travel. The exposure of systems across all eras offers a rejection of normative legitimacy. During Jim Crow, *The Crisis* commonly printed articles exposing firsthand accounts of transportation discrimination via train.

Years later, the same theme emerges in the context of air travel. Articles describing travel for the purpose of political protest (i.e., Activism travel) appear during all three eras as well, exemplifying the use of existing systems for change.

Raising Awareness of Transportation Discrimination

Black travelers raised awareness of the tensions between socio-cultural and political norms of each era by sharing firsthand accounts of their experiences with transportation discrimination. During the Jim Crow era, of the three publications, *The Crisis* reported on transportation discrimination via train most frequently. The discrimination often began with ticket purchases, noting: “they cheat poor citizens by making them pay first-class fares for third class accommodations” (“Jim Crow travel”, 1930, p. 88). Travel was described as “a nightmare of discomfort, insecurity, and insult” (“Jim Crow travel”, 1930, p. 88). Expanding on this topic, *The Crisis* reported:

Accommodations for travel are a constant menace to every self-respecting colored person who boards our passenger trains. It is not unusual to find the coach provided for colored passengers to be at the same time the baggage car, mail car, the butcher’s booth and the conductor’s desk, where our wives and daughters are frequently subjected to the most uncouth manners and forced to hear language too vile to be uttered (“The looking glass”, 1923, p. 269).

These examples indicate the lived experiences of Black travelers as they navigated the institutions and systems created during the Jim Crow era. These statements also demonstrate public acknowledgement of a lack of normative legitimacy within institutions and systems that directly impact Black travelers.

During the Civil Rights era, articles continued to raise awareness of transportation discrimination including train and automobile. *The Green Book* did not openly engage in criticism of socio-cultural and political norms. Instead, the publication used a coded way of

raising awareness of transportation discrimination as seen in the subtitle “vacation without humiliation” or foreboding warnings to carry the *Green Book* because “you might need it”. Both statements may have been taken differently depending on the audience. For Black travelers, the strategy garnered support for *The Green Book* as a necessary resource aimed at Black middle-class travelers, while also marking it as a safe investment for White business partners (as discussed in the section on entrepreneurship). These methods were useful forms for increasing relational legitimacy among Black travelers and increasing cognitive legitimacy for the Black traveler in broader societal terms. *Ebony* and *The Crisis* offer contrasts to the *Green Book* by boldly naming racist forms of transportation discrimination. For example, both *Ebony* and *The Crisis* revisit the Jim Crow era, detailing its origin and highlighting victories like *Morgan v. Virginia* whose Supreme Court decision outlawed segregation for interstate passengers. For Black travelers, articles demonstrated how the past continued to impact the present adding further doubt of the normative legitimacy as associated with institutions and systems established during Jim Crow but maintained during the Civil Rights era.

Articles written during the Black Lives Matter era raise awareness of airplane transportation discrimination, often through the use of social media hashtags. For example, #flyingwhileBlack was used to signal racially motivated incidents via plane. A 2017 *Ebony* article describes a basketball coaches experience on American Airlines:

It's 2017 and a Flight attendant for @AmericanAir sees 2 young black athletes with blankets from first class...his 1st comment is 'did you steal them.' How about you teach people to get the facts first before jumping to conclusions. #beingblackinamerica (“Flying While Black: Pro Ballers Kicked off Flight”, 2017 para. 6).

Social media have given consumers an easy path to share their experiences with transportation discrimination. In keeping with critical race theory, these types of examples expose the socio-cultural systems that are still in place.

Activism Travel

Activism is not typically included as a motivating factor for travel, however for Black Americans, it was a critical part of their quest for institutional change. Black print media, namely *The Crisis*, featured on-the-ground strategies used to disrupt institutions and systems. Attendance at conferences and protests were top forms of activism travel. Black travelers attended conferences aimed at raising awareness and organizing to advocate for systemic and institutional change. An advertisement for the 14th Annual NAACP Conference emphasizes the need to discuss matters of race in the United States and the (re)introduction of an anti-lynching bill (see Fig. 8). Lynching has a horrific history in the US and refers to “a form of vigilante justice for presumed criminal offenses” (Mowatt, 2012, p. 1368) used as a frequent source of intimidation against Black Americans. It is just one example of the violence associated with the socio-cultural and political features of racialized travel (Alderman, 2018).

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OF THE

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Representative L. C. Dyer who will reintroduce his Federal anti-lynch bill in the next Congress, will address the conference and help make new plans to carry the

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NEW YORK CITY

Mention *The Crisis*

Fig. 8. 1923 *Crisis* Advertisement for 14th Annual N.A.A.C.P. Conference from Google Books (https://books.google.com/books?id=01kEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)

The more politically focused *Crisis* included articles covering activism travel during the Civil Rights era. Black Americans continued to travel to conferences to raise awareness and engage in protests. The 1956 *Crisis* article, "On to San Francisco" asked attendees to participate in a 'Don't Ride' campaign by refraining from using yellow cabs due to the company's refusal to hire Black drivers. Another *Crisis* article showed attendees at the 53rd annual NAACP conference picketing hospitality businesses who refused to provide services to Black patrons (see Fig. 9).



Fig. 9. 1962 activism at NAACP Conference from Google Books
(https://books.google.com/books?id=AFwEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Lawsuits, filed complaints, and international coverage of activism travel (e.g., Freedom Rides) led to governmental confirmation of unjust treatment of Black travelers and resulted in the 1961 ICC mandate prohibiting segregated seating. After the ruling, *The Crisis* reported: “American citizens may now travel freely among their states without being penalized and persecuted because of their color” (“ICC anti-Jim Crow ruling”, 1961, p.533). Perhaps the most well-known event combining activism and travel was the March on Washington (see Fig. 10). The subsequent passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 was detailed in *The Crisis* and *Ebony*, leaving a record of individual and collaborative efforts to challenge existing institutions and

systems. The resulting political policy prohibited discrimination on the basis of several identities. Chief among them was race, thereby ending previous Jim Crow laws (Floyd & Mowatt, 2014).

The political policy changes established during the Civil Rights era did not completely remove systemic stigma and violence associated with racialized spaces. During the Black Lives Matter era, *Ebony* articles report on these instances, showing both traditional and emerging forms of activism against the existing systems and dominant hegemony. Social media activism was exposed in one article as a unique method for mobilizing virtually. *Ebony* reported on traditional activism travel taken to the locations of violence to participate in protests and demand change. The frequency of these tragedies in 2020 was documented in *Ebony*:

The grotesque face of race relations and anti-Blackness in the United States has been unraveling since the inception of our national-except now this revolution, our revolution, of peaceful protests and revolts are, in fact, being televised (*“Ebony Statement”*, 2020).



Fig. 10. The March on Washington from Google Books (https://books.google.com/books?id=slsEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gb_s_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Black travel as depicted in print media during three major political eras provide support for both theories. During the Jim Crow era, Black travelers describe the systemic power dynamics that existed between Black travelers. The experiences described during the current era raise awareness that transportation discrimination is systemic and unfortunately not a thing of the past. Their stories demonstrate the permanence of race and racism which functions as taken-for-granted systems created to center Whiteness (Poole et al., 2021). The depictions and illustrations also offer support for legitimacy theory in that they reveal strategies Black travelers used to change existing regulatory features of institutions and systems. Previous research has focused on the status of individuals who engage in institutional work, noting that these individuals are often professionals in positions of power (e.g., CEOs) making them legitimate actors (Lawrence, Leca, & Zilber, 2013). Interestingly, this study emphasizes the actions of people who for much of their lives were not considered a legitimate part of the marketplace. These individuals and collective actors used their, overlooked, high level of cultural competence to engage in institutionalized systems while also working to disrupt them (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). The ground level work, shown through their activism, was an important part of increasing their legitimacy in society and the industry.

Discussion and Implications

Examining three major forms of Black print media during three critical periods in U.S. history illuminates the experiences of Black travelers and reveals the tensions between their quest for legitimacy and the socio-cultural and political systems in each era. The use of a unique methodological approach answers the call to provide a more robust understanding of how the past impacts contemporary experiences and the legitimacy of Black travelers today (Butler et al., 2002; Carter, 2008; Dilletta et al., 2019).

In terms of substantive findings, an examination of publication covers using MMCA and thematic analysis of articles and advertisements resulted in themes and sub themes (see Fig. 2) across each era which often interrelate. For example, during Jim Crow, the travel experiences shared in Black print media demonstrate Black Americans' "double consciousness" (DuBois, 1903), as they navigated being both "American" and "Black" (Dillette, 2021). Print media raised awareness of transportation discrimination; an issue Black travelers would later seek to change. During the Civil Rights era, print media reflected continued interest in travel among the growing Black middle class. Efforts placed on sharing stories of engagement led to increased awareness by mainstream businesses who saw the value and financial opportunity represented in this demographic. As support for their cause grew, print media magnified the Civil Rights era as a prominent period for disruption through activism travel. This ground level work led to changes in transportation related political policy (i.e., ICC 1961 ruling) and discriminatory practices overall (i.e., Civil Rights Act of 1964). Engagement during the Black Lives Matter era is a modern take on the themes, as Black influencers create digital spaces aimed at providing resources and offering support to modern day Black travelers. Additionally, raising awareness of transportation discrimination and activism travel have become important strategies in the fight against violence toward Black citizens in America.

This research has several theoretical contributions that answer previous calls for research related. For critical race theory, we have contributed through our investigation of the lived experiences reflected in print media of marginalized groups. These experiences offer unique perspectives on the complex intersection of race and tourism as called for by Dillette & Benjamin (2021). The findings acknowledge the legacy of racism embedded in political policy and cultural norms which impact the everyday experiences of Black travelers, as recommended

by Poole et al. (2021). We answer recent tourism literature that suggests a shift from traditional legal-oriented perspectives of the theory to one that is more practical and applied (Benjamin & Dillette, 2021; Dillette & Benjamin, 2021; Poole et al., 2021). This study also adds to the practical and applied perspective by addressing both the past and present-day concerns of Black travelers (e.g., discrimination while traveling). Present day concerns indicate the role of racism found in institutions and systems shaped by past political policy and cultural norms persists today. This requires both systemic change and individual agency.

The interlacing of these theories has resulted in a symbiosis between informing the theory and creating a framework for the data as recommended by Poole et al. (2021). Legitimacy theory offers a unique perspective by addressing how individuals work to change institutionalized systems (exposed by critical race theory) of which they are a part (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006; Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013). As demonstrated in the findings, institutional change occurred in part due to two strategies implemented by Black travelers: raising awareness of transportation discrimination and activism travel. The consistent coverage of discrimination led to public questions about the normative legitimacy associated with political policy. Activism travel whereby Black travelers (and their allies) mobilized to attend conferences and protests embodies this phenomenon. These actions, coupled with international media attention, led to formal review of policies and the ultimate passing of legislation banning discrimination. A result of changing times and technological advancements suggests that contemporary forms of congregation (i.e., social media) can lead to change. Most recently this has been demonstrated in the responses of tourism organizations for increased transparency around diversity related decisions.

The use of legitimacy theory is of particular applied importance because it adds to our understanding of how people who lacked positional power were able to upend hundreds of years

of unjust political policies (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). New regulatory structures resulting from this work should ideally support increased cognitive legitimacy and acceptance into new forms of institutions. However, as this study shows, systems that were designed to exclude require ongoing work.

Methodologically, this study affirms the value placed on the lived experiences of Black people (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Our work pushes the boundaries of traditional research on race through its focus on popular Black print media. The covers, articles, and advertisements center the Black experience. Without analysis of these firsthand accounts, it would be difficult to understand how Black Americans' travel experiences were impacted by the tensions between the socio-cultural and political norms during the Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and Black Lives Matter eras.

While this work explores the experiences of Black travelers depicted in Black print media from a strictly U.S. context, it also has potential relevance on a global scale. Due to the extensive impact of the transatlantic slave trade and subsequent migration pressures, there are individuals who identify as Black in every corner of the globe. They are defined by historical intersections of race, place, space, and power (Floyd & Mowatt, 2014) that is far more complex and nuanced than current research depicts. This study humbly answers the call for more research centering the travel and tourism experience of Black people and posits a unique theoretical and methodological approach that can be applied anywhere.

Destination management organizations and other tourism-related institutions can benefit from this work in several ways. The research can assist them as they address current institutional and systemic racism issues. Our work also exposes Black entrepreneurial activities that have existed for decades which may inspire tourism professionals to tap into that knowledge and

expertise in a way that diversifies their own tourism product. Additionally, they can use the rich storytelling and activism history among Black travelers to tell a more complete story about their destinations. These tourism professionals may be motivated to examine current mobilities like public transportation that continue to form barriers between their product and potential customers/travelers.

In 2020, the U.S. tourism industry vowed to confront issues related to diversity, equity and inclusion. The first step in this process is acknowledging that the Black travel market is a viable and legitimate market. Indeed, Black travel is not a new phenomenon; there are resources and historic works that can provide a more robust travel experience for Black tourists. For example, a virtual timeline was recently created to recognize Black travel history (Dillette & Benjamin, 2022). Turning this acknowledgement into action may require new business practices that are intentional about incorporating this market segment. Examples include the creation of special task forces, diversifying advisory boards, and engaging with social media groups as a way to develop and promote tourism created by and for Black Americans (and people of color around the world).

Marketing plays an important role in legitimacy because it shapes the image of the broader community. The increased representation of Black travelers in marketing materials has the potential increase their legitimacy (Tolbert & Zucker, 1983) while breaking down the stereotypes associated with racialized space and leisure activities. Specifically, future work may benefit from an exploration on colorism in tourism marketing (Mallick, 2021). As with legitimacy, authenticity must be central to their efforts. Tourism organizations may benefit from following the hashtag “#travelingwhileBlack” for authentic representation of Black travel (Dillette et al., 2019). Black travelers are not interested in being tokenized, but rather wish to

have their experiences portrayed in a real and genuine manner. Finally, additional strategic planning practices suggested by this research may include an evaluation of recruitment practices as a means of diversifying staff and board membership, and engagement in diversity related trainings.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has perimeters that focus on analysis of the depiction of Black travel in three forms of print media during three eras. Undoubtedly, Black travel over the past 100 years in the United States is rich, robust, and should include many more resources and target a variety of time frames and locations. Black travel previous to Jim Crow as well as between the Civil Rights and Black Lives Matter eras deserves additional focus in future work.

Considerations of the intersection of race and tourism is ripe for additional future research. From a theoretical perspective, legitimacy is a fairly new construct in tourism research. An interesting next step would be to measure legitimacy of the tourism industry from the perspective of the consumer, specifically the Black traveler. Research suggests that the legitimacy judgements of consumers are valuable as consumers are important stakeholders who impact how an entity fairs within a given environment (Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002). Future research would also benefit from exploring topics related to the intersections of race, social media and tourism. Further investigation into the ways Black travelers represent themselves through imagery and text would be of value for the industry. Articles in this study pointed to the development of online communities focused on representing and serving Black travelers, some likening their existence to *The Green Book*. Investigating the formation of online travel communities based on social identities like race and gender would not only continue to amplify

counternarratives, but offer insight into the voids that exist in the broader industry relative to these marginalized groups.

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CHAPTER 2: Measuring Legitimacy

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Abstract

Legitimacy is a critical piece of the social contract organizations have with consumers; enabling them to operate within a given environment. Legitimacy is granted from a wide range of evaluators, but only a small number of studies explore factors that influence the judgments of consumers. This study recognizes the importance of individual judgments by developing a valid and reliable scale which measures how Black travelers evaluate the legitimacy of destination marketing organizations (DMOs). A three-factor solution including relational, cognitive, and pragmatic dimensions of legitimacy was established. The findings extend legitimacy theory by measuring relational legitimacy which considers how organizations affirm one's identity. Results demonstrate the value of representation in marketing, employees, and tourism products/services. Recommendations from the Black Traveler DMO Legitimacy Scale suggests tourism offices can increase legitimacy by building partnerships with Black owned businesses, ensuring authenticity in marketing, and revisiting strategic plans related to employee recruitment and retention.

Keywords

African American/Black travel, scale development, legitimacy theory, destination marketing organizations

Introduction

Destination marketing organizations (DMOs) are a staple within the tourism ecosystem (Gretzel et al., 2006). Their existence promotes and supports collaboration among various sectors within hospitality and tourism such as hotels, restaurants, and airlines (Zach, 2012). Traditionally, DMOs have been tasked with crafting a destination's image and brand that ultimately increases economic impact to the community (Gretzel et al., 2006). However, the need for stakeholder collaboration, the evolution of the traveler, increased focus on destination competitiveness, globalization, sustainability, and a myriad of socio-political phenomena have expanded the fundamental functions of DMOs to include a managerial focus (Pike & Page, 2014).

One such area DMOs have found themselves addressing, particularly in the United States, is the heightened attention on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), especially toward Black travelers. These actions were ignited by a pivotal moment in 2020 following the extensive media coverage of the deaths of Black Americans. While communities marched for justice, numerous business organizations, including DMOs, engaged in a range of advocacy activities, including posting social advocacy statements in support of the Black community and/or the Black Lives Matter movement (Mzezewa, 2020), making donations, evaluating DEI marketing and hiring policies, and publicly sharing key performance indicators (#pullupfortravel Campaign Report, 2020). Such actions alienated some consumers while garnering support from others (Yim, 2021).

The actions in support of the Black community were met with a variety of responses, ranging from positive affirmation to questioning the legitimacy of the organizations from

which they originated (Mzezewa, 2020; Benjamin et al., 2022). Aside from the obvious desire for DMOs to show solidarity, these types of actions further the long-debated connection between business and society (Wertley & Baker, 2022). For many Black travelers the sudden engagement in advocacy by DMOs felt forced and inauthentic, illuminating the disconnect between themselves and the industry (Benjamin et al., 2022). Given the importance between consumers' sense of affinity with organizations that agree with their values and subsequent influence on spending with those entities, reactions to these efforts have economic, socio-cultural, and ethical implications for the hundreds of DMOs that serve diverse travelers (Dodd, 2018; Tucker et al., 2023).

Despite their long engagement in travel and tourism (Tucker et al., 2023), the Black travel market has not been a key focal segment within the industry (Benjamin & Dillette, 2021; Fogle et al., 2022). This exclusion led Black travelers to create their own opportunities for tourism promotion and engagement, a trend that continues today (Benjamin & Dillette, 2021; Tucker et al., 2023). New reports revealed Black travelers spent an estimated \$109 billion on travel. For DMOs seeking new travel segments, Black travelers should certainly be on their list of groups to target (Benjamin et al., 2022). From an ethical standpoint, many industries, including tourism have neglected to understand their organization's responsibility to race. Historically, issues of race and business have created a tangled web of injustice which only stand to reinforce harmful stereotypes and reemphasize inequitable power dynamics (Logan, 2021; Tucker et al., 2023). As it becomes more common for organizations to speak about injustice, the perceived legitimacy of DMO initiatives needs to be strong in order for current and future efforts to be successful. In other words, DMOs need to understand whether

the groups they wish to support view their efforts (as well as their existence) as legitimate, then subsequently design and develop appropriate initiatives for those groups.

DMO engagement in destination social advocacy emphasizes the role of legitimacy in the management of strategic issues whereby organizational behavior is legitimized by individual perceptions of “how that behavior fits within societal and/or stakeholder group beliefs about the ways in which the organization should behave” (Dodd & Supa, 2014, p. 3). However, before we can understand and measure the impact of the DMO statements, a standard measure of legitimacy must first be developed. Thus, the purpose of this study is to develop a reliable and valid scale to measure the legitimacy judgements of Black tourists toward DMOs. Specifically, we ask: How do Black travelers view the legitimacy of DMOs? While a small number of scales focusing on legitimacy judgments have been developed in existing literature, they do not attend to the unique nature of DMOs which differ considerably from an independent firm, nor do they consider the role of race in establishing such evaluations. Given the rise in DEI related initiatives and the central role DMOs play in the industry, this study and its efforts to create the Black Travelers DMO Legitimacy Scale (BTDLs) is both timely and crucial.

Literature Review

DMOs, Legitimacy, and the Black Traveler

DMOs must navigate a host of stakeholders, including local residents, politicians, the travel industry, and the various travel market segments (Pike & Page, 2014) amidst unpredictable and seismic social and political shifts (Bogren & Sörensson, 2021). Recognizing the DMO’s role as both initiators and mediators, Volgger and Pechlaner (2014) suggest DMOs approach their tasks through the use of stakeholder management strategies which may include open dialogue

that facilitates information exchange and the successful coordination of action plans. Each of the entities with whom DMOs interact must see them as a legitimate part of the industry and of society (Pike & Page, 2014).

The Black American traveler is a seemingly new travel market segment with whom DMOs are desperately seeking to engage when in fact it has been a robust market for over 100 years (Tucker et al., 2003). Longstanding misconceptions about this group have perpetuated stereotypes of non-participation within the industry. For years academic research posited that Black participation in certain activities differed from their White counterparts due to socio-economic status, culture, and discrimination (Carter, 2008; Lee, 2023). However more recent work showcased early engagement, in the industry, through the creation of parallel institutions made for and managed by Black innovators, a necessary feature to ensure safety from harmful segregation laws (Tucker et al., 2023). Equally as important as the availability of safe spaces is how a destination approaches diversity and representation in tourism marketing. According to Ivey-Walker (2021), 54% of Black U.S. travelers surveyed stated they were more likely to visit a destination if Black travelers were represented in marketing materials. Unfortunately, destination marketing targeting Black travelers has been limited, often forcing Black travelers to create their own resources for relevant and reliable tourism information (Dillette & Benjamin, 2021; Tucker et al., 2023).

Engagement in advocacy work is just one way to connect with historically marginalized groups. DMOs are missing an opportunity to share narratives that resonate with and attract the Black travel market. Filling this gap will require DMOs to learn more about this market and engage in dialogue about what this means for their destination, both internally and externally

(Dillette & Benjamin, 2021) ensuring trust and transparency are central to their work (Abou-Shouk, 2018).

Legitimacy as Theoretical Paradigm

Legitimacy is a fundamental aspect of organizational studies. First introduced by Max Weber, legitimacy is considered paramount to understanding an organization's performance and survival (Weber, 1968). Given its long history in organizational research, it is not surprising that the definition of legitimacy has evolved through a number of transformations and expansions (see Deephouse et al., 2017 for a full review of legitimacy). Nevertheless, Suchman's (1995) definition is generally the most accepted. He states that legitimacy is "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (p. 574). This definition has been well received because it is broad enough to be generalizable, it emphasizes the importance of actors as an evaluator of legitimacy (Suddaby, et al., 2017), and it acknowledges the role of the social construction of social judgments. Suchman (1995) emphasizes that "legitimacy is dependent on a collective audience, yet independent of particular observers" (p. 574). Thus, the judgement of one person is not likely to influence an organization's legitimacy, but the collective judgements of like-minded people could in fact impact an organization's perceived legitimacy. This is an important distinction when studying individual legitimacy judgements because it is the coalescing of perceptions that will likely influence the subsequent actions of an organization (Bitektine et al., 2020; Tost, 2011).

Legitimacy can be further understood through institutional and resource-dependence theories (Fig. 1). An institutional theory approach to legitimacy considers how society "looks in" on their organizations whereas a resource-dependence perspective considers how organizations

“look out” in an effort to acquire vital resources (Suchman, 1995). The institutional approach rests on the connection between an organization and its environment. In order to survive, an organization will conform to certain demands and acceptable norms; this process is known as isomorphism wherein organizations seek to resemble others who are facing the same environmental pressures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Conversely, resource-dependence theory emphasizes heterogeneity as a key function of performance. Instead of conforming to their environment, resource-dependence theory considers an organization’s strategic choices and how they can be used to uniquely maximize their current strengths in order to meet their goals and obtain resources (Chung et al., 2016; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

Despite specific differences separating these approaches, common elements exist. Both approaches agree that an organization is constrained by external pressures that must be assessed in order to explore its relationship with its environment. They also emphasize the ways in which an organization gains legitimacy from stakeholders (Hessels & Terjesen, 2010). Although valuable individually, there is growing support for incorporating both theoretical approaches in the exploration of legitimacy. Suchman (1995) noted that an integrated approach would allow for “a larger picture that highlights both the ways in which legitimacy acts like a resource as well as a taken-for-granted belief system” (p. 577). The present-day context that spurred this study is indicative of the real-life quandaries’ organizations like DMOs face that require both an inward and outward examination of legitimacy. Organizations must consider the fluctuating environment while also managing and meeting the needs of its constituents (Suchman, 1995; Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019). Specific to this study, in order to establish and maintain legitimacy among Black travelers, DMOs must be attentive to the externalities that are beyond their control and manage them appropriately (Suchman, 1995; Chung et al., 2016). In this way, legitimacy is

considered to be critical in the development of perceptions of a destination as well as during the travel decision making process.

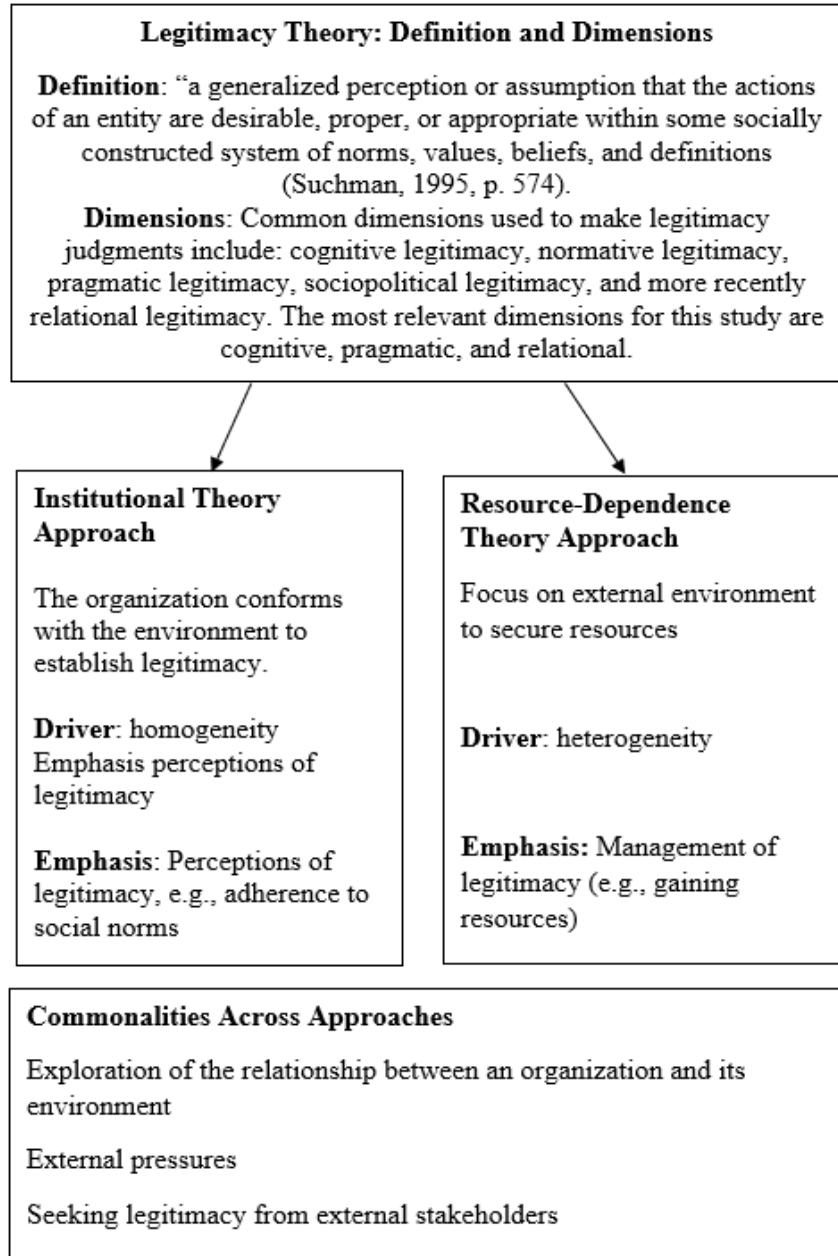


Fig. 1. Legitimacy Theory Paradigm

Measuring and Typologizing Legitimacy

A number of measures have been applied in a variety of contexts, adding to the complexity of legitimacy over time, including the cattle industry (Elsbach, 1994), rural cooperatives (Foreman & Whetten, 2002), and the gambling industry (Humphreys & Latour, 2013). (For a complete review of the various contexts, see Deephouse et al., 2017). The aforementioned studies explore legitimacy through a variety of dimensions. The increased variability has made the study of legitimacy quite complicated (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019), expanding the dimensions to include cognitive, normative, pragmatic, socio-political and most recently relational (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Review of previous studies of legitimacy

Author(s)	Description of Legitimacy Judgement	Cognitive Legitimacy	Normative (moral) Legitimacy	Pragmatic Legitimacy	Socio-political Legitimacy	Relational Legitimacy
Elsbach (1994)	Judgements of the cattle industry		X			
Foreman & Whetten (2002)	Perceptions of members of rural co-ops	X		X		
Tost (2011)	Conceptual framework of legitimacy judgments	X	X	X		X
Humphreys & Latour (2013)	Impact of media framing on perceptions of online gambling industry	X	X			
Chung, Berger, & DeCoster (2016)	Overall legitimacy of pharmaceutical industry	X	X			
Alexiou & Wiggins (2019)	General	X	X	X		
Bitektine, Hill, Song, & Vandenberghe (2020)	Organizational legitimacy, reputation, and status	X			X	

Note: Chung et al. (2016) measures legitimacy as a unidimensional construct, but item review indicates aspects of cognitive and normative legitimacy.

A review of the literature reveals cognitive and pragmatic legitimacy as the most commonly used, parsimonious, and well-refined dimensions of legitimacy (Elsbach, 1994; Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Humphreys & Latour, 2013; Suchman, 1995). Recently, the relational dimension has gained attention due to its emphasis on the relationship between organizations and consumers (Tost, 2011). This dimension seems especially important for issues of race and legitimacy. Due to the consistent reliability and validity of cognitive and pragmatic legitimacy dimensions and the unique applicability and potential contribution of relational legitimacy, this study focuses on the legitimacy judgments of Black travelers through these three dimensions (Fig. 1).

Cognitive legitimacy supports an organization's inclusion in a specific class or category (Suchman, 1995) and is "predicated on how well the organization fits in established cognitive categories in evaluators' minds" (Bitektine et al., 2020, p. 109). Black travelers will evaluate cognitive legitimacy based on how well they view DMOs as a part of the tourism industry. Pragmatic legitimacy is explained as an exchange-based assessment of the value an organization provides its stakeholders (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Suchman, 1995). Individuals are likely to grant legitimacy to an organization whose presence is more valuable than its absence and is fulfilling the needs of the individual or group (Tost, 2011). Black travelers will base their pragmatic legitimacy judgment on the direct or indirect benefit they gain from DMOs. Lastly, the most recently identified dimension comes from social psychology and introduces relational legitimacy as a factor in individual judgments. Relational legitimacy is conferred based on an organization's ability to affirm an individual's social identity (Tost, 2011). Relational legitimacy argues that individuals are attracted to brands that match their beliefs. This is of obvious importance as we look to create a way to measure how Black travelers, a commonly overlooked

consumer group, feel that DMOs recognize their presence as a valuable. Black travelers will evaluate relational legitimacy based on how well they feel DMOs affirm their social identity. Each of the three dimensions play a crucial role in measuring the legitimacy of a DMO so that it may determine future actions that will impact the judgements from Black travelers.

While the current research offers promising steps forward in understanding how individuals grant legitimacy, there are critiques that the theory is incomplete and needs further refinement. Leading researchers in this area continue to encourage exploration from a variety of contexts and perspectives (Deephouse et al., 2017). Others have expressed that while expansion of the theory is helpful, refinement toward parsimony is also important (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Bitektine et al., 2020).

The examination of Black travelers' perceptions of legitimacy of DMOs is an ideal response to these critiques and fit for this line of research for several reasons. First, it is widely recognized that legitimacy can change over time and context (Deephouse et al., 2017). Given its popularity, tourism generally operates under a taken-for-granted status in that it is not typically scrutinized by the public. However, the current sociopolitical landscape considered for this study places a heightened awareness of DMOs and their actions, leaving them open to scrutiny by Black travelers. With this new spotlight, it begs the question, how do Black travelers view the legitimacy of DMOs?

Second, it is common for legitimacy studies to explore the cognitive and pragmatic dimensions (and rightfully so), but less is known about the influence of emotions, feelings, and social identity on legitimacy judgments (Deephouse et al., 2017; Tost, 2011). Thus, the exploration of legitimacy using cognitive, pragmatic, and relational dimensions will not only examine how Black travelers conceptualize DMOs as an appropriate entity within the tourism

industry (cognitive), how they view the actions of DMOs as appropriately meeting individual needs (pragmatic), but also how they see themselves reflected in the organization and its actions (relational).

Third, the Black travel market has been an historically underrepresented segment within the tourism industry. Continued exclusion and/or misrepresentation makes for missed opportunities to mend those relationships and connect with this lucrative demographic (Dillette & Benjamin, 2022; Tucker et al., 2023). Through the development of a reliable measure for legitimacy, this study will provide baseline knowledge for the ways in which Black travelers view DMOs as a central organization within the industry, thereby allowing for opportunities to engage deeper with Black travelers.

Methodology

Measurement scales are useful tools that enable researchers to evaluate abstract constructs (Morgado et al., 2018). This study uses the step-by-step process for scale development as described by DeVellis (2016) similar to many tourism researchers such as Soulard et al. (2021): “1) determine clearly what it is you want to measure, 2) generate an item pool, 3) determine the format for measurement, 4) have the initial item pool reviewed by experts, 5) consider inclusion of validation items, 6) administer items to a development sample, 7) evaluate the items, and 8) optimize the scale length” (DeVellis, 2016, pp. 105-150). This method is especially beneficial for this study because of the emphasis placed on legitimacy theory during measure development. The following is a description of each step coupled with the approach used in this study.

The Scale Development Process:

Step 1: Determine Clearly What to Measure

The first step in the measurement process is to construct a clear definition of the construct of interest. Soulard et al. (2021) note the importance of this step as it assists the researcher in writing relevant items. Using the four-stage process presented by Podsakoff et al. (2016) the researcher was able to evaluate and select the best definition and dimensions of legitimacy outlined in the literature review.

Step 2: Generate an Item Pool

The purpose of this step is to create a set of items that effectively represent the construct (DeVellis, 2016). Given the existing research on legitimacy coupled with access to expertise on Black travelers, a deductive approach was used to generate items for the existing study (Table 1). The review of extant literature is noted as a valuable step in the process of item generation because it provides information on how dimensions and/or constructs have previously been defined (Churchill, 1979).

In addition to the literature, the authors considered item generation from their particular positionalities and their relationship to the topics being discussed. For example, the lead author identifies as a Black, female researcher and traveler. By virtue of her interest in these topics, she is in tune with current discussions related to diversity and inclusion within the tourism industry, a feature that was particularly useful in the development of the relational legitimacy items. The second author is a White, Appalachian female who holds advanced degrees in sociology. She has a passion for issues of equity and diversity. The third author is a male of Asian heritage. He has a PhD in business administration and is interested in understanding the relationship between DMOs and their stakeholders. The fourth author identifies as a Black female with previous research on diversity in the hospitality industry. She brings a unique and valuable perspective

that sheds light on the experiences and challenges encountered by people from diverse backgrounds.

The initial item pool included five items for cognitive legitimacy (from Bitektine et al., 2020; Foreman & Whetten, 2002), 11 items for pragmatic legitimacy (from Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Foreman & Whetten, 2002) and eight items for relational legitimacy, created based on the description of the dimension provided by Tost (2011). The initial item pool resulted in a total of 24 items.

Step 3: Determine the Format for Measurement

After the initial item pool is generated, the format for measuring the items is determined (DeVellis, 2016). Due to its prevalence in both tourism studies (Dolnicar et al., 2011) and legitimacy measurement studies (Chung et al., 2016; Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Bitektine et al., 2020), a 7-point Likert-scale is used. Respondents will select their agreement to declarative statement stems (e.g., It makes sense to have organizations like this in society) using options that range from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Step 4: Initial Item Pool Review by Experts

Next, DeVellis (2016) suggests a team of experts review the list of items and definitions through several iterations. In this case, the experts consisted of tourism professors (n=4), a sociology professor (n=1), destination managers (n=2), and scale development experts (n=3). Each received a copy of legitimacy dimension definitions and corresponding items to review. The experts reviewed the instrument for clarity and fit of the items using the provided definitions as a guide. Specifically, this process required attention to the wording of each item and assurance that the items aligned with the identified dimension (DeVellis, 2016). Verbal feedback was

obtained from the experts which resulted in robust conversations about the item pool development process. The item pool can be found in Appendix A.

Step 5: Consideration of the Inclusion of Validation Items

The inclusion of validation items helps to determine if there are flaws or concerns with social desirability (DeVellis, 2016). One way to detect response bias is to use instructed response items whereby a statement is included that instructs respondents to follow a specific action (e.g., select agree). For example, one instructed response asked to “Please select the color purple” from a list of five colors. Individuals who selected the wrong color were automatically excluded from the study. Additionally, as recommended by Podsakoff et al (2012), we tried to avoid ambiguous language. One expert suggested that the survey introduction include a description of Destination Marketing Organizations and an explanation of how this is interchangeable with the more colloquial term “tourism office” to offer terminology with which respondents may be more familiar. A description including the definition, types of tourism offices, and examples of when one may have utilized a tourism office’s services were included in the introduction and the term “tourism office” was used throughout the survey.

Step 6: Administer Items to a Development Sample

After generating and evaluating the items, a pilot sample is administered to assess their effectiveness. The literature on sampling suggests recruiting a large enough sample to prevent subject variance, typically over 300 participants (DeVellis, 2016). However, for initial scale development, where the goal is to gauge the comprehensiveness of the items, a sample of 100-200 respondents is recommended (Johnson and Brooks, 2010). For this study, the target was 200 respondents.

The scale was developed on the Qualtrics platform and pilot-tested with Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Screening questions were used to verify the respondents' eligibility for participation. For example, "Are you a U.S. citizen?" was used to gauge citizenship, whereas "What is your year of birth?" was included to ensure participants were at least 18 years old. Individuals outside of the USA and under the age of 18 were not permitted to participate. Participants receive \$.50 for completing the survey. Data analysis was conducted using R, an open-source software program (Luo et al., 2019). After data cleaning, a total of 216 responses qualified for analysis.

The resulting pilot sample was comprised of 129 male and 87 female respondents between the ages of 20-70 from 39 different states. The majority of respondents (n=146) reported having a bachelor's degree, followed by 45 who indicated having a post graduate degree. The largest number of respondents identified as White (n=178) followed by Asian (n=26), and Black (n=8). One respondent identified as American Indian/Alaska Native and one additional respondent identified as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. The small n of Black respondents to the pilot is less than ideal but it does provide a comparative sample by which we can observe differences and similarities between Black travelers and other groups.

Step 7: Evaluate the Items

After administering the items to a pilot sample, the next step is to evaluate them. This process determines which items are appropriate and constitute the scale. When evaluating the items, it is important to look for a "high correlation with the true score of the latent variable" (DeVellis, 2016, p. 140). High correlations among items indicate higher reliability of individual items, which is particularly important because of the items' impact on the scale. Next, variance levels are considered. Like correlations, high item variance scores are desirable (DeVellis, 2016).

Item means are also considered during this process. Item responses on this scale range from 1-7, with 1 corresponding to “strongly disagree” and 7 corresponding to “strongly agree.” Thus, a mean score near 4 is considered ideal. During this phase, items of concern are noted, but not removed until after evaluating using EFA and CFA. Each of the evaluative features are considered as the researcher moves into the next phase. The pilot sample item means ranged from 5.38 to 5.81, somewhat high but typical for this type of research. The item standard deviations ranged from .92-1.24, well within the recommended 2:1 ratio (DeVellis, 2016).

Step 8: Optimize the Length of the Scale

The goal of this step is to optimize the scale length by removing items that are considered low performing. One of the processes associated with this step is conducting an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) which enables the researcher to identify the appropriate number of factors as well as the factor structure to be used in the final scale (DeVellis, 2016).

For this phase, a second sample was collected, this time using Prolific, a crowdsourcing platform similar to MTurk but built with more robust stop-gaps and pre-screening options as well as greater access to more diverse populations (Palan & Schitter, 2018). Due to the small number of Black respondents collected on MTurk during the pilot study, Prolific’s pre-screening function offered a way to ensure the survey would be distributed to the individuals registered with the demographic features necessary for this study (Peer et al., 2017). This feature provided stronger assurances that the survey would be distributed to Black Americans, a feature not currently available via MTurk. The following section details EFA and CFA processes and results.

Results

Data cleaning and descriptive statistics

Data for the EFA were collected May 2023. A total of 269 responses were collected. Data were extracted and entered into R for data cleaning. Using the same processes described in step 6, the sample was reduced to 203 usable surveys. Descriptive statistics indicate that 100% of respondents identified as Black/African American representing 33 states. Gender representation included 107 participants who identified as male, 93 as female, and 2 as non-binary. One participant preferred not to answer. Participants ages ranged from 18-84. The largest age category consisted of individuals between 25-34 (n=60), followed by 35-44 (n=52), 18-24 (n=38), 45-54 (n=36), 55-64 (n=12), 65-74 (n=4), and 75-84 (n=1). Several participants had a 4-year degree (n=82).

The data for CFA was collected June 2023. A total of 313 responses were collected resulting in 298 usable surveys. Again, 100% of participants identified as Black/African American and represented a total of 41 states. Gender representation included 144 participants who identified as male, 151 as female, and 3 as non-binary. Participants ages ranged from 18-84 with subgroup representations as follows: 25-34 (n=89), 45-54 (n=74), 35-44 (n=60), 18-24 (n=37), 55-64 (n=26), 65-74 (n=10), and 75-84 (n=2). Most participants had a 4-year degree (n=129). A full set of descriptive statistics can be found in Table 2.

Table 2.*Descriptive statistics for EFA and CFA samples*

Characteristics	EFA	CFA
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
Gender		
Male	107	144
Female	93	151
Non-binary	2	3
Prefer not to say	1	N/A
Age		
18-24	38	37
25-34	60	89
35-44	52	60
45-54	36	74
55-64	12	26
65-74	4	10
75-84	1	2
Education		
Less than high school	3	N/A
High school	28	33
Some college	49	68
2-year degree	23	27
4-year degree	82	129
Post graduate degree	15	39
Doctorate	2	2
U.S. States Represented	33	41

Exploratory Factor Analysis

To determine sampling adequacy, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was calculated. Analysis revealed a KMO = 0.9, which is considered marvelous according to the categories outlined by Kaiser and Rice (1974). All individual values for KMO are well above the acceptable limit of 0.5 (Kaiser & Rice, 1974). A corresponding Bartlett's test suggests the sample is significant, $\chi^2 = 168.57$, $df=15$, $p<0.001$.

Moving forward with optimization, a parallel analysis was run using principal axis factoring (PA-PAF). The resulting scree plot offered a visual representation of the inflection point which helped determine the number of factors that should be extracted (Finch & French, 2015). Consistent with the common factor analysis approach, a scree plot was used to identify inflection points within the data which would indicate the number of factors needed to be extracted (Finch & French, 2015). The analysis suggests a three-factor solution.

Another PA-PAF was conducted with an oblique (promax) rotation specifying a three-factor solution representing relational, cognitive, and pragmatic legitimacy dimensions (see Table 3). The three factors explain 58% of the variance. Initial analysis of reliability is measured using Cronbach's alpha. Reliability results were as follows: relational legitimacy $\alpha = 0.93$, cognitive legitimacy $\alpha = 0.74$, and pragmatic legitimacy $\alpha = 0.84$. All results for alpha are above the recommended threshold of .70 (Field et al., 2012).

Table 3.
Results from Exploratory Factor Analysis

Factor/Items	Factor Loading	Mean	SD
Factor 1: Relational Legitimacy ($\alpha = .93$)			
RL2. I feel appreciated by tourism offices.	.96	4.58	1.30
RL1. I feel recognized/valued by tourism offices.	.95	4.47	1.33
RL3. I feel seen by tourism offices	.84	4.50	1.43
RL7. Tourism offices make me feel as though I belong.	.69	4.50	1.32
RL4. People like me are important to tourism offices.	.66	4.98	1.40
RL5. People like me are represented in tourism offices	.64	4.41	1.45
RL6. People like me are represented in the tourism offices' products/services.	.57	4.43	1.42
RL8. Tourism offices make me feel as though I am welcome in their destination. (X)	.44	5.00	1.23
Factor 2: Cognitive Legitimacy			
CL2. It makes sense for tourism offices to be part of the tourism industry.	.68	6.08	0.91
CL4. It makes sense to have organizations like this in communities.	.63	5.80	1.01
CL3. Tourism offices are complementary to other organizations in the tourism industry.	.58	5.73	0.99
CL1. Tourism offices are a common organization that operates in the tourism industry.	.43	5.63	1.08
CL5. I believe that tourism offices are necessary. (X)	.35	5.37	1.23
Factor 3: Pragmatic Legitimacy			
PL2. Tourism offices create value for tourists.	.75	5.58	1.08
PL4. Activities of tourism offices benefit tourists.	.72	5.76	0.99
PL5. Tourism offices understand the needs and concerns of tourists.	.72	5.64	0.94
PL1. Tourism offices have employees with excellent professional skills.	.49	5.01	1.03

Factor 1 represents relational legitimacy which indicates the ways in which Black travelers feel DMOs affirm their identity. Individuals will likely evaluate an organization affirmatively if they are “seen as being responsive to the individual or constituency’s larger interests” (Tost, 2011, p. 692). As shown in the items that make up this dimension, items related to being recognized, valued and seen are important to Black travelers. The relatively high means indicate areas of

strength for DMOs. Based on the responses, areas of importance including recognition and representation are key features which can lead to feelings of belongingness. Interestingly, taking into account the low factor loading for RL8 (i.e., *Tourism offices make me feel as though I am welcome in their destination*), it stands to reason that recognition and representation do not always lead to feelings of welcomeness. Topics of representation and welcomeness have long been conversations involving Black participation in travel and tourism. Black Americans have extensive experience in creating their own spaces to ensure they can engage with and in the tourism industry (Tucker et al., 2023). More recently, Black travelers have begun to use social media as means of showcasing their tourism engagement and to share their travel experiences with the social identity of race at the forefront (Dillette et al., 2019).

The second factor is associated with cognitive legitimacy. As a whole, this dimension suggests that DMOs are well integrated in both the tourism industry and communities. Results reveal that their overall existence is well established and aligns with the needs and desires within the industry and communities. Additionally, the product and services offered by DMOs make sense within the broader tourism industry. While there is clearly a logical explanation for the existence of DMOs, the relatively low factor loading associated with their necessity could be due to the vast array of tourism planning resources available today (e.g., social media). Nevertheless, the cognitive dimension firmly aligns with the work of Alexiou and Wiggins (2019), Bitektine et al., (2020), Elsbach (1994), and Foreman and Whetten (2002). The establishment of DMOs cognitive legitimacy speaks to the familiarity (taken-for-granted status) they have within the industry representing its institutionalization over time (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019).

The final factor is associated with pragmatic legitimacy. The collective results of this dimension emphasize the value DMOs create for tourists as well as the importance of employees

who understand their target market. Research suggests that in order to be granted pragmatic legitimacy, individuals (tourists) must receive something of value or the resulting exchange must benefit them in some way (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019). Thus, based on these items, value is derived from DMOs' ability to create products, services, and activities that meet the needs of Black travelers. Cultivating this value exchange is the work of competent employees.

With the reliability confirmed and extensive review of the dimensions completed, scale optimization can commence. Item reduction was led by both data (factor loadings below .50) and theory. The relational item '*Tourism offices make me feel as though I am welcome in their destination*' was removed due to its factor loading of .44 and cross loading with pragmatic legitimacy. The cognitive item '*I believe that tourism offices are necessary*' was also removed due to its low factor loading. Several pragmatic legitimacy items were removed due to the indistinguishability between other dimensions as well as a failure to load at .5 or above (7 items), moving the scale toward a more manageable and parsimonious form. While the pragmatic item, '*Tourism offices have employees with excellent professional skills*' fell short statistically (factor loading of .49), it made sense in terms of content validity, so it remained part of the scale for the next phase. A total of 15 items were retained for use during the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

In order to confirm the three-factor structure represented by relational, cognitive, and pragmatic legitimacy (see Table 4), a CFA was conducted, using the Lavaan package in R as well as the WLSMV estimator. Robust fit statistics suggest overall good fit with $\chi^2=62.958$, $df=87$, $p\text{-value} < .001$. Additionally, comparative fit index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) were reviewed. Hu and Bentler (1999) suggest results for both should be greater than .90. Results

for the Black Traveler DMO Legitimacy Scale (BTDLS) reveal CFI = 0.99 and TLI = 0.98. Values for root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) are acceptable up to .08 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The BTDLS reveals RMSEA = .04 and SRMR = .57. Again, reliability is conducted using Cronbach's alpha. Results indicate acceptable reliability for dimensions represented by seven item relational legitimacy ($\alpha=.94$), four item cognitive legitimacy ($\alpha=.81$), and four item pragmatic legitimacy ($\alpha=.86$).

Table 4.

Results from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Factor/Items	Mean	SD	AVE	CR
Factor 1: Relational Legitimacy ($\alpha = .94$)			0.62	0.87
RL2. I feel appreciated by tourism offices.	4.58	1.44		
RL1. I feel recognized/valued by tourism offices.	4.51	1.45		
RL3. I feel seen by tourism offices	4.43	1.53		
RL7. Tourism offices make me feel as though I belong.	4.58	1.44		
RL4. People like me are important to tourism offices.	4.93	1.49		
RL5. People like me are represented in tourism offices	4.51	1.48		
RL6. People like me are represented in the tourism offices' products/services.	4.43	1.42		
Factor 2: Cognitive Legitimacy ($\alpha = .81$)			0.52	0.81
CL2. It makes sense for tourism offices to be part of the tourism industry.	6.09	0.92		
CL4. It makes sense to have organizations like this in communities.	5.93	0.98		
CL3. Tourism offices are complementary to other organizations in the tourism industry.	5.69	1.04		
CL1. Tourism offices are a common organization that operates in the tourism industry.	5.66	1.13		
Factor 3: Pragmatic Legitimacy ($\alpha = .86$)			0.68	0.94
PL2. Tourism offices create value for tourists.	5.78	1.09		
PL4. Activities of tourism offices benefit tourists.	5.79	1.03		
PL5. Tourism offices understand the needs and concerns of tourists.	5.59	1.16		
PL1. Tourism offices have employees with excellent professional skills.	5.20	1.09		

Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Convergent validity refers to how well two measures adequately capture the essence of a construct (Carlson & Herdman, 2010). To gauge convergent validity, researchers can use the average variance extracted (AVE). This score should be above .50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). AVE scores for the BTDLs are all above the threshold with relational legitimacy at .62, cognitive legitimacy at .52, and pragmatic legitimacy at .68. These results suggest good convergent validity. Discriminant validity is used to determine “which measures of theoretically distinct constructs are unrelated empirically to one another” (Shaffer et al., 2015). Acceptable terms associated with discriminant validity suggest AVE values should be higher than the squared correlation between each dimension (Farrell & Rudd, 2009). In Table 5, this value is shown on the top diagonal and is higher than the squared correlations, thus indicating good discriminant validity and high significance given the p-value less than .001.

Table 5.
Convergent and discriminant validity correlations

Factors	<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>	<i>F3</i>
Relational Legitimacy	0.788		
Cognitive Legitimacy	0.284***	0.727	
Pragmatic Legitimacy	0.570***	0.389***	0.824

*** $p < 0.001$

Note: Squared correlations are on the top portion of the matrix. The correlations are located in the lower half of the matrix.

Discussion and Future Research

This paper sought to develop a reliable and valid scale to measure the legitimacy judgements of Black tourists toward DMOs and answer the question: How do Black travelers

view the legitimacy of DMOs? To do so, the BTDLs was developed based on existing dimensions of legitimacy and previous measurement scales (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Bitektine et al., 2020, Tost, 2011). The resulting scale consists of three dimensions: cognitive, pragmatic, and relational legitimacy.

Theoretically, this work supports the notion that legitimacy should not be viewed as a set of competing ideals, but rather as a multi-dimensional construct which influences the way individuals perceive an organization and their actions (Tost, 2011). The underlying factors that influence such perceptions extend existing studies by bringing together the foundational aspects of institutional and resource-dependence theories demonstrating how legitimacy can work as a resource while also being taken for granted (Suchman, 1995). Taken from the individual's point of view (i.e., the Black traveler), this study offers an important theoretical contribution in that it is the first to address issues of racial identity in the evaluation of legitimacy judgments. The prominence of the relational dimension suggests that evaluators make judgments based on the organization's ability to affirm their identity. For Black travelers this was encapsulated in their desire to feel recognized, valued, important, and seen. Utilizing legitimacy theory has supported previous work that has revealed that Black travelers want to be represented and feel as though they belong while adding to the conversation with a well-developed theory-based scale that includes a relational component (Dillette et al., 2019; Tost, 2011).

Results from this study offer important practical implications for DMOs. First, Black travelers want and need to feel valued, as evidenced by the strong showing for the item *people like me are important to tourism offices*. DMOs would benefit from surveying their communities or recent travelers with the BTDLs gain a better understanding of how their destination is perceived. Further emphasizing representation in products and services, DMOs should strive to

identify existing Black owned businesses, initiatives, and spaces with whom they could partner to elevate visibility. They should also be looking for examples of best practices. For example, parks and other outdoor spaces have historically been considered contested for Black Americans. Recently, in an effort to debunk preconceived notions about such spaces and the leisure activities of Black travelers, two organizations, Black Folks Camp Too and Spacious Skies Campgrounds, partnered with DMOs, among other organizations, to identify 14 campgrounds across various states that are committed to equity (Black Folks Camp Too, 2023). Such partnerships can go a long way to establishing trust within spaces where Black travelers have traditionally not existed.

Second, Black travelers want to feel seen. Items 3, 4, and 5 from the relational component of the BTDLs (*I feel seen by tourism offices; People like me are important to tourism offices; People like me are represented in tourism offices*) strengthen and support what has been previously revealed in earlier work (Dillette et al., 2019; Dillette & Benjamin, 2022). Perhaps the most commonly discussed topic related to Black travel is representation (or lack thereof) in tourism marketing (Tucker et al., 2023). The continued exclusion of minorities in marketing perpetuates normative standards of power and privilege (Davis, 2018). As a result of this exclusion, Black travelers turned to social media to represent themselves in destinations across the globe, thereby challenging notions of racialized space. Destinations seeking to attract Black travelers would benefit from utilizing the BTDLs to identify legitimacy strengths and weaknesses related to diversity marketing efforts, then develop partnerships with Black content creators who are astute in peer-to-peer marketing. For example, Visit Asheville, a DMO in the U.S., partnered with Nomadness Travel Tribe founder Evita Robinson to highlight Black and brown communities, entrepreneurs, and tourism businesses (Nomadness in Asheville, 2023). Partnering with content creators also offers an intersectional approach to Black travel that is

often missed. As Benjamin et al. (2022) note, Black travel is not monolithic and the use of the BTDLs in combination with various content creators can aid in the production of diverse viewpoints of tourism. Such an approach is likely to increase Black travelers view of a destination through increased relational legitimacy. Building trust with marginalized groups will take time, but through sustained efforts these relationships can be strengthened. While some DMOs may not have the budget to for large scale partnerships, a number of these initiatives can be accomplished at little or no cost (e.g., engagement in the community, searching social media hashtags).

Interestingly despite affirming tourism office's ability to recognize and represent Black travelers, the relational item, '*Tourism offices make me feel as though I am welcome in their destination*' did not adequately load. This suggests that while representation matters and is acknowledged in certain contexts, it may not lead to feelings of welcomeness. Tourism offices must take into account the wide range of experiences tourists have once in their destination, many of which may be out of their control. While every tourist's experience will be different, DMOs can help by creating a community culture which emphasizes high standards of quality customer service across hospitality and tourism businesses within their destination. Listening to and building upon visitor feedback will also aid in building a positive reputation for the destination.

Lastly, given the strength of relational and pragmatic components of the BTDLs, findings indicate that DMOs would benefit from diversifying their staff. Black travelers want to know that the employees of tourism offices are representations of themselves and have excellent professional skills. A part of this stems from the employee's ability to effectively understand and meet the needs of Black travelers. The authors recognize that every destination cannot

quickly change the racial makeup of their staff, but creating strategic plans for recruitment strategies is one step in the right direction. DMOs (and the organizations they oversee) should consider from where they recruit. This may include partnerships with minority serving institutions or engagement with organizations like the National Society for Minorities in Hospitality.

As the above-mentioned examples indicate, in addition to this important work on scale development, future studies may benefit from the use of combining the scale with qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups to understand more deeply specific activities or strategies DMOs have used (or should use) to elucidate these feelings from Black travelers. In addition, DMOs could benefit from structured academic assessments of existing best practices.

Despite the contributions of the BTDLs, this work does have limitations. This existing study is based solely on a U.S. based population. Future studies targeting DMOs outside the U.S. as well as Black travelers from international destinations would also contribute to the literature in this area. Interestingly, when the scale was tested on a sample containing multiple races, there was difficulty in identifying dimensions that did not cross load with others. This indicates a need to test the scale across various under-served demographics including other racial groups, LGBTQ+ segments, and persons with disabilities. Lastly, although MTurk is a popular method for collecting data, there is some concern that respondent's racial identification and familiarity with tourism offices is based on their self-identification rather than a sorting feature built into the system just as they do for age or geographic location. Additionally, while we did ask respondents about their use of tourism offices to assist with travel planning, we have no way of verifying their responses. Future studies may seek to use other methods that allow for verification at the onset of the study.

This study is one of the first of its kind aimed at advancing work on the Black travel market and DMOs through the creation of unique scales, particularly in the area of legitimacy, so there is substantial opportunity for continued research. Much of the existing research on Black travelers focuses on how they experience the tourism industry. Future research should continue this important line of inquiry but there is also room to better understand how Black travelers view/judge various aspects of the industry (e.g., hotel brands), the role of authenticity particularly in the ways in which they communicate with Black travelers, and perceptions of destination safety and welcomeness. Like Tost (2011), this work considers legitimacy judgements to be fluid, therefore measuring Black travelers' sentiments at different touch points is crucial. Finally, following Chung et al. (2016), future studies should investigate manifestations of issue legitimacy, such as social advocacy statements, donations, marketing, hiring policies, and other key performance indicators in conjunction with organizational legitimacy. Given the industries heightened interest in DEI initiatives, a promising next step would be to elucidate the differences that exist between a stakeholder's expectations of an organization, the actions of an organization, and the stakeholder's perception of those actions (Lawrence et al., 1007) as it relates to such initiatives. A likely next step would be to use this scale in an experimental study meant to understand the legitimacy judgements of tourists, particular Black tourists on these actions. There is abundant room for growth and exploration in the area of the relationship between Black travelers and the tourism industry.

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Chapter 3: Online Advocacy: Exploring Black Travelers' Perceptions of DMO Social Advocacy Statements

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Abstract

In today's interconnected world, consumers seek organizations' public stance on social issues. Most recently destination marketing organizations (among other entities) expressed support for the Black community regarding racial justice. Current research lacks insight into ways in which Black travelers judge these efforts. This study uses a 2x2 experimental design to examine understand how Black travelers evaluate such statements. Additionally, this work explores the mediating role of relational legitimacy between advocacy statements and behavioral intentions. Findings indicate Black travelers find statements containing both an image and text to be the most appropriate form of digital advocacy. Relational legitimacy was a significant mediator between advocacy statements and behavioral intentions. This study advances social advocacy by demonstrating how such actions resonate with consumers. Organizations can leverage these findings to ensure their efforts demonstrate a clear connection between their work and the needs of the community they seek to support.

Introduction

Communication is an important tool for any organization and often involves a cadre of stakeholders (Berger et al., 2020). The traditional approach to communication between businesses and consumers is viewed as unidirectional whereby organizations seek to reach consumers directly as a means of influencing behavior. These methods rarely, if at all, offer an opportunity for consumers to engage in conversations with businesses. For over a decade, however, due to social media and other digital communications, such engagement has become a

two-way process thereby providing increased ways to facilitate conversations between businesses and customers (Yim, 2021). It is not surprising that it is considered an important strategy such that multiple communication practices are used by companies to manage or gain legitimacy. Conversely, if not implemented correctly, an organization and its actions may face scrutiny and risk losing legitimacy (Meyer & Scott, 1983).

Efforts to maintain open communication between businesses and their (potential) customers can be found across social media platforms within a number of industries. In tourism, destination marketing organizations (DMOs) regularly use social media to communicate with constituents including, but not limited to, residents and visitors. A common function of tourism related social media is the use of visual stimulants (e.g., photos, videos, gifs) to create an image of the destination for prospective visitors (Li, et al., 2023). Additionally, a quickly growing use of social media includes the sharing of organizational opinions on various socio-political issues (Yim, 2021; Sobande, 2024). For example, in an effort to show their support for the Black community after the public deaths of Black Americans and as a way to show their support for racial justice (Wertley & Baker, 2022), many tourism organizations joined the virtual social movement now known as Blackout Tuesday. Using the visual and textual features of the platform, tourism businesses posted a single black square, iterations thereof, and sometimes included a brief statement to demonstrate their public stance on racial injustice (Wertley & Baker, 2022). As Suchman (1995) notes, efforts such as this are examples of the ways in which organizations attempt to leverage communication to gain, maintain, or defend their legitimacy with certain targeted groups. While the current trend suggests that consumers are supportive of organizational actions that support diversity, equity, and inclusion responses to these types of online advocacy initiatives are varied (Im et al., 2023; Yim, 2023).

Few studies have examined the intersection of digital advocacy, business, and consumers, leaving a particular gap in understanding from the perspective of consumers. Wertley and Baker (2022) examined Twitter statements made by top U.S. based companies after the death of George Floyd. Wellman (2022) interviewed social media influencers to explore the ways in which they were able to effectively merge their everyday content with advocacy related posts. However, little research to date has been conducted targeting the actual thoughts and opinions of Black Americans. Thus, using the tourism industry as a contextual base, this study centers the opinions and evaluations of Black American travelers. Specifically, this work examines how Black American travelers' behavioral intentions are impacted by various types of social advocacy statements and whether a specific type of legitimacy known as relational legitimacy mediates this relationship. These statements include both textual and visual cues represented with a singular black square, black square accompanied with a written statement, a visual alone, or a visual accompanied with a written statement. Based on DMO expert input, the most recent work on legitimacy theory, and the findings of Tucker et al. (2023) which uncovered the importance of relational legitimacy, the following research question is posited: How does relational legitimacy mediate the relationship between racial justice advocacy statements and behavioral intentions? While these types of advocacy statements were developed and implemented in 2020, we unfortunately continue to witness events that call for advocacy statements and are likely to see more in the future. Thus, this research provides practical implications for DMOs as they seek to develop policies and strategic plans around future social media responses. Exploring different visual and textual characteristics extends the theoretical implications of relational legitimacy and social advocacy. Further, this study demonstrates how DMOs can be a powerful resource for stakeholders within a given destination through their communication and subsequent actions. As

organizations continue to connect with diverse segments of tourists, it will be imperative to address the gaps between the industry and historically marginalized groups (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

Literature review

The role of business in society

Explorations into the role of business and society have led to the often debated expectations of an organization's ability to impact social change (Wertley & Baker, 2022). The overarching idea behind such engagement is known as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and suggests businesses have a responsibility, beyond generating financial outputs, to ensure quality relationships with stakeholders. Businesses must also guarantee their actions do not negatively affect society (Logan, 2019). From a public relations standpoint, CSR related actions often include philanthropic announcements, sustainability reports, or volunteerism. However, despite these efforts and the good it can bring to society, the emphasis is still commonly on the company's interests (Wertley & Baker, 2022).

Due to the ambiguity of CSR, a new model known as public interest communication has emerged. Public interest communication has the goal of spurring on behavioral change and is commonly exhibited through organizational advocacy. Its emphasis on engaging in sociopolitical issues, shaping policy, and encouraging people to take action sets it apart from the popular yet controversial CSR (Wertley & Baker, 2022). The literature recognizes communication as a powerful legitimacy strategy, yet it can be a double-edged sword particularly for organizations engaged in organizational advocacy. Those who participate in this work must consider how their actions may please some but alienate others (Nielsen & Thomsen, 2018; Yim, 2021).

Destinations, race, and social responsibility

As previously mentioned, businesses in various industries participated in #BlackoutTuesday. In tourism, some of the primary entities engaged in these efforts were destination marketing organizations (DMOs). Unlike a singular for-profit business, a DMO has the responsibility to market the assets of an entire community, thereby helping to shape the destination's image in the minds of potential visitors (Tucker et al., 2023). Recognizing the need to distinguish the actions of a destination from a corporation, tourism researchers have begun to explore the concept of destination social responsibility, which emphasizes similar topics found in CSR but is specific to an entire destination (Su et al., 2018). Situating the advocacy statements associated with #BlackoutTuesday within a tourism industry context expands the discussion to include destinations, race, and social responsibility.

The role of race in organizations

An organization's responsibility to the role of race is rarely discussed and typically kept within the areas of labor, philanthropy, and consumerism. From a labor standpoint, much of the discussion is on creating a more diverse and inclusive workplace (Logan, 2019), with tourism literature emphasizing diversity management (Madera, 2013). Discussions of race are often seen in examples of corporate philanthropy, whereby organizations showcase their moral standing by donating money to under-resourced communities of color (Logan, 2019). Occasionally, discussions about race in relation to consumerism focus on messaging targeting the purchase intentions of specific demographic groups. The unifying themes among these topics are finances and profitability (Logan, 2019). Advocacy, however, requires organizations to think beyond the bottom line to include ethically and morally just frameworks that not only effectively communicate their stance, but ones that affirm the identities of the intended audience (Yim,

2021). For Black consumers, race continues to play a role in their preferences, experiences, and perspectives (Benjamin et al., 2022; Dillette et al., 2019). Black travelers are seeking evidence that the tourism industry is recognizing and addressing their diverse needs. A destination that advocates on their behalf is likely to be viewed favorably if done correctly. For a more complete discussion, see Benjamin et al., 2022; Dillette et al., 2019.

Legitimacy Theory

An organization's ability to be seen as a viable part of society hinges on legitimacy (Tost, 2011) which is defined as:

the generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions (Suchman, 1995, p. 574).

Organizations use a variety of practices including strategic communication methods to demonstrate their value to society. Individuals, in turn, use pre-existing standards to make judgments on these actions based on their personal values and expectations. To make these evaluations, individuals use various attributes linked to different dimensions of legitimacy.

The most common dimensions of legitimacy are pragmatic, moral, cognitive and relational (Deephouse et al., 2017). Pragmatic legitimacy is used to measure the communication between an organization and its stakeholders. Consumers grant pragmatic legitimacy based on how well an organization meets an individual's needs. For example, Tucker et al. (2023) found that Black travelers based pragmatic legitimacy on a DMO's ability to develop valuable activities, understand their needs, and employ skilled staff. Moral legitimacy focuses on the connection between organizational actions and the value system of stakeholders (Nielsen & Thomsen, 2018). Specifically, an individual's judgments are based on their degree of ethical

certainty, which impacts their evaluation of moral legitimacy (Tost, 2011). Cognitive legitimacy speaks to an organization's engagement in activities that are considered mainstream by business standards and societal norms. For example, Black travelers agree that DMOs and their activities are a relevant part of the tourism industry (Tucker et al., 2023b). Relational legitimacy focuses on an organization's ability to affirm one's social identities. Black travelers will evaluate relational legitimacy based on how well an organization recognizes and values aspects of their culture (Tost, 2011). Each of these forms of legitimacy are well-documented and developed, but relational legitimacy is the newest concept, and is somewhat under-studied. Additionally, as the social identity of race is central to this study, relational legitimacy is most relevant to this study. Past research in this area has placed relational legitimacy at the forefront of identity-related research (Treviño et al., 2014; Tyler, 1997). For these reasons, this was selected as the focal dimension used to explore racial justice advocacy by DMOs.

Relational Legitimacy

Relational legitimacy considers how people judge organizations based on identity, particularly regarding their group membership. In other words, individuals make judgments based on treatment related to their social identities (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Tyler, 1997). The more people identify with their group membership, the more likely their judgments will be based on relational attributes (Palmer et al., 2013).

Much of what is known about this dimension centers the interactions between authorities and subordinates. In this context, people relied on relational information more than any other dimension to explain their willingness to obey rules (Tyler, 1997; Tyler & Lind, 1992). In such situations, power dynamics are important as individuals also based their actions on perceived levels of integrity and care as experienced by authorities (Tost, 2011). With this in mind, Tyler

(1997) suggested organizations seeking to communicate identity relevant information should consider their role as neutral agents in the situation, the level of trustworthiness associated with their actions and recognition of the group's status (Tyler, 1997).

The early exploration of relational legitimacy described above focused on the relationship between individuals within an organization, thereby omitting the perspectives and judgment processes of unaffiliated members (Drori & Honig, 2013; Huy et al., 2014; Treviño et al., 2014). A resurgence in the interest of individual evaluators led Tost (2011) to introduce relational legitimacy as a valuable dimension for management research. This conceptual study formulated a three stage integrated model to enhance the comprehension of how individuals make legitimacy judgments and how they may change over time.

The model includes judgment formation, judgment use, and judgment reassessment. First, an individual forms a judgment about an organization or its actions. Tost (2011) found that most judgments are made quickly (i.e., passively) and tend to occur when an individual feels an organization's actions have met their expectations. However, in certain situations, individuals take a more evaluative approach, seeking additional information before making a final judgment. As previous literature suggests, people will place affirmative relational judgments on organizations whose actions are personally relevant. Judgments established during the formation stage are generally continued into the use stage, whereby people will enact specific behaviors based on legitimacy. Entities viewed as legitimate are supported, while those marked as illegitimate may be scrutinized. However, there are situations (e.g., Blackout Tuesday) that cause individuals to re-evaluate their initial judgments. This stage is known as the reassessment stage and is commonly when individuals push for change (Tost, 2011). This conceptual focus of legitimacy is particularly useful in understanding its connections to social identity related

judgments, however, it does not offer operational information to further examine relational legitimacy in specific contexts.

More recently, Tucker et al. (2023) began investigating legitimacy theory within the tourism industry and developed a reliable and valid scale showcasing relational legitimacy as a distinct dimension. This study was also the first to focus on the role of race in legitimacy evaluations. Results from participants identifying as Black/African American emphasized the need to feel appreciated, recognized/valued, seen, and important. Additionally, feelings of belongingness and representation in tourism offices and products/services were seen as important aspects of relational legitimacy. The current study seeks to continue the work of race, advocacy, and legitimacy by exploring how Black travelers evaluate the relational components of racial justice advocacy statements and how behavioral intentions are impacted.

Research Hypotheses

Issue Legitimacy

In the context of this study, issue legitimacy is defined as the public's perception that an issue is proper or appropriate for a certain type of organization to engage (Chung et al., 2016). Arguably it is important to first establish whether the sample population views participation in issues of race as appropriate before measuring their success in engaging in such issues. Both general organizational engagement as well as specific engagement by DMOs were measured to benchmark respondents' opinions about whether DMOs should be engaged in race-related social advocacy at all.

H1. Black travelers support for engagement in race-related social advocacy will be consistent whether initiated by organizations in general or by DMOs.

Advocacy Statements as an appropriate response

Recently, organizations used social media platforms to post advocacy statements, including variations of visual and textual messages, to publicly convey their stance on racial justice. In line with Yim (2021), this study suggests different racial justice statements will evoke varying levels of approval, with posts consisting of visual and text receiving higher appropriateness scores.

Existing research on advocacy statements, while limited, suggests that the content of such messages should include three components: the specific issue, an expression of solidarity, and commitment to action (Wertley & Baker, 2022). Similarly, the inclusion of concrete language (Park & Jiang, 2020), messages from CEOs (Brenstad & Sølvsnes, 2019), and action steps (Heffron, 2019) were also found to have a positive impact on consumers judgments of the statements and/or the company itself.

The above findings offer useful suggestions for crafting textual messages, but are less insightful when considering what type of imagery should be used when advocating for a topic via social media. With a lack of information in this specific area, we turn to research focused on the use of photos and image perceptions in general. Not surprisingly, scholars have found photos to be the top form of visual representation used to influence how tourists think about a destination (Li et al., 2023). Combining existing knowledge of best practices for social advocacy and the importance of photos, the statement with the visual and written statement is likely to be viewed as a more appropriate response.

H2. Advocacy statements with a visual and written component will be perceived by Black travelers as a more appropriate response to racial justice advocacy over statements with only the black square, a black square and written statement, and a visual alone.

Advocacy statements and behavioral intentions.

Understanding tourist behavior has been a prominent focus in tourism research (Dolnicar et al., 2015). Much of our foundational knowledge comes from the theory of reasoned action, which posits that an individual's attitude as well as certain social norms will influence behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In tourism research, common outcome variables focused on intention to visit and revisit with destination image as a central justification in anticipating positive visitation outcomes. For example, scholars found that DMO websites and social media have a moderating effect on destination image and visitation (Molinillo et al., 2018). Holistic images were found to mediate images and intention to revisit (Stylos et al., 2016). More recently, Afshardoost and Eshaghi (2020) conducted a meta-analysis focused on destination image and behavior. The findings indicate that both overall and affective images significantly impacted intentions while image had the highest impact on intention to recommend a destination. While there has been a great deal of work conducted in this area overall, a review to the literature revealed that the use of advocacy statements as a predictor of behavioral intentions is sorely understudied (Dodd, 2018; Dodd & Supa, 2015; Gretzel, 2017).

In recent years, organizational engagement in social advocacy has increased. Topics such as racial discrimination and gender equality have been points of discussion for various organizations, including hospitality and tourism (Farmaki, 2023; Yim, 2021). As previously stated, organizations who engage in this work must be prepared for both positive and negative outcomes (Yim, 2021). For example, Dodd and Supa (2015) investigated social advocacy involvement on the topic of same sex marriage and found that social advocacy had a significant impact on purchase intentions which they link to the future financial success of a business. They also found that intention to purchase was highest when the organization's beliefs and the

individual's beliefs align. Following this logic, we posit that DMO engagement in racial justice advocacy will influence behavioral intentions of Black travelers, but it may be influenced by the types of statements used.

H3. The presence of racial justice advocacy statements will influence Black travelers' behavioral intentions.

H3a. Of all the advocacy statements, the one consisting of only the black square will result in the lowest rates of behavioral intentions.

H3b. The black square containing a written statement will exhibit higher rates of behavioral intentions compared to participants exposed to the black square.

H3c. The visual with no written statement will exhibit higher rates of behavioral intentions compared to participants exposed to the black square and the black square with a written statement.

H3d. The visual advocacy statement with a written statement will exhibit the highest rate of behavioral intentions compared to the black square, the black square with a written statement, and a visual with no written statement.

Advocacy statements and relational legitimacy

Relational legitimacy considers how well an organization and its actions affirm an individual's social identity (Tost, 2011). When organizations engage in social advocacy, consumer response is often based on how well they feel the organization's message aligns with their personal values (Korschun et al., 2019). In this study, we are particularly interested in how the use of racial justice advocacy statements are perceived by Black travelers.

H4. There is a difference in Black travelers' perception of relational legitimacy across types of racial justice advocacy statements.

H4a. Of all the advocacy statements, the black square will exhibit the lowest rate of perceived relational legitimacy.

H4b. The black square with a written statement will exhibit higher rates of perceived relational legitimacy compared to the black square.

H4c. The visual alone will exhibit higher rates of perceived relational legitimacy compared to the black square and the black square with a written statement.

H4d. The visual with a written statement will exhibit the highest rate of relational legitimacy compared to the black square, the black square with a written statement, and the visual alone.

Relational Legitimacy of racial justice advocacy statements and behavioral intentions

Organizations' participation in social advocacy can generate a wide range of socially and financially rewarding consumer responses (Tyler & Lind, 1992; Yim, 2021). For example, when advocacy statements are evaluated positively, they have been found to influence the opinions and actions of consumers thereby increasing both word-of-mouth support and intention to purchase (Chatterji & Toffel, 2019; Korschun et al., 2019). Based on this previous research, we posit that Black travelers will be drawn to statements whose actions they perceive as affirming their identity, thereby enhancing their behaviors such as sharing positive reviews, recommendations, and intention to visit.

H5. The perceived relational legitimacy of DMO racial justice advocacy statements will influence Black travelers' behavioral intentions such that the visual with the written statement will be stronger than the black square, the black square with text, and the visual alone.

H6. Perceived relational legitimacy will mediate the relationship between racial justice advocacy statements and Black travelers' behavioral intentions.

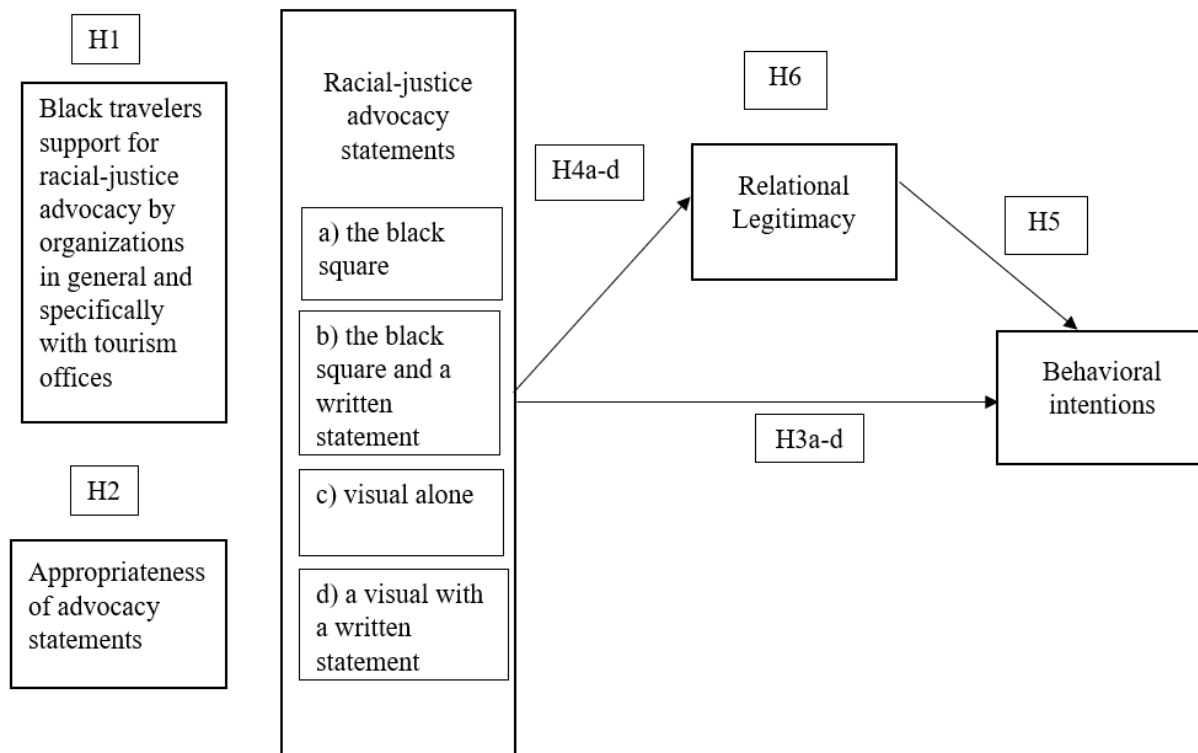


Figure 1: The Research Model and Hypotheses

Study Design and Procedure

This study uses a 2x2 within subject experimental design to examine preferences for the visual and textual aspects of social advocacy statements by Black travelers. Statistical analysis is conducted using the R software program version 4.3.2. A power analysis using G*power 3.1.9.7 (Faul et al., 2007) using an effect size of 0.25, alpha =0.05, and power =.90 recommended a sample size of 160 participants. To account for sampling concerns, a total of 196 participants were recruited from Prolific with one participant being excluded for failure to pass the attention check leaving a total of 195 usable responses. Prolific was selected over other platforms (like MTurk) because it allows the researcher to more accurately identify demographic features like

race during the pre-screening process. In this case, it is imperative we have confidence that the participants taking the survey identify as Black/African American.

Experimental Research Design: The Survey Instrument

Customary with experimental design studies, participants were given an introductory page that describes the purpose of the study and offers instructions for how to proceed. Included in the introductory information was a description of tourism offices (see Appendix A).

Next, participants were asked to read a brief statement (figure 2) describing Blackout Tuesday which served as the catalyst for posting social advocacy statements. This statement was included not only to provide participants with the context of this study, but to measure whether respondents feel organizations in general as well as tourism offices specifically should be engaged in online advocacy related to race.

Description of Online Activism
After extensive media coverage of the deaths of Black Americans, there was a rapid growth of collective public action both in-person and online. One major online action involved organizations and individuals posting black squares on their social media page. The events became known as Black out Tuesday. The black squares were meant to symbolize an organization's support for the Black community and/or the Black Lives Matter movement. While many organizations posted only black squares, others posted black squares with statements of advocacy, or other visuals with or without written statements. Many tourism offices engaged in this form of online advocacy.

Figure 2. Description of online activism

After reviewing the statement, participants were shown four different advocacy statements (Appendix B) one at a time using the randomizer feature in Qualtrics. Following each advocacy statement, participants answered questions about relational legitimacy and behavioral intentions using a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7 =strongly agree). After each set of relational and behavioral intention questions, participants were given the opportunity to respond to the open-ended question: “If you saw this form of advocacy statement as part of your

information search for comparing destinations to visit, how would it influence your opinion of the destination?” After viewing all statements, participants were asked to share their opinions of offices who opted not to make a statement. Open-ended statements were included because it gives participants the ability to elaborate their opinions in a way that may not be captured in the closed-ended questions. Additionally, the inclusion of open-ended questions offers a comparability of consumer thoughts and opinions on the different types of advocacy statements (Hadler, 2023; Li et al., 2023). Once all statements were viewed, participants were asked to rank the advocacy statements in order of their appropriateness. Lastly, participants were given the opportunity to share additional thoughts about the type and/or use of advocacy statements posted by tourism organizations in an open-ended format. The researchers felt this was important given the relatively under-studied area of advocacy statements; as scholar-activists, we also felt that respondents would welcome the opportunity to share more about their experiences. Data from the open-ended questions were used to illustrate and illuminate the quantitative findings. When considering the statistical results and illustrative qualitative statements positionality was also a part of the justifications and implications of this work. For example, the authors are three female researchers each with experience in qualitative research which explores underrepresented populations. Their intersecting identities inform the following nuanced discussions on race.

Results

Participant Profile

The sample was represented by a total of 195 participants all of whom identified as Black or African American. A 10 year age distribution revealed participants were fairly evenly distributed between 45-54 (25%), followed by participants 25-34 (24%), and 35-44 (23%). Gender representation indicated 51% were male (n=99), 49% were female (n=95). One

participant identified as non-binary. All participants had at least a high school diploma, with 39% possessing a bachelor's degree and 16% with a graduate degree.

Issue legitimacy

H1. Black travelers support for engagement in race-related social advocacy will be consistent whether initiated by organizations in general or by DMOs. Issue legitimacy was measured on a 7-point Likert scale. The overall mean scores between organizations in general are (M=5.01) and tourism offices (M=5.02). Repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to determine if there were significant differences between these two groups. The results indicate there is not a significant effect, $F(1, 194) = 0.03, p = 0.87$, between expectations for organizations in general and tourism offices, thus H1 is supported. These findings suggest that regardless of organization type, Black travelers support organizational engagement in race-related social advocacy.

Responses to the open-ended questions expound on Black travelers' thoughts on an organization's use of racial justice advocacy statements:

"It creates awareness especially for people of different race[s]."

"I believe that tourism offices should be able to create and post advocacy statements. Advocacy statements can be a powerful way for tourism offices to express their values and beliefs, and to promote positive social change."

"I think when advocacy statements are made, they go a long way to make those affected feel seen and recognized."

These excerpts represent the multi-level impact of social advocacy. The first two quotes are indicators of the role of advocacy statements in making others aware of a specific situation, particularly for those who may not be directly impacted. The second statement not only underscores the use of advocacy statements to increase awareness, but how they can be used as a tool to encourage change (Yim, 2021). The third statement highlights the relational benefits

association of social advocacy. At the individual level, such actions are viewed as appropriate because they acknowledge the specific situation, thereby validating the experiences and feelings of those impacted by the issue (Tucker et al., 2023).

Advocacy statements as an appropriate response

H2. Advocacy statements with a visual and written component will be perceived by Black travelers as a more appropriate response to racial justice advocacy over statements with only the black square, a black square and written statement, and a visual alone. Participants were asked to rank each statement for levels of appropriateness with 1 representing the most appropriate and 4 as the least. Descriptive results indicate that the statement with a visual and written statement was perceived as the most appropriate (n=111) and the black square was ranked as the least appropriate (n=22). To further explore these results, ANOVA, was conducted. Results indicated significant differences across the appropriateness of statements, $F(3, 582) = 75, p < 0.001$. To further explore these differences, pairwise comparisons using paired t-tests revealed that the visual with the written statement, the black square with the written statement, and the black square were significantly different ($p < 0.001$). The black square with the written statement and the visual alone was also significantly different ($p < 0.000$). There was not a significant difference between the visual alone and the black square with the written statement ($p = 0.6$). In consideration of multiple comparisons, the Holm method was used to adjust p-values. In consideration of appropriateness, one participant offered explicit comments about the use of advocacy statements:

“I think in the wake of a publicized event, it would definitely be appropriate for a tourism office to make some type of statement, especially if the event was travel-related. That would make me feel safer as a tourist. I can't really think of any postings that would deter me from visiting unless they were making light of the situation.”

Some participants provided responses that offer insight into appropriateness of the specific statements. For example, when considering the black square, one participant stated:

“If they want to make an advocacy statement, I would like them to put actual effort and thought as to what they would like to post. A black shape with nothing else on it is disrespectful to the Black community.”

This statement suggests that even with knowledge of the call to action, the intention did not resonate with Black travelers. Conversely, the statement with the visual and the written statement was viewed more favorably, with one participant stating: “I think an advocacy statement containing a visual statement and a caption show real support for a community.” The failure to distinguish appropriateness between the black square with the text and the visual statement is likely due to a lack of specificity and/or contextual clarity. The black square with the text lacked the visual representation needed to connect with Black travelers and visual statement alone suffered from issues of contextual clarity, leaving some to wonder the connection between the family and the cause.

Advocacy statements and behavioral intentions

H3. The presence of racial justice advocacy statements will influence Black travelers’ behavioral intentions. To test this hypothesis, ANOVA was conducted. The results indicate that advocacy statements have a significant different impact on behavior, $F(3, 776) = 32.7, p < 0.001$. Recognizing that at least one of the statements was significantly different, further analysis was conducted. First, the estimated marginal means (EMMeans) were calculated revealing the following results: the black square = 4.20, 95% CI [4.00 4.40]; black square with text = 5.19, 95% CI [4.99 5.39]; visual alone = 5.32, 95% CI [5.12 5.53]; and the visual with the text = 5.51, 95% CI [5.31 5.72]. Tukey’s post hoc test was conducted, revealing that there was a significant difference ($p < 0.001$) in the black square’s influence on behavior, resulting in lower levels of

positive recommendations and likelihood of visitation. Comparisons for the remaining statements did not yield a statistical difference in behavior.

Comments from participants further support these findings. For example, in reference to the black square, one participant stated “It would influence my opinion of the destination in a bad way” while another stated, “I would not associate with them”. The black square with text, visual alone, and visual with text had similar sentiments. Illustrative statements are displayed respectively:

Destination X has clearly proven to me that, they do not condone any sort of discrimination. I would go to a place like this.
I think what they are showing is a good thing and I would be ok going there.
It will influence my opinions positively and I will like to visit the location. I will feel like I belong to this place.

These statements further underscore the importance of understanding how various aspects of racial justice advocacy statements influence behavior. This information further suggests how DMOs can shape their statements to reach specific populations.

Advocacy statements and relational legitimacy

H4. There is a difference in Black travelers' perception of relational legitimacy across types of racial justice advocacy statements. Mean scores for each statement reveal increasing rates of relational legitimacy thereby supporting hypotheses 4a-d: black square = 4.18, black square with text = 5.37, visual alone = 5.52, visual with text = 5.71. To test differences between statements, repeated measures ANOVA was conducted. A highly significant effect was found, $F(3, 582) = 110, p < 0.001$, which indicates strong variability between statements. Thus, a pairwise t-test was used to determine differences in relational legitimacy among all four statements. Results indicate each advocacy statement is statistically significant. Specifically, comparisons between the black square, the black square with text, and the visual alone resulted in $p < 0.0001$ indicating high

significant differences. Similarly, comparisons between the black square with text and the visual alone, the p-value = 0.04. Comparisons between the black square to the visual with text yielded a p-value < 0.0001. The black square with text and the visual with text resulted in a p-value of 0.00001, and the visual alone and the visual with text resulted in a p-value of 0.003.

The open-ended statements were used to illustrate the differences in relational legitimacy among each statement. Responses to the black square suggest low levels of relational legitimacy. For example, one participant stated:

“I think this is a little lackluster compared to the other statements I have seen. I don’t want to be represented by just a black square.”

While some “appreciated the gesture”, the black square failed to connect with most participants on a deeper level, as was the case with this participant who stated:

“I would think that the people at the destination just want to follow the latest trend and actually don’t care about issues pertaining to the situation of minorities in America.”

The black square demonstrates the destination’s willingness to engage but is not strong enough to connect with Black travelers on matters associated with race and racial justice.

The black square with the written statement gained slightly more relational legitimacy, but interestingly, this form of advocacy evoked questions about the organization’s level of understanding for the Black experience and their actions beyond their social media posts. This was best illustrated in following statements:

“...they went a bit further by having a statement, but that doesn’t mean my people are truly valued and our struggles are really understood.”

“Seeing this would make me a little cautious whether they actually mean the statement or if they’re just trying to put on a face. This would make me want to look more into the company to see if they truly embody what they say.”

Another statement combines these areas of concerns stating:

“It's a nice statement and I appreciate the support, but I would like more information about specific ways this destination supports the Black community or commits to being inclusive or aware of our specific needs or worries. I have a somewhat better opinion of this destination than one that only posted the black square.”

These results suggest that adding text to the original call to action was appreciated more than simply posting the black square, however the textual component led to increased levels of scrutiny about the tourism office's overall business practices. Responses to the open-ended question suggest participants would be more receptive to this form of advocacy if the statement included specific actions for improving or enhancing the Black community.

The advocacy statement represented by the visual alone evoked high levels of relational legitimacy. The inclusion of a Black family enabled participants to quickly connect with the post and the destination. As one participant stated, “...the tourist office has my concerns at heart”.

The following statement further expands on this idea:

“This advocacy statement makes me feel heard and seen as a Black individual. Seeing people who are the same race as me makes me feel included as well...”

The inclusion of the Black family indicates an immediate acknowledgment for whom this post is meant to connect. Seeing the family elicited emotional responses that connect to attributes of relational legitimacy (e.g., feeling seen and recognized). The race-based placement in this advocacy statement implies not only do they matter, but so does their perspective (Tucker et al., 2023).

Responses to the visual with the written statement also revealed high levels of relational legitimacy. This statement received less scrutiny than the others and included hints toward positive behavioral intentions. For example, one participant stated:

“The combination of the photo and the passage lets me know that this tourism office REALLY appreciates Black people and they would have all of my support because of it.”

The image allowed participants to connect this form of advocacy due to the racial representation of the family. Additionally, the visual and statement received less scrutiny and was more positively viewed than the black square with the same written statement.

Relational Legitimacy of racial justice advocacy statements and behavioral intentions

H5. The perceived relational legitimacy of DMO racial justice advocacy statements will influence Black travelers' behavioral intentions such that the visual with the written statement will be stronger than the black square, the black square with text, and the visual alone. ANOVA was conducted suggesting a strong statistical significance between relational legitimacy and behavioral intentions, $F(3, 776) = 32.73, p < 0.001$. Given the significance levels, the EMMMeans were calculated for behavioral intentions. The EMMMeans results are as follows: the black square is 4.40, 95% CI [4.00, 4.40]; the black square with written statement is 5.19, 95% CI [4.99, 5.39]; the visual statement is 5.32, 95% CI [5.12, 5.53]; and the visual with the written statement is 5.51, 95% CI [5.31, 5.72]. Tukey's post hoc method indicated significant differences in the behavior associated with the black square compared to all other forms of advocacy ($p < 0.001$). Surprisingly, there was no statistical difference in behavior associated with the black square with written text as compared to the visual alone ($p = 0.79$). The lack of statistical difference reveals that the language used in the sample statement and visual representation of a Black family results in comparable levels of affirmation. Lastly, the black square with written text compared to the visual with written text ($p = 0.11$) and the visual alone compared to the visual with written statement ($p = 0.56$).

The open-ended responses are once again used to illustrate relational legitimacy and behavioral intentions. Concerning the black square, it was evident that this statement was less likely than the other three forms of racial justice advocacy to lead to positive behavioral

intentions. For example, one participant did not connect to the advocacy efforts and indicated a lack of desire to visit: “I would not go to this destination because all it is a black square. What is this supposed to mean?” Another participant stated:

“I would need to know more about the destination to make a decision. Again, the gesture is appreciated, but I need more information to see if I would be comfortable visiting this destination.”

Although the findings indicate a lack of statistical significance among the remaining statements, the open-ended statements present an alternative narrative, which suggest the black square with text also differs from the black square as well as the visual alone and the visual with text. For example, the black square with the text included comments that indicate mixed emotions with regard to behavior:

“It takes into account my identity and their advocacy for those who fall under my identity. I have a very positive view of this particular destination with an advocacy statement like this.”

“In this case, such an advocacy statement would likely not sway my opinion of the destination because it lacks substance. Actions and genuine efforts to combat racism and support the Black community are far more impactful than mere words.”

The above statements indicate that Black travelers have favorable opinions of DMO participation, but some may not be motivated to travel to the destination due to participation in advocacy alone. Instead, there is a desire to learn more about a destination’s efforts to fight racism before making a travel decision.

In contrast, comments for the visual alone and the visual with the written statement offer support for the statistical findings and include more favorable comments about visitation. For example, one participation stated “I’d feel safe and would immediately want to spend money with this destination. They’d have my business.” While another commented:

“This advocacy statement makes me feel heard and seen as a Black individual. Seeing people who are the same race as me makes me feel included as well. I like how diverse they are and it makes me feel inclined to rely on them when choosing my destination.”

Such statements suggest that the visual alone and the visual with the text are effective in their ability to affirm an individual’s racial identity thereby eliciting positive behavioral intentions. Additionally, both of these advocacy statements resulted in sentiments associated with feeling safe, included, comfortable and welcomed. Clearly these two statements resonated with Black travelers.

H6. Perceived relational legitimacy will mediate the relationship between racial justice advocacy statements and Black travelers’ behavioral intentions. A mediation analysis was conducted to explore the association between the various racial justice advocacy statements, relational legitimacy, and behavioral intentions. Following the steps of Barron and Kenny (1986), the direct effect was calculated first. The results revealed significant findings. The intercept of the direct effect was 0.59 (SE = 0.10, $t = 5.64$, $p < 0.001$). The direct effect of advocacy statements on the outcome (c') was not statistically significant (Estimate = 0.00, SE = 0.03, $t = 0.06$, $p = 0.953$), however, the direct effect of relational legitimacy was highly significant (Estimate = 0.86, SE = 0.02, $t = 43.65$, $p < 0.001$). The overall model fit demonstrated a strong association between the three variables. The R^2 value indicated that the model explains 74% of the variance of behavioral intentions. The second step investigated the effect of advocacy statements on relational legitimacy (path a). The results were significant with an estimated coefficient of 0.47 (SE = 0.05, $t = 10.40$, $p < 0.001$). Next path b examined the effect of relational legitimacy on behavioral intentions. The analysis of relational legitimacy on behavioral intentions was estimated to be 0.86 (SE = 0.02, $t = 43.65$, $p < 0.001$). These results indicate there is a highly significant positive influence of relational legitimacy on behavioral intentions.

Lastly, there is a significant indirect effect of relational legitimacy on behavioral intentions through advocacy statements, $b = 0.41$, 95% CI [0.33, 0.49] (see figure 3).

These data suggest that relational legitimacy serves as a critical mediator influencing the relationship between racial justice advocacy statements and behavioral intentions. When Black travelers feel as though their Blackness is recognized and represented in a way that validates and supports their experience(s), certain behaviors such as recommending a destination, making positive comments, speaking highly and planning to visit are more likely to occur. Statements like the ones below illustrate the mediating effect of relational legitimacy:

“It would make me want to visit this destination even more. They are taking into account my identity and their support for those who are also of my identity. I would absolutely look to visit this destination.”

“I would definitely visit the destination. The statement representations what I believe in and represents me.”

The quotes emphasize the role of relational legitimacy in increasing levels of trustworthiness among Black travelers which leads to positive perceptions and helps to foster a genuine interest in the destination. They further illustrate how relational legitimacy can be a bridge between DMOs’ engagement in racial justice advocacy and real life experience, thereby making it an influential part of the tourism decision-making process.

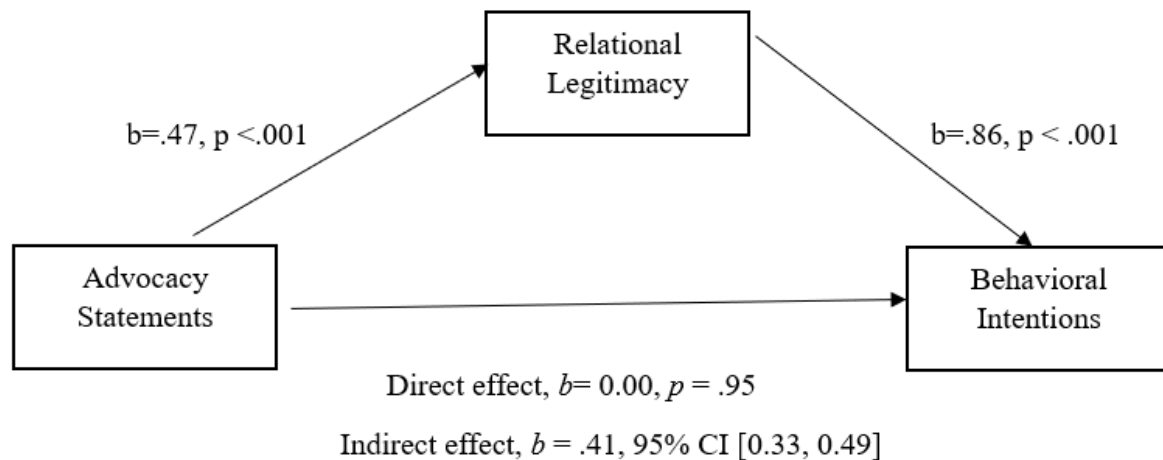


Figure 3. Model of advocacy statements as a predictor of behavioral intentions, mediated by relational legitimacy.

Discussion

This study is the first of its kind to examine the role of DMO’s use of racial justice advocacy statements on behavioral intentions of Black travelers with a focus on the role of relational legitimacy. This new area of study indicates exciting opportunities to understand how social media can best be used as a platform to support various social causes and how such participation can affirm the identities of the targeted group. Focusing on relational legitimacy as a key component of individual judgments, this study uncovers the identity-based lens through which racial justice advocacy statements were viewed by Black travelers. This work bridges the gap between theory and practice by increasing our knowledge on advocacy in a digital context.

Findings from this study show there is strong support for thoughtful advocacy related actions via social media. Participants found this approach to be an impactful way to raise awareness about a specific topic. Participation in racial justice advocacy was viewed as an opportunity to seek social change while also elevating individual relational associations to the

cause and the organization. Both statistical analysis and the qualitative responses were imperative to fully understanding the theoretical and practice implications of social advocacy.

From a theoretical perspective, this work adds to the growing interest in relational legitimacy and social advocacy. This study is the first of its kind in tourism and provides a framework that can be used to garner input from Black Travelers about travel destinations. In this instance, the social context of racial justice resonated with participants and demonstrated strong affective implications of relational legitimacy. The illustrative responses from participants were particularly useful in understanding nuances associated with relational legitimacy. Results found that participants valued participation in this social movement, but the level of relational legitimacy varied. Within the context of racial justice advocacy, participation in the movement is not enough, because engagement in digital forms of advocacy does not guarantee actionable change. Based on the results, we conclude that failure to connect with the target audience will lead to organizational scrutiny, as seen in the case of the black square and black square with text. Posting on social media may give the appearance of social consciousness, but without actional steps or evidence of contributions to the cause, such actions may be deemed performative. Contrarily, visual representations of the Black family led to higher levels of relational legitimacy. Results align with the work of Tucker et al. (2023) who found that relational legitimacy was associated with Black travelers feeling seen, recognized/valued, and important. Statements by participants also revealed interesting findings about racial representation and feelings of belonging, welcomeness, and comfort within a destination. While belonging is noted as an attribute of relational legitimacy, welcomeness did not register as an attribute in the existing legitimacy scale (Tucker et al., 2023). Perhaps future exploration into distinctions among belonging, welcomeness, and comfort are warranted. These theoretical advancements are

quite useful in outlining the practical implications for racial justice advocacy particularly for destination marketing organizations.

The current study moves beyond descriptions of advocacy characteristics to understanding how and why certain types of advocacy resonate (or do not) with Black travelers. In the context of racial justice advocacy, participants desire a well-rounded approach that moves beyond reactionary normative concepts of justice (e.g., racism/discrimination is bad). The black square demonstrated that simply participating in digital advocacy is not enough. Organizations must instead consider the issue, the call to action, and their association with the topic and/or relationship to the targeted group. Failure to do so may lead to distrust among those the organization sought to support. The black square with the text enhanced the engagement by demonstrating awareness of the issue and a decision to participate, however, the addition of affirming language was not well received, indicating words of support may not be enough to avoid scrutiny. Our study demonstrated that, in situations related to racial justice, consumers want to know an organization combines action with their words (Sobande, 2024). Organizations can demonstrate this by offering transparent descriptions of how and in what ways they are engaged in racial justice work. There needs to be clear evidence to substantiate claims of support. Engaging in advocacy through the use of racial representation without further explanation can lead to issues of contextual clarity (Im et al., 2023). While participants affirmed of the representation of the Black family, there were concerns about the genuine nature behind this action. It is important to remember that this particular call for online advocacy was based on the unnecessary deaths of Black Americans. Failure to recognize this may result in online advocacy being perceived as a symbolic gesture that does not speak to the root cause of the issue. The work needed to overcome years of racial segregation and exclusion will be ongoing. It will

require more than a single social media post (Sobande, 2024). While not as frequent, participants wanted to know that an organization's engagement in racial justice advocacy was more than just a trend. Responses to the visual with the written statement were well received and led to feelings of safety and welcomeness. This suggests engagement in racial justice advocacy requires both representation associated with the target audience and statements affirming their stance. Levels of scrutiny were less common in the open-ended responses to this form of advocacy. Perhaps the inclusion of specific ways the destination fights for racial justice would have demonstrated statistical significance from the black square with the written statement and the visual.

Overall, participation in social advocacy is well received and encouraged. As noted earlier, we continue to witness situations related to social issues which expand opportunities for organizations to engage. For example, recent increases in anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim activities might indicate value for this type of initiatives aimed at these tourist groups. Thus, this framework can also be used to study other forms of advocacy as well as other travel populations. Topics discussed in the previous paragraph indicate ways a DMO can enhance planning and policy initiatives specific to their destination. Incorporating this work into the strategic plans of a destination ensures engagement in racial justice is not a one-time occurrence, but matters of trust, transparency, and equity are central to their daily work.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study offers valuable contributions to the research on relational legitimacy and racial justice advocacy, there are limitations. First while the DMO used in this study was intentionally fictitious (after considerable consideration) in order to limit destination bias, it may lack external validity. Future studies may wish to partner with specific DMOs to further examine the role of race in specific geographical locations (Carter, 2008). This would be particularly

enlightening for destinations with less racial diversity, as narratives from Black travelers would further explore how racial justice advocacy can be approached in a manner that resonates with Black travelers.

Second, the results suggest that visual and textual statements together increase rates of relational legitimacy. However, only one image representing Black individuals was included in this study, a heterosexual young family in a park setting. A range of images are currently being used to suggest support of the Black community. To that end, it would be beneficial to examine how different types of visual images influence relational legitimacy and behavioral intentions.

Third, this study focused on the relational dimension of legitimacy. However, as Tucker et al. (2023) indicate, Black travelers also engage with the cognitive and pragmatic dimensions to evaluate legitimacy. Future studies may consider including survey questions that speak to these dimensions. For example, to explore the cognitive domain, participants could be asked about their thoughts on whether DMOs are a necessary part of our society. To explore the pragmatic dimension the statement “Tourism offices understand the needs and concerns of tourists” could be included. These additions would add to our understanding of the tourism industry as a taken-for-granted entity.

In conclusion, matters of relational legitimacy and social advocacy are complex and require nuanced, thoughtful processes and responses that are specific and relevant to the given situation. Participation in social advocacy is likely to be viewed favorably, particularly if it is a cause with which consumers relate. However, today’s consumers are not easily swayed by statements alone, thus organizations must do the work on the front end to ensure travel and tourism truly operates as an accepted institution in communities around the world.

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Appendix

Appendix A.

DMO Description

Destination Marketing Organizations

This section is interested in your opinion of a specific type of organization within the tourism industry known as a destination marketing organization (DMOs). The following section provides an overview of DMOs and their common tasks. You may be familiar with DMOs under different names: they may also be known as convention and visitor bureaus (CVBs), destination management organization or simply tourism offices.

What are destination marketing organizations?

Destination marketing organizations are often defined as the governmental organization in charge of marketing a destination, attracting conference/events to the destination and providing visitor services locally. While less common, they may also be quasi-governmental, member based or private. These types of organizations can be found in a single town, a city, metropolitan area, or state.

To keep it simple, from now on we'll use the term tourism office.

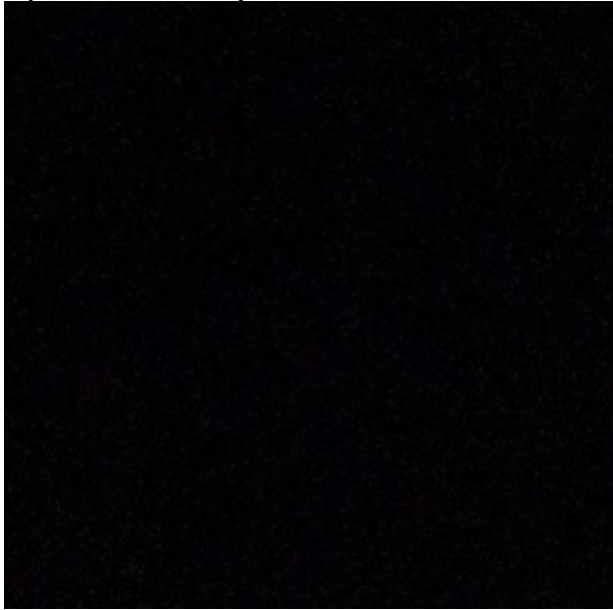
What do tourism offices do?

- Promote a destination's image through print (e.g., magazines) and digital (e.g., website, social media) mediums
 - For example, tourism office websites are often developed to assist tourists with trip planning (e.g., identifying hotels, restaurants, and activities in a specific destination)
- Promote economic development of a destination by attracting and increasing visitors to a destination
- Work with convention centers, hotels and other venues to attract business travel, conventions and conferences to the destination
- Manage visitor centers
- Enhance community relations by promoting the betterment of the community through tourism (e.g., job creation)

Appendix B.

Advocacy Statements

Option 1: Black square



Option 2: Black square with written statement

Discrimination of any kind is not acceptable. Destination X stands with the Black community. We are committed to doing our part to fight racism.

Sincerely,
Destination X CEO

Option 3. Visual Image without a written statement



Option 4. Visual image with written statement



Discrimination of any kind is not acceptable.
Destination X stands with the Black community. We are committed to doing our part to end racism.
Sincerely,
Destination X CEO

*******BEGIN SURVEY*******

*****MAIN SURVEY*****

Destination Marketing Organizations

This section is interested in your opinion of a specific type of organization within the tourism industry known as a destination marketing organization (DMOs). The following section provides an overview of DMOs and their common tasks. You may be familiar with DMOs under different names: they may also be known as convention and visitor bureaus (CVBs), destination management organization or simply tourism offices.

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What do tourism offices do?

- Promote a destination's image through print (e.g., magazines) and digital (e.g., website, social media) mediums
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- Work with convention centers, hotels and other venues to attract business travel, conventions and conferences to the destination
- Manage visitor centers
- Enhance community relations by promoting the betterment of the community through tourism (e.g., job creation)

Have you used a tourism office to plan one of your vacations?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

The following section focuses on a specific social issue which many tourism offices chose to participate. Please read the statement below and answer the questions that follow.

Description of Online Activism

After extensive media coverage of the deaths of Black Americans, there was a rapid growth of collective public action both in-person and online. One major online action involved organizations and individuals posting black squares on their social media page. The events became known as Black out Tuesday (#BlackoutTuesday). The black squares were meant to symbolize an organization's support for the Black community and/or the Black Lives Matter

movement. While many organizations posted only black squares, others posted black squares with statements of advocacy, or other visuals with or without written statements. Many tourism offices engaged in this form of online advocacy.

How do you feel about *organizations in general* posting online advocacy statements?

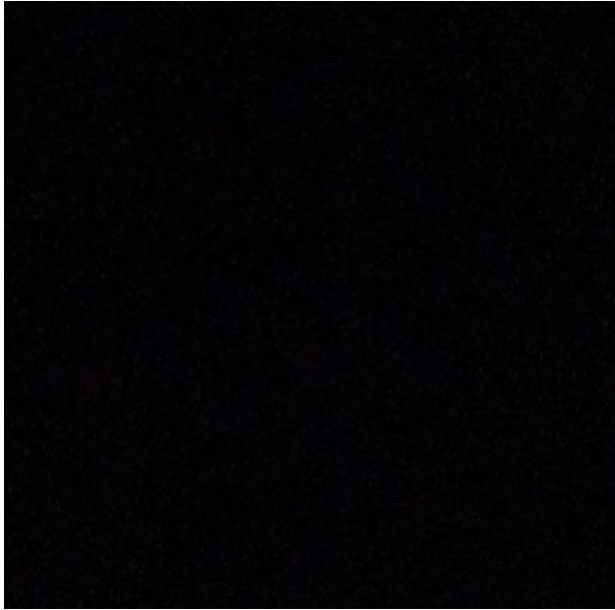
- Organizations in general should create and post advocacy statements.
- I have a positive opinion about the advocacy statements organizations use in support of racial justice.
- Advocacy statements posted by organizations have helped people learn about racial justice.
- I think that any problems associated with the creation of organizations' advocacy statements in support of racial justice could be solved.
- Overall, the benefits of organizations' advocacy statements for racial justice outweigh the problems.
- Can you tell us more about your feelings about organizations creating and posting advocacy statements like those described in the statement above?

How do you feel about *tourism offices* posting online advocacy statements?

- Tourism offices should create and post advocacy statements.
- I have a positive opinion about the advocacy statements tourism offices used in support of racial justice.
- Advocacy statements posted by tourism offices have helped people learn about racial justice.
- I think that any problems associated with the creation of tourism offices' advocacy statements in support of racial justice could be solved.
- Overall, the benefits of tourism offices' advocacy statements for racial justice outweigh the problems.
- Can you tell us more about your feelings about tourism offices creating and posting advocacy statements like those described above?

In the next section you will be shown a series of advocacy statements. Following each advocacy statement, you will answer questions about your feelings for each statement. You will also have the opportunity to respond to an open-ended question allowing you to express your thoughts, feelings, and opinions in a way that may not be covered in the questions.

Social Advocacy Option 1



Based on this form of advocacy statement posted by a tourism office:

- I feel recognized/valued by this tourism office.
- I feel appreciated by this tourism office.
- I feel seen by this tourism office.
- People like me are important to this tourism office.
- People like me are represented in this tourism offices' products/services.
- This tourism office makes me feel as though I belong.

If you saw this form of advocacy statement as part of your information search for comparing destinations to visit, how would it influence your opinion of the destination? [open-ended]

Based on this form of advocacy statement posted by a tourism office:

- I would recommend this destination to my family and friends.
- I would make positive comments about this destination.
- I would speak highly of the destination to family and friends.
- I would plan to visit this destination.

Social Advocacy Option 2

Discrimination of any kind is not acceptable. Destination X stands with the Black community. We are committed to doing our part to fight racism.

Sincerely,
Destination X CEO

Based on this form of advocacy statement posted by a tourism office:

- I feel recognized/valued by this tourism office.
- I feel appreciated by this tourism office.
- I feel seen by this tourism office.
- People like me are important to this tourism office.
- People like me are represented in this tourism offices' products/services.
- This tourism office makes me feel as though I belong.

If you saw this form of advocacy statement as part of your information search for comparing destinations to visit, how would it influence your opinion of the destination? [open-ended]

Based on this form of advocacy statement posted by a tourism office:

- I would recommend this destination to my family and friends.
- I would make positive comments about this destination.
- I would speak highly of the destination to family and friends.
- I would plan to visit this destination.



Based on this form of advocacy statement posted by a tourism office:

- I feel recognized/valued by this tourism office.
- I feel appreciated by this tourism office.
- I feel seen by this tourism office.
- People like me are important to this tourism office.
- People like me are represented in this tourism offices' products/services.
- This tourism office makes me feel as though I belong.

If you saw this form of advocacy statement as part of your information search for comparing destinations to visit, how would it influence your opinion of the destination? [open-ended]

Based on this form of advocacy statement posted by a tourism office:

- I would recommend this destination to my family and friends.
- I would make positive comments about this destination.
- I would speak highly of the destination to family and friends.
- I would plan to visit this destination.

Social Advocacy Option 4



Discrimination of any kind is not acceptable.
Destination X stands with the Black community.
We are committed to doing our part to end racism.

Sincerely,
Destination X CEO

Based on this form of advocacy statement posted by a tourism office:

- I feel recognized/valued by this tourism office.
- I feel appreciated by this tourism office.
- I feel seen by this tourism office.
- People like me are important to this tourism office.
- People like me are represented in this tourism offices' products/services.
- This tourism office makes me feel as though I belong.

If you saw this form of advocacy statement as part of your information search for comparing destinations to visit, how would it influence your opinion of the destination?

Based on this form of advocacy statement posted by a tourism office:

- I would recommend this destination to my family and friends.
- I would make positive comments about this destination.
- I would speak highly of the destination to family and friends.
- I would plan to visit this destination.

Now that you've seen 4 types of social advocacy statements, please rank the statements in order of their appropriateness for a tourism office to utilize as part of their social media messaging:

1=least appropriate 4=most appropriate

- _____ 1
- _____ 2
- _____ 3
- _____ 4

What is your opinion of tourism offices who did not make a statement? [open-ended]

Finally, we would like to provide space for you to share any other thoughts you have about the type and use of advocacy statements posted by tourism offices. Do you have recommendations about best practices that encourage you to visit a destination? Are there postings that would deter you from visiting?

******DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS******

Which category below includes your age?

- 17 or younger
- 18-20
- 21-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 or older

Which best describes your racial identity?

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian / Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic
- White / Caucasian
- Multiple ethnicity/ Other (please specify)

Are you a U.S. Citizen

- Yes
- No

In which state do you reside?

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

What is your gender?

- Male

- Female
- Transgender
- Non-binary/non-conforming
- Prefer not to respond

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree received?

- Less than high school degree
- High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- Some college but no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor degree
- Graduate degree

TRAVEL RELATED QUESTIONS

When was your last vacation?

Where did you go?

With whom did you travel?

Dissertation Conclusion

This dissertation uses three distinct yet interrelated studies to explore Black travel past and present. Each study is connected through legitimacy theory. A particular emphasis was placed on relational legitimacy which shed light on the ways in which Black travelers evaluated the travel industry and its ability to connect with Black travelers. This work has uncovered opportunities for continued development in two distinct yet intersecting ways: identity and empowerment and advocacy from both individual and organizational perspectives. This chapter allows space for reflection on the established findings, implications, and future directions for this exciting line of inquiry.

Much of the existing travel-related research emanates the taken-for-granted assumption that travel is and has always been available for all. However, in the United States, the experiences of minoritized groups like Black travelers have been marked with both adversity and resilience. The first article in this dissertation sought to demonstrate how Black travel was represented in Black print media due to marketplace exclusion a challenge the persisted today. Present day exclusions have led to the use of social media as a space to represent their involvement in tourism (Dillette et al., 2019). An ideal next step is to explore how Black travelers use digital platforms to redefine conventional tourism imagery. This work would contribute to the discussion of representation, identity, and agency by challenging the dominant narrative(s) associated with travel in general and more specifically Black travel. Using relational legitimacy as the dominant theoretical perspective, this work would shift the focus from an organizations' ability to affirm one's identity to that of peer networks. This work continues to encourage inclusive practices within the tourism industry.

In addition to representation and engagement in tourism, Article 1 showcases strategies Black travelers used to disrupt the harmful institutions and systems that impacted their daily lives. By examining this work over a 100-year period, it emphasizes the importance of contextual associations of how the past impacts the present. Their fight for inclusion continues today. As Floyd and Mowatt (2014) note, the development of contemporary services “should be guided by what is known about the history associated with minority groups” (p. 298). Such focus ensures that products, services, and policies provide access for all. Recognizing the continued question for inclusion, future research will explore how individuals and groups coalesce to seek and/or create change (Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013). This work offers an opportunity to explore this topic from several directions. First, given the rise and popularity of travel influencers, this work can explore the implications of an increased presence of Black travelers (i.e., indirect advocacy) juxtaposed against more direct forms of digital advocacy and activism. Second, there is a need to better understand the move from individual organizing to collective approaches to change. For example, in response to racial justice advocacy statements by DMOs, Black traveler influencers and industry leaders began creating advocacy groups (e.g., Black Travel Alliance, Tourism Diversity Matters) to encourage inclusion and equity within the industry. An understanding of what is involved in the move from influencer to advocate would be beneficial in advancing literature on digital advocacy.

A major contribution of this dissertation is the expansion of the relational dimension of legitimacy. Articles 2 and 3 developed and tested a measurement scale that centers the role of race on legitimacy judgments. When making evaluations based on how well an organization affirms their social identity of race, Black travelers value being recognized and seen. They also want to be represented in the tourism office’s products and services. The relational dimension of

the scale was applied in the third article to better understand Black travelers' perceptions of racial justice advocacy statements made by destination marketing organizations (DMOs). This was a first step in understanding how Black travelers view the actions of organizations. Building on these insights, the subsequent phase in this line of research seeks to better understand how organizations are moving beyond digital advocacy to engage in the offline work needed to create organizational and/or societal change (Wang et al., 2023). This work has important implications in understanding the role of political and social norms especially given that we are living in a time where more consumers want transparency regarding an organization's stance on social issues like race (Yim, 2021), but recent policy changes are removing financial support for diversity, equity, and inclusion programs. How will organizations react to this particular tension and how will these actions impact legitimacy evaluations?

This research recognizes the significant role race (and other intersecting identities) plays in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of Black travelers. Over the years, Black consumers have used their voice and resources to share their experiences and seek more inclusion within the tourism industry. By acknowledging the role of race, organizations can create products, services, and marketing that meets the needs of the diverse population they serve. By understanding the racial dynamics associated with consumer perceptions, businesses can work towards creating more inclusive environments for future travelers. Examining existing policies, practices, and products can ensure employees are aware of the work within the organization and how it impacts consumers from diverse backgrounds. This internal work will help organizations to proactively address issues, build trust with consumers, and mitigate potential actions that may lead to a loss of legitimacy thereby leading to increased levels of consumer satisfaction.

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