Who is ethnic neighborhood tourism for anyway? Considering perspectives of the dominant cultural group

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Abstract
Past studies regarding “ethnic neighborhood tourism” (ENT) have primarily reflected perspectives of the ethnic minority group whose culture is represented to tourists. Therefore, this study explored how members of the ethnic “majority” group who live in the ethnic neighborhood perceive ENT in their own community. The interpretive analysis of 31 interviews with Japanese residents in a Brazilian neighborhood in Oizumi, Gunma, Japan, revealed that the Japanese residents are reluctant and somewhat antagonistic towards ENT in their community. This study also illustrates that ENT reinforced the ethnic divide within the town rather than healing past tensions between the 2 groups.

KEYWORDS
Brazilian neighborhood, ethnic neighborhood tourism, ethnic relations, Japan, qualitative study, residents’ attitudes

1 INTRODUCTION

Ethnic minority groups have been attracting visitors to destinations for some time. The concept of “ethnic neighborhood tourism” (hereafter referred to as ENT) involves the travel to ethnic minority neighborhoods embedded within broader communities dominated by another culture (Henderson, 2000; Santos, Belhassen, & Caton, 2008). The tourism product within these ethnic enclaves is often associated with the unique foods and customs of the minority culture (not easily found within other parts of the city or country as a whole), which provide “authentic” ethnic experiences without having to travel abroad. Examples of ENT range from Chinatowns in Chicago (Santos & Yan, 2008; Santos et al., 2008) and Singapore (Henderson, 2000) to Amish farms in Iowa and Pennsylvania (Chhabra, 2012).

Mirroring the growing popularity of ENT worldwide, research on this unique form of tourism has followed suit—most noticeably in exploring various aspects of the phenomena. Past research regarding ENT has illustrated the potential of ENT to provide an opportunity of socioeconomic development for formerly marginalized ethnic communities (Aytar & Rath, 2012). ENT has also fostered positive perceptions of ethnic groups among tourists and reduced interethnic tensions within culturally diverse neighborhoods (Pang, 2012; Santos et al., 2008). However, studies have also illustrated that ENT may turn a neighborhood into a mere tourism attraction offering only packaged experiences (Aytar & Rath, 2012; Henderson, 2000).

These analyses, however, have primarily been undertaken from the perspectives of representatives of the ethnic minority group whose culture is represented to tourists. As a result, voices of those individuals from the dominant culture, who also live in the neighborhood showcasing ENT, are unheard. The absence of dominant cultural group residents’ perspectives may be due to the dichotomous logic of ENT. More precisely, similar to ethnic tourism, ENT is “premised on the desire to gaze at ‘Others’ who are viewed as being different from the western self” (Santos & Yan, 2008, p. 1002). That is to say, research on ethnic tourism, including ENT, predominantly treats ethnic minorities as local residents whose culture is gazed upon and ethnic majorities as tourists who engage in the gazing—disregarding the latter as members of the local community.

However, even within an ethnic neighborhood, not all residents in the area belong to a specific ethnic minority group. Rather, members of the ethnic dominant group (within the region, state, or nation) often reside in and around the neighborhood that is at the center of the ENT. In this situation, a third category beyond the “hosts” and “guests” may emerge. Hollinshead (1998) refers to a group of people who find themselves in geographically defined quandaries based on cultural identities as “halfway populations”:

“Halfway populations” are those communities of people who are caught in difficult cultural locations or in strained representative situations, in awkward
Although this term has often been applied to people caught in the globalized context (e.g., diasporic people and populations at national borders: Kaftanoglu & Timothy, 2013), in the setting of ENT, residents who belong to the ethnic dominant group may be referred to as a “halfway population” for their ambiguous position in between the ethnic majority tourists and minority residents.

With this consideration, various research questions can be raised. For instance, what are the perceptions of these halfway populations belonging to the dominant culture concerning ENT that are focused on the cultural minority group? Is ENT managed in a sustainable way from these individuals’ perspectives? Also, how are the relations between members of the ethnic minority and dominant ethnic group (i.e., cooperation or conflict) impacted by ENT?

The aim of this work is to illustrate the perceptions of ENT among Japanese residents residing within a Brazilian neighborhood in Oizumi, Gunma, Japan. In particular, this study illustrates that Japanese residents are reluctant and somewhat antagonistic towards ENT. In addition, this study reveals how the existing boundary between Brazilian residents and Japanese residents contributes to the former’s lack of interest in existing and potential tourism development.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

The boom of ENT in Western society and some parts of Asia can be attributed to deindustrialization, changes in consumers’ preferences, and ideological shifts towards diversity (Drew, 2011; Santos & Yan, 2008; Santos et al., 2008). According to Aytar and Rath (2012), along with the reduction of industrial activities, cities that have relied on manufacturing industries find themselves in need of alternative industries. At the same time, a change in consumers’ preferences has led to the emergence of a new consumer market segment that seeks more symbolic fulfillment and individualized consumption, rather than mass consumption (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007). With the emergence of this market segment, the presence of an ethnic neighborhood, which offers food and entertainment with a unique taste of the “Other,” has become an asset, rather than a burden. In addition, the shift from the traditional, “assimilation” model to a multicultural agenda that celebrates the cultural differences has accelerated the proliferation of ENT destinations (Santos & Yan, 2008). With the new agenda, an ethnic neighborhood has become viewed as an ideal landscape of harmony and high social cohesion among different ethnic groups—increasing individuals’ demand for visiting.

As this type of tourism has grown in popularity, researchers have identified both positive and negative aspects of ENT (see Aytar & Rath, 2012; Drew, 2011; Maruyama, Woosnam, & Boley, 2016). For example, similar to ethnic tourism, ENT fuels employment and entrepreneurial opportunities even for people without specialized knowledge and skill, which improves both economic and social status of marginalized groups (Mbaia, 2004; Santos & Yan, 2008). The growth of ENT also refashions the ethnic neighborhood in a positive manner. As Novy (2012) argued, ethnic neighborhoods were once often marginalized and associated with social problems, such as unemployment, poverty, and vandalism. However, with the boom of ENT, such previously underprivileged, “no-go areas” have been commodified and reimagined as desirable places for leisure and consumption (Aytar & Schroeder, 2012). Santos et al. (2008) illustrated that the past negative imagery of Chicago’s Chinatown as “forever foreign” was transformed in such a way that reconstructs the Otherness in a way that appears friendly to tourists. Additionally, ENT may provide more power to a previously underrepresented population by allowing individuals to actively take advantage of the uniqueness of their culture and control what to represent and how to represent their culture to tourists (Harrison & Schipani, 2007; Maruyama et al., 2016). Drew (2010) illustrates that local tour guides in urban ethnic neighborhoods in Chicago control forms of information to share with tourists and ways in which to share it, bringing about a shift in the balance of power.

Despite these positive influences, negative effects of ENT have also been documented. For example, Santos and Yan (2008) argue that people in ethnic neighborhoods need to respond to the demand for “exoticized” food and entertainment, which may reinforce stereotypical images of the ethnic group and lead to cultural commodification. Research has also shown that, while responding to tourists’ demand, local minorities’ perceptions of their own culture are often ignored (see Wang, Yang, Chen, Yang, & Li, 2010; Yang & Wall, 2009). This makes ethnic neighborhoods “Disneyized” areas that error on the side of meeting the needs of tourists more than those of community residents (Aytar & Rath, 2012). Henderson (2000) illustrates that, in the effort to revitalize Chinatown in Singapore, local Chinese residents were not involved in the process. As a result, the town became overorganized, losing the original atmosphere. Such biased revitalization may cause unequal distribution of the economic benefits of tourism, providing disproportional advantage to the dominant ethnic group (Yang & Wall, 2009). In addition, to attract tourists, an ethnic neighborhood needs to portray an image of itself as being positive, welcoming, and without problems (Santos & Yan, 2008). Such representation then may obscure the social reality that the community is actually facing, including ethnic conflicts and prejudice, crime, social inequality, and social isolation.

Among various benefits and problems of ENT, the influence on ethnic relations has particularly been of interest to scholars (Aytar & Rath, 2012; Hitchcock, 1999). In a way, tourism can be a common goal of successful tourism development, which may ease the interethnic conflict and unite different groups (Henderson, 2000; Timothy & Kim, 2015). It may unite different groups by serving as a medium through which residents represent their community as “us” to outsiders (or “them”; Jamison, 1999). On the contrary, Hannam (2006) and Stronza (2008) illustrated that in a mixed ethnic community, with the introduction of tourism, different ethnic groups began having conflicts over who had the right to decide what to showcase to tourists and who deserved benefits from tourism. Jamison (1999) further maintained that tourism serves as a catalyst for already-existing tension or cooperation among ethnic groups.

These analyses, however, have primarily reflected perspectives of the ethnic minority group whose culture is represented to tourists, which leads to a lack of consideration for how members of the ethnic
“majority” (or dominant cultural) group who live in the ethnic neighborhood perceive ENT in their own community. Exploring a majority’s perspective can be particularly important for ENT to be sustainable, because to achieve the goal of sustainability, all stakeholders need to be consulted (Richard & Hall, 2002). In the case of ENT, because of its binary nature representing the culture of an ethnic minority group to tourists over a dominant ethnic group, it is likely that residents of the dominant ethnic group may have different perceptions towards ENT than the minority group at the center of ENT. Therefore, this study aims to explore the perceptions of ENT among Japanese residents within a Brazilian neighborhood in Gunma, Japan. According to past studies (see Boley, Maruyama, & Woosnam, 2015; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006), to enhance the sustainability of tourism, multiple dimensions of tourism impacts need to be considered. More precisely, tourism must be economically feasible, and the benefits from tourism must be fairly distributed throughout the community (Scheyvens, 1999). It also needs to be implemented in a way that respects social identity and community culture and strengthens social cohesiveness and pride (Boley & McGehee, 2014; Boley, McGehee, Perdue, & Long, 2014). Furthermore, residents must be politically empowered by not being mere spectators of tourism development, but included in the decision-making process (Scheyvens, 1999). Accordingly, this study illustrates how Japanese residents perceive the positive and negative impacts of an ENT industry focused on Brazilian culture within their majority Japanese town.

2.1 Brazilian immigrants in Japan and Oizumi town

The repatriation of Brazilians to Japan began in the 1980s because of the severe economic crisis in Brazil that coincided with Japan’s booming economy and a serious shortage of unskilled labor (Tsuda, 1999). To fulfill the demand for manual labor, the Japanese government amended the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act in 1989, which took effect in 1990. The law granted long-term residence visas (indefinitely renewable with no job restrictions) to all Japanese emigrants, their descendants, and family members up to the third generation while prohibiting the employment of illegal workers (Tsuda & Cornelius, 2004). As a result of the policy change, a massive influx of Nikkei Brazilians and their families to Japan took place.

The town of Oizumi, located in the Ōra District within the Gunma Prefecture, is approximately 110 km northwest of Tokyo, hosting 41,580 residents (Oizumi Town, 2017). The arrival of Brazilians in Oizumi began in the late 1980s (Tsuzuki, 2000) as the town, much like the rest of Japan, was suffering from severe labor shortages. The former mayor of Oizumi took initiative to employ Brazilian immigrants for the factories in town. By 1995, the number of registered Brazilians in Oizumi rose to 3,848 (9.36% of the town’s population), which was the highest concentration of Brazilians throughout Japan. The most recent census that took place in 2010 indicated that 3,678 Brazilian residents live in Oizumi.

A tourism bureau was created in 2007 by the chamber of commerce in Oizumi with the intent to help diversify the town’s economy. Although the town was well known for its manufacturing with a relatively stable economy during the early 2000s, it has witnessed significant job loss coinciding with the decline of manufacturing over the last decade, leading to the need for new forms of economic activity. Given the high percentage of Brazilian residents, number of Brazilian restaurants, grocery stores, and other shops that exist to serve members of the minority members, the town government developed ENT focused on Brazilian culture as a new economic strategy. As a result, several events focusing on Brazilian culture have been organized. For example, “Gourmet Yokocho” is a monthly, international street food festival, where a number of vendors set their booths alongside the main street of the town. An occasional walking tour is also organized by the tourism bureau. Throughout the tour, participants visit Brazilian shopping malls, food stores, and other smaller snack and souvenir shops. In addition, bus tours bring visitors from Tokyo, making stops at Brazilian shopping malls and restaurants. Among these activities, an annual samba festival is the major event for tourism. Occurring over 1 day, the festival involves a number of special events including a dance competition, food vendors, and other commercial exhibits. In 2014, Oizumi hosted 256,300 visitors (Bureau of Statistics in Gunma, 2016).

Though Oizumi is promoting itself as a site for multiculturalism, in reality, Brazilian residents have been socially and spatially segregated (Hamada, 2006; Tsuda, 2003). The Brazilian residents are condensed in the southwestern portion of the town, near the Panasonic factory as well as on the south side, adjacent to the Otone industrial park, and these areas have been treated as a “no-go” area by the Japanese residents in town. Accordingly, Japanese residents in Oizumi rarely visit Brazilian restaurants and shops. Cultural conflicts in everyday lives between the two groups also have been frequently reported (Hamada, 2006; Tsuda, 2003).

The Brazilian residents’ status as a negative minority is partly because of the Japanese racial ideology and ethnocentric view (Tsuda, 2000). Because Brazilian immigrants are “Nikkeijin” (i.e., Japanese descendants), they are imposed with greater cultural demand and expected to be inherited with Japanese culture. However, many Nikkei Brazilian migrants are second and third generations who are culturally “Brazilians” to various degrees. The loss of Japanese culture was perceived by the Japanese residents with disappointment, resulting in labeling the Nikkei Brazilian residents as “second-rate Japanese.” In addition, Japanese residents typically formed negative stereotypes of Brazilian immigrants as uneducated, unskilled factory workers with low socioeconomic origins because many of the Brazilian immigrants accepted positions as unskilled factory workers (Tsuda, 2003). Certain characteristics of Brazilian culture and society (e.g., being laid back and economically underdeveloped) as well as work ethic and ability (e.g., lacking company loyalty and being careless and irresponsible) similarly exacerbate the social divide between the Japanese and Brazilian residents (Maruyama & Woosnam, 2015; Tsuda, 2003).

As a result, Brazilian business owners and residents rarely attend meetings regarding tourism development in town because of the language and cultural barrier, although the main attraction of the tourism in town is the Brazilian culture (personal communication, 2015). As Jamison (1999) argues, whether this existing hostility is strengthened or mitigated by ENT is a particular interest examined within this study.
3 | RESEARCH METHODS

Data collected for this study included personal interviews and on-site observations conducted between May 2012 and February 2014. The main source of data involves seven in-depth interviews conducted with Oizumi residents operating businesses in Oizumi. Such individuals were recruited following a purposive sampling method strategy. Of the seven business owners, six were male and one was female. Their ages ranged from 35 to 66. Each in-depth interview typically lasted between 1 and 2 hr. During the interviews, a semistructured interview script with a series of open-ended questions was utilized. Interviewees were asked about the frequency and extent to which they are involved in the tourism development of Oizumi (e.g., participating in the local tourism events and joining the tourism board’s meeting). The interviewees were also asked to talk at length about their impressions of the best and worst things about existing tourism development in Oizumi, whether they supported or opposed the idea of focusing on Brazilian culture for tourism, and what they thought the town should do to improve its economy. Although the questions provided the outline of the discussion, the interviewees were encouraged to bring new topics into the conversation. Such interactive interviews may uncover interviewees’ honest opinions and help increase the study’s credibility.

A second form of data for this study involved 24 short interviews with Oizumi residents who participated in local events (i.e., Gourmet Yokocho) in Oizumi. The interviews with Japanese residents visiting local events each lasted between 10 and 15 min. A similar set of open-ended questions used for the business owners was utilized, although responses from these individuals was briefer. All interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed verbatim for interpretive analysis. In addition, on-site observation was carried out by the first author of this study at various tourist sites and events at Oizumi. Field notes were written during and immediately following observations for the analysis.

Because of the sampling method and size of the sample, no claim was made that this sample is representative of all residents of Oizumi, and thus, the conclusions of this study may not be generalized to a wider population. Instead, this study aims to provide rich description of a phenomenon from an emic perspective (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). To maintain study accuracy, interviews continued until sufficient repetition in data (i.e., data saturation) was reached (Bowen, 2008). In addition, using various data sources (interviews and observation) complies with the technique of triangulation that increases the reliability of the analysis.

To analyze the data, a cross-case approach was used. With this approach, the intent was to monitor, record, categorize, and then compare social phenomena (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981). Through the constant comparison of a case with previous cases, new themes and dimensions as well as new relationships can be discovered. Three steps required for this analysis have been explained by Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, and Coleman (2000). The first step involves categorizing data bits; this step is undertaken to reduce the complexity of data and uncover and categorize primary patterns within the data. The essential task of this categorization is to merge together, into temporary categories, those data bits relating to the same content (Dye et al., 2000). These categories become the basis for the conceptualization of the data. Therefore, it requires careful judgment about what is important and meaningful in the data. Temporary categories are then compared across cases to find patterns and variations within the comparing data stage. Refining categories is the final step whereby categories are continuously developed based on the fit between categories and data bits. Within this stage, the researcher attempts to define and redefine categories by specifying and changing the criteria used to categorize the data. Through continuous refinement, the criteria for including and excluding data bits becomes more accurate. To aid in analyzing the data, the qualitative data analysis software, Atlas.ti, was utilized. As Seale and Silverman (1997) have pointed out, using such computer programs ensures a systematic analysis of representative data instances.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 Transformation of Oizumi’s identity

When the interviewees talked about tourism development in Oizumi, they frequently expressed strong sentiments about Oizumi in the past as a well-known manufacturing town. Interviewees repeatedly, and often proudly, mentioned the town’s economic stability and liveliness in the past and, at the same time, expressed the hopelessness that they feel about the current condition. Community members frequently compared the past condition of the town against the current situation, stressing how the town flourished in the past. Residents were found making statements such as “When Sanyo [the largest company in Oizumi at the time] was doing well ....” Such a phrase served as the opening of many claims to indicate how the current economic condition contrasted with the past. For example, one interviewee described that in the past, the local summer festival in Oizumi always had the highest turnout in the region for its large firework show sponsored by Sanyo. Another interviewee also described that the town was full of workers in the past and compared it with the current emptiness:

When Sanyo was at its peak, the train with 10 cargos from Tokyo was just packed, and everybody got off at Nishikoizumi [the closest train station to the Sanyo factory]. There were some people who could not even get into the train. The train station was full of workers to Sanyo. It was just like a Disneyland. It is impossible now to even imagine that.

However, beginning in 2006, Sanyo began to lay off employees, and in 2008, the company was acquired by Panasonic, which led to even more downsizing. This change seems to have severely influenced the town’s economy. Interviewees often stated that, after Sanyo merged with Panasonic, the whole town was “not functioning the way it had.” The interviewees also expressed their strong concern about a decline of town’s liveliness and a sense of confidence among residents. One stated that “the entire town is feeling down.” This negative sentiment was expressed in the concern for out-migrating residents. One person voiced her worry about the continuous outflow of residents, especially younger generations, in search of employment outside Oizumi.
Because of the current economic situation of Oizumi, interviewees seemed aware of the need for alternative economic activity. At the same time, they appeared hesitant to admit tourism is a viable alternative. One interviewee described the town's attempt to recruit another factory to the town for economic revitalization, although the company ended up choosing another location. He continued with reluctance, “So, the local chamber of commerce and the town government thought we needed to focus on tourism.” Residents also stated several times that “We did not have to even think about tourism” when Sanyo was thriving. Such perspectives speak to the fact that interviewees consider tourism as a “last resort” for the economic survival of Oizumi. Tourism does not appear to be an option that the town’s residents were familiar with or had given much thought to supporting. Past studies (see Mbaiwa, 2011; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012) illustrate that residents consider tourism as disruptive to local culture when it influences the community’s traditional employment patterns because such changes are perceived to disturb the residents’ value and occupational identity. Similar to such cases, the residents of Oizumi seem unsettled about the town’s shifting identity from one centered on manufacturing to one focusing on Brazilian ENT.

4.2 Negative feelings concerning ENT

Although several interviewees (often the participants at the events) expressed their support for ENT, other event participants and members of the tourism bureau expressed negative sentiments particularly concerning the presentation of Brazilian culture to tourists. Interviewees identified several reasons for a lack of support for ENT. One is the top-down management style that they feel the town’s government engages in regarding tourism planning. Although past studies (Aytar & Rath, 2012; Henderson, 2000) illustrated that minority residents were often excluded from the planning of ENT and feeling disempowered, the narratives of this study revealed that in the case of Oizumi, the members of the majority group felt frustrated by a lack of participating opportunity. According to the interviewees, at the town meetings, they suggested several ideas to attract tourists and revitalize the local economy, including developing ecotourism, agri-tourism, or factory tours by using the existing resources in town, or combining the representation of Brazilian culture with these different types of tourism. However, interviewees stated that their opinions were not reflected in the tourism planning process. For example, one female interviewee who suggested developing ecotourism opportunities stated the town government did not take the idea into consideration:

*There are many big trees in Oizumi, and we have lots of greenery, and have the Tone river, and are close to Tokyo. So, I said [at the town meeting] that we can use these things for tourism. But, all of the sudden, Brazilian culture and samba became that [a main attraction].*

Another reason for the interviewees’ opposition to ENT focused on Brazilian culture is that it makes Japanese residents feel socially and economically excluded. According to the interviewees, visitors to local events in Oizumi are predominantly Brazilians, which makes Japanese residents feel out of place within their community. It provides credence for ENT’s ability to turn the ethnic majority residents into what Hollinshead (1998) refers to as halfway populations. In addition, tourists to Oizumi mostly shop or eat at Brazilian shops and restaurants; economic benefits among Japanese businesses are minimal. One stated, “If you ask me whether ENT leads to the improvement of the residents’ life, I don’t see that [good side]. That is why people don’t like the idea of labeling Oizumi as a Brazilian town.” Moreover, the members of the tourism bureau are often asked to volunteer their time or donate money to local tourism events under the guise of “machiokoshi [town’s revitalization].” For example, at the Oizumi Carnaval, an annual samba event, Japanese business owners are requested to volunteer to plan, fundraise, and operate the entire event. Furthermore, on the day of the festival, only Brazilian and other foreign businesses have priority in displaying their booths whereas Japanese business owners, who spend much time and resources for preparing the event, need to wait for vacant spots. The interviewees insisted that they need economic incentives to encourage greater collaboration in making the events as equitable and sustainable as possible. One interviewee stated, “I am slaving away and getting tired of doing carnival every year. In the end, we do not get any benefits.”

4.3 Negative perceptions of Brazilians

Although several reasons for the opposition towards ENT emerged, the strongest emotion that underlies the negative feeling towards ENT seems to be negative perceptions towards Brazilian residents in general. Interviewees had conflicts with their Brazilian neighbors relating to everyday life. As such, they are not inclined to label Oizumi as a “Brazilian town” because it has a negative connotation for them. Interviewees repeatedly stated that since Brazilian residents began to migrate to Japan, conflict over the excessive noise, unpaid bills, and children’s education has existed. Interviewees blamed Brazilian residents for the heightened crime rate in the region. Additionally, within the work place, the two groups have also experienced conflict over work ethic and language barriers. These conflicts between Japanese and Brazilian residents have been documented by other researchers (Hamada, 2006; Maruyama & Woosnam, 2015; Tsuda, 2003) in the past. As such, interviewees in this study stated that Japanese residents are not willing to cooperate with Brazilian residents on tourism projects:

> Because of all the conflicts in our everyday lives, there are many Japanese residents who have given up on their Brazilian neighbors. They do not even want to use the term “Brazilian” to describe Oizumi. There are a certain number of residents who feel this way, and it cannot be ignored.

One interviewee pointed out that labeling Oizumi may even negatively influence a sense of pride among the residents of the town because it indicates that “we do not have anything else but Brazilian culture.”

Although not all residents have negative perceptions of Brazilians, some interviewees stated that most Japanese residents do not have friendly or meaningful interactions with Brazilian residents in their everyday lives, and thus, they do not have a strong awareness about
Oizumi as a “Brazilian town.” One interviewee mentioned that “we do not have as much interaction [with Brazilian residents] as people outside of Oizumi would expect.” Indeed, Brazilian residents rarely participate in the local chamber of commerce or tourism bureau meetings.

4.4 | Perpetuated ethnic divide

Jamison (1999) argues that tourism may either strengthen the ethnic tension among different ethnic groups by causing competition over scarce tourism resources or mitigate the tension by being a common goal and common threat. Studies (see Jamison, 1999; Palmer, 2007) have indeed revealed that in the context of tourism, different ethnic groups have maintained good relationships, whereas Stronza (2008) has observed tourism can actually lead to tension between local ethnic groups as a result of competition over tourism-related resources. Oizumi appears to fit the latter case. During the interviews, participants often stressed the boundary between Japanese and Brazilian residents. Interviewees identified Brazilian residents as “they” and “those people,” while identifying Japanese as “we.” This type of language points to a lack of solidarity between the two cultural groups (Woosnam, 2011a; Woosnam, Norman, & Ying, 2009). Only one person acknowledged the ancestral connection between Brazilian and Japanese residents. The remaining interviewees stressed differences rather than commonalities between the two groups. Indeed, one interviewee mentioned the conflict with Brazilian neighbors over excessive noise at the local events, and stated, “They are different from Japanese. Something that they were born with or their blood is different from us.”

According to the interviewees and the first author’s observation, the Oizumi Matsuri, a local summer festival in Oizumi, is an event that clearly embodies the social boundary between Japanese and Brazilian residents. At the festival, all the Japanese vendors had set up their booths alongside the main street of Oizumi, and the audience in the area was also predominantly Japanese. On the contrary, the performers and audience on the east side of the Nishikoizumi train station was mainly Brazilians and other foreign residents. One interviewee stated, “We are just bipolarized at the Oizumi festival.”

The separation is so pronounced that sometimes the media has criticized Oizumi for segregating foreign residents from the indigenous Japanese residents. However, one interviewee who plays music at the Oizumi festival every year explained, though he has tried to connect with Brazilian musicians, it is difficult because the manner regarding the volume is different:

We just cannot play at the same time with Brazilians. Their volume exceeds ours. They face their speakers towards ours. We cannot outdo them.... We, Japanese, try to lower the volume so that people in the booths can talk, but they use full volume.... So, before, we tried to cooperate, but we don’t do that anymore.

In the quote above, the interviewee clearly engages in “Othering” language directed at Brazilian residents in identifying festival participants as “they.” Interviewees also described that they used to include a samba parade in the official program of the Oizumi festival. However, the conflict over arriving at an appropriate time to finish live music and street dancing developed. As a result, the parade portion of the festival was removed. These perspectives highlight the social boundary that exists between Brazilian and Japanese residents and how through tourism, such division is perpetuated rather than mitigated.

5 | CONCLUSION

The aim of this work was to illustrate the perceptions of ENT among majority Japanese residents residing within a Brazilian neighborhood in Oizumi, Gunma, Japan. Past studies of ENT (see Drew, 2010; Henderson, 2000; Santos et al., 2008) predominantly focused on the perspectives of ethnic minorities whose culture is represented, while lacking an exploration of the perspective among residents of a dominant ethnic group. Arguably, results from this study filled this gap and suggest that the logic of ENT is not a simple dichotomy of the members of ethnic minority group as “hosts” and members of the ethnic dominant group as “guests.” Instead, a local community for ENT may contain a third group, who is neither hosts nor guests but falls between the two established categories. As other studies (Gelbman & Timothy, 2011; Hollinshead, 1998; Kaftanoglu & Timothy, 2013) about such half-way populations suggested, this study revealed feelings of unease, restlessness, and confusion about the representation of their own community among the Japanese residents in Oizumi.

Narratives in this study indicated that Japanese residents have negative feelings towards labeling the town as “Brazilian.” One main reason for the feeling is their strong sentiments and nostalgia towards the past when the community flourished as a result of increased manufacturing. Participants conveyed that Japanese residents have not collectively accepted the town’s new identity as an ENT destination. Nunkoo and Gursoy (2012) maintain that residents often oppose tourism as an economic strategy when they perceive tourism as a threat to the community’s occupational distribution and traditional employment patterns. In the case of Oizumi, although not all the interviewees in this study were employed by the manufacturing industry, they had received economic and social benefits from the manufacturing industry indirectly in various ways. Therefore, they may feel that the town’s culture is threatened by tourism, although they are acutely aware of the need for alternative economic activity. In other words, implementation of ENT made the residents of Oizumi face the dilemma between the town’s traditional identity and the newly emerged identity. Such a dilemma may even negatively affect a sense of pride among the residents. This problem may be prevalent among newly created ENT destinations as Aytar and Rath (2012) argue because these cities’ past industrial identities are being replaced with cultural identities often at odds with the industrial identity for which residents of the dominant ethnic feel nostalgic.

Another reason for the negative feeling towards labeling Oizumi as a Brazilian town was the past conflict with Brazilian residents and lack of friendly, meaningful interactions with their Brazilian neighbors in their everyday lives. This may indicate that, although ENT can refashion ethnic neighborhoods to appear attractive in the eyes of tourists as a landscape of harmony and high social cohesion among
multiethnic groups (Santos & Yan, 2008), such an image may not necessarily match what residents of the dominant ethnic group feel the town’s image should be.

In addition, Japanese business owners felt exploited through ENT because of the need for volunteering or making financial contributions to ensure the success of local tourism events while they rarely receive economic benefit from tourism. This feeling of being victimized by tourism may stem both from the reality of ENT and from the Japanese residents’ own view toward ethnic diversity. On one hand, walking tours and bus tours in Oizumi bring tourists only to Brazilian restaurants and shopping malls while not making any stop at Japanese shops. Similarly, pamphlet, brochures, and magazines that promote Oizumi predominantly introduce Brazilian businesses to visitors. Arguably, this biased representation may have led to the negative attitudes towards ENT among the Japanese residents (Ap, 1992). On the other hand, the Japanese residents’ attitudes towards ENT may be caused by their denouncement with accommodating ethnic diversity. Past studies (Ang & Stratton, 2006; Back, Keith, Khan, Shukra, & Solomos, 2002) indicate that members of dominant ethnic groups have unfavorable attitudes towards multiculturalism and rather support assimilation compared to their ethnic minority counterparts. Wolsko, Park, and Judd (2006) argues that this is because embracing ethnic diversity may require the ethnic majority population relinquish the domination and homogeneity of their culture. That is to say, Japanese residents in Oizumi may perceive not only a loss of economic benefits but also a defeat of their culture and privilege by promoting Oizumi as Brazilian town.

These underlying reasons for Japanese residents’ negative feeling about ENT are interrelated to preexisting tensions that existed in Oizumi even before ENT was initiated. Past studies (Gössling, 2002; Raymond & Hall, 2008) indicate that tourism may accelerate existing social, cultural, and economic problems in the host communities. Indeed, residents in Oizumi had been suffering from the severe economic crisis since the mid-2000s, in spite of the various attempts to revitalize it. Arguably, the antitourism attitude of the Japanese residents is an outlet for them to express sentiments about the past flourishing of the town, frustration about the current economic condition, and disappointment with the local government’s economic policies. Similarly, previous studies (Jamison, 1999; Stronza, 2008) argue that tourism serves as a catalyst for already existing tension or cooperation among ethnic groups. In the case of Oizumi, the existing hostility between Japanese and Brazilian residents seems strengthened through the implementation of ENT. According to interviewees, a clear divide between Japanese and Brazilian residents had been drawn prior to ENT. Although ENT helped somewhat increase opportunities for contacts between the two groups through various tourism events, the increased contacts were not set up in a way to enhance cooperation between the two groups. Rather, interviewees in this study stated that the differences, rather than similarities, became apparent through the increased contact. Such feelings may exacerbate the existing social boundary between the two groups.

Additionally, narratives portrayed in this study are those of Japanese residents of Oizumi who own local businesses and have dissimilar attitudes towards tourism with residents. Byrd et al. (2009) indicate that business entrepreneurs and residents have different attitudes towards tourism, which can be explained by the perceived benefits each group receives from tourism. Arguably, the data of this study indicate Japanese residents with entrepreneurial and nonentrepreneurial backgrounds do not perceive economic and social benefits from Oizumi’s Brazilian-focused ENT. Rather, study participants feel similarly that the tourism project is overtly biased, both economically and socially, towards Brazilian residents.

Overall, ENT in Oizumi does not appear to be managed in a sustainable way from the perspective of Japanese residents. More precisely, previous studies (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006) suggest that for a tourism project to be sustainable, multiple aspects across the triple bottom line need to be considered. Results would indicate that Japanese residents in Oizumi are dissatisfied with the current economic, sociocultural, and political situations surrounding ENT and are essential disempowered from the ENT focused on Brazilian culture. This is evidenced in narratives illustrating a lack of equal distribution of economic benefits from ENT. The interviewees also expressed resentment about the fact that their opinions about tourism development were not reflected in the actual planning, which illustrates a lack of sustainability and political empowerment (Boley et al., 2015). In addition, although Choi and Sirakaya (2006) argue that tourism needs to be implemented in a way to respect community culture and strengthen social cohesiveness and pride among the residents, ENT in Oizumi has exacerbated the divide within the community. Residents also communicated that the town’s traditional identity is threatened by the tourism project. These results indicate that members of the dominant ethnic group feel economically, socially, and politically excluded, which suggest the importance of exploring perceptions of various ethnic groups within local destinations, including among the dominant ethnic group, so as to make ENT as sustainable as possible for all involved (Richards & Hall, 2002).

5.1 Implications, limitations, and future studies
Tourism authorities responsible for planning and managing ENT in Oizumi need to provide a forum to share information about ENT in Oizumi, regarding how the decision is made and how benefits are distributed in town. Authorities also need to listen to Japanese residents’ concerns regarding transforming the town’s identity and discuss how to implement the ENT without threatening the existing social identity of Oizumi. If residents feel like they have a voice in tourism planning, research shows that they are more likely to perceive the impacts of tourism as positive and will be more likely to support tourism as an economic development strategy (Boley et al., 2014). Practitioners also need to provide equal opportunities to Japanese business owners in conducting business at tourism events. It is also important to facilitate positive interactions between resident groups of different ethnicity to foster positive attitudes towards tourism (Woosnam, 2011b; Woosnam, 2012).

This study was only conducted within one ethnic neighborhood; more studies need to be conducted in various ethnic neighborhoods to deepen our understanding of this phenomenon. Studies in ethnic neighborhoods where different levels of ethnic tension or cooperation exist are especially critical. Finally, the ENT in Oizumi is still at an early stage of development, and thus, the economic impact has yet to be
fully realized. Therefore, exploring residents’ perspectives, both those of the ethnic minority and those of the dominant ethnic group, in communities where economic and social impacts of ENT are more pronounced, would help deepen our understanding.

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