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Smita Khan
Hindu College, University, India

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Laurence Tiberre
Toulouse University Le Mirail II, France
Taylor’s University, Malaysia
Marcella Alyosius
National University of Malaysia, Malaysia

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Bangkok University International College, Thailand

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Robert Charles G. Capistrano
Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

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New Jersey: Prentice Hall
Zulmiyati Kambie, Taylor’s University, Malaysia
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Contents

The Importance of ‘Social’ in Family Tourism
Heike A. Schänzel
AUT University, New Zealand

An Insight into Stereotypical Images and Encountered Reality of South Asia as a Tourism Destination
Sonia Khan
H.P. University, India

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Taylor’s University, Malaysia
Marcella Aloysius
National University of Malaysia, Malaysia

Perceptions of Selected Attributes in Tourism Management of Music Festivals: A Case Study of Pattaya Music Festival 2012
Samart Plangpramool
Burapha University International College, Thailand

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Huynh Hue Linh & Frederic Bouchon
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Research Paper

The Importance of ‘Social’ in Family Tourism

Heike A. Schänzel
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Abstract: This paper explores the relationship between social dimensions in tourism and families. Social tourism has received increasing attention as a new form of tourism for disadvantaged families to increase their social capital. However, benefits to social relations such as strengthening social connectedness have been identified for some time within the larger family tourism market. This paper extends the understanding on ‘social issues’ for families who travel, with important implications for human relationships and social life. This study is based on families in New Zealand. Parents were first surveyed through five primary schools (n = 110) and then given the option to be interviewed using a whole-family methodology for which 10 families volunteered (20 parents and 20 children). This study provides a generational perspective on the social dimensions on holiday in that parents are more deliberate about social identity formation whereas children seek fun and sociality. The findings further show that most families use travelling as an opportunity to strengthen social connections with friends and extended family. Family holidays serve the purpose of (re)connecting people through tourism that can be seen as a social practice that involves networking, social capital formation and social obligations. The contribution of family tourism then deserves more attention for its integral role in society.

Key words: Family tourism, social tourism, children, parents, social connectedness, social identities


Introduction

In recent years social tourism has received increasing attention as a form of tourism for disadvantaged families to increase their social and family capital (Hazel, 2005; McCabe, 2009; McCabe, Minnaert & Diekman, 2011; Minnaert, 2012). The studies...
on this new form of tourism are coming out of Europe and are laudable in their approach to make the benefits of holidaying more inclusive for everyone in society. However, the social benefits of tourism for its participants have been identified for some time within family tourism as opportunities for bonding, communication and strengthening of relationships (Carr, 2011; Gram, 2005; Shaw, Havitz & Delamere, 2008). Holidays are often the only time the whole family spends together for an extended period without the distractions of work and school.

The reasons that families go on holiday then differ from those of general holidaying individuals. Family holidays are less about an escape or break ‘from’ home routines and more about spending time ‘with’ the family (including extended family) doing fun activities that are different to normal and which create positive memories (Schänzel, 2012; Shaw et al., 2008). The emphasis lies here on facilitating social connectedness and the formation of social identities with regard to belonging to a social network or family. However, there has been little research into how tourism contributes to enhance levels of social capital (Mura & Tavakoli, 2012). This paper brings attention to the largely neglected social relations between tourists and explores the opportunities for turning tourism from being part of the societal problems we face today – such as climate change and unsustainable consumer cultures – into taking a more active role in alleviating them.

The ‘Social’ in Family Tourism Literature

Families travelling with children form the consumer base of most tourism operators and are estimated to generate over a third of receipts within the wider travel industry (Travelhorizons, 2009). Family travel (defined as that undertaken by adults, including grandparents, with children) is predicted to grow at a faster rate than all other forms of leisure travel, partly because it represents a way to reunite the family and for family members to spend time with each other, away from the pressures of work (Butlins, 2012; Yesawich, 2007). The demand for family holidays and its potential to create meaningful family relationships can then be of more societal importance than the economic contribution of family tourism. This paper aims to illustrate the importance of ‘social’ aspects in family tourism beyond recent attentions on social tourism and turns awareness to the pursuit of social relationships on holiday as an opportunity for society. It is based on a study of holidaying families in New Zealand.

There is a perception that families today are too busy to spend enough time with their children and that families have less time to relax, play, communicate and sit down for meals together (Mintel, 2009). Increasing attention is placed by society on families spending time together at home, during leisure and on holiday. Within this context, family holidays are perceived as opportunities for bonding to ensure the happiness and togetherness of the family, away from the distractions of everyday life.
Parents value the opportunity to spend quality time (indicating meaningful interaction) with their children and this has become more desired as the hurried pace of life places stresses upon families (Lehto, Choi, Lin & MacDermid, 2009). It is the emphasis placed on ‘family time’ that lies at the heart of facilitating social connectedness and formation of social identities through tourism. This focus is also seen as an entrenched part of Western discourse (Daly, 1996; Shaw, 2010) which reflects an ideology of togetherness associated with social values about what it means to be a good family.

Social connectedness centres on establishing social relationships with loved ones and is a time for (re)connecting and providing support for each other. The importance of connectedness for families is recognised throughout the literature dealing with family holidays (Carr, 2011; Gram, 2005; Schänzel, Smith & Weaver, 2005; Shaw et al., 2008) and is a prime reason for social tourism (McCabe, 2009; Minnaert, 2012). The focus on social values such as family togetherness and social relations is generally accepted in the family tourism literature although other non-family tourist groups also have similar social interaction needs such as bonding with friends and partners (Larsen, Urry & Axhausen, 2007) through which meaning is derived (Colton, 1987). The key concept here is social capital (Bourdieu, 1984) which was popularised by Putnam (2000) as a label for the positive effects of sociality (Portes, 1998). The family is one of the most fundamental sources of social capital (Putnam, 1995) which can have a particular influence on children’s development (Mura & Tavakoli, 2012). However, tourism research has largely neglected issues of sociality and (re)producing social networks (Larsen et al., 2007; Obrador, 2012) despite the analysis of social networks at-a-distance and social capital being of central importance to society.

Family holidays can also be about teaching children about ethics and values that are understood as generativity or guiding the next generation (Erikson, 1950). The literature understands this as generating social identities (Lehto et al., 2009; Shaw et al., 2008) or belonging to a group from which family members draw a sense of ‘who they are’: their identity (Burns & Novelli, 2006). Social identities are also established through shared memories (Shaw et al., 2008). Tourist photography is one of the uniquely modern ways through which families produce memories and visual life-narratives. Photography is then an integral component in producing ‘identity, social relations and ‘familyness” (Haldrup & Larsen, 2003, p. 26) and manifests as souvenirs of quality family time, emblematic of the emotional investment made in the social relationships depicted (Hallman, Mary, & Benbow, 2007). Generally, little is known about the meanings and identities ascribed to holiday photography with regards to families and social identity formation through family tourism is lacking in the literature (Burns & Novelli, 2006).

There is scant knowledge about the social aspects of family tourism from a generational perspective. While there are some studies on the meaning of family
holiday experiences to parents (Gram, 2005; Lehto et al., 2009; Shaw et al., 2008), only few studies have investigated the family holiday experiences of children (Carr, 2011; Hilbrecht, Shaw, Delamere & Havitz, 2008; Small, 2008). These suggest that, for children, holidays are about being involved, having fun and that connections with social relations make for a good holiday experience. The purpose of this study was to provide insight into the social dimensions on family holidays from the perspectives of all family members, including parents and children, and from their individual and interactive family group perspectives. This would allow a broader understanding of the contributions of family tourism to society.

**Methods**

The study focused on domestic tourism in New Zealand (which accounts for over half of all tourism earnings in New Zealand), of which families represent a major market. In order to provide a domestic context to family holiday behaviour in New Zealand and as a basis for sampling, a preliminary parental survey was administered through five primary schools in the Wellington region. To maintain some homogeneity in terms of life cycle stage (Shaw et al., 2008) only families that had at least one child, 8–12 years old, were invited to participate. The 110 parental responses from the survey (15% response rate) then formed the voluntary pool (using the option of ticking a box to participate) for the whole-family interviews.

Ten biological fathers and mothers and 20 children participated in the study (eleven boys and nine girls, ranging from 6–16 years), with between one and three children per family. Although the qualitative part of this study required two parents to give a gender perspective on parenthood, it allowed for step-parents. However, no blended families volunteered. The participants were white, European-New Zealand and middle-class, making the families relatively homogenous and not representative of the diversity of New Zealand families.

The study aimed to understand the individual and collective experiences and meanings of family holidays over time for all family members. Whole-family methodology was adopted from family research to tourism (Schänzel, 2010). This involved interviewing in the family home, first, all family members together in a group interview and, then, each family member separately to capture their collective and individual perspectives. Children had the option of having a parent present during the individual interviews and all interviews were conducted in an open space in the family home (usually around the dining table). This was repeated three times, once before and twice after their summer holiday to capture their anticipation and short- and longer-term recollections of holiday experiences. Auto-driven photo-elicitation in the form of photographs taken by the interviewees as stimuli for projective interviewing in the post-holiday stages was used (Schänzel & Smith, 2011). This is a
valuable tool for allowing children to actively interpret their own experiences and underlines the importance of family holiday photography in creating longer-term memories (Haldrup & Larsen, 2003). The choice of methodology was underpinned by the philosophical perspective of interpretivism and a symbolic interactionist perspective was adopted for this study. This also formed the basis for a grounded theory methodology (GTM) used for the analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) which allowed a focus on inter-personal relations within the family group. In order to ensure the integrity and trustworthiness of qualitative research, it was necessary to evaluate how intersubjective elements influenced data collection and analysis (Finlay, 2002) which included biography, gender, parental role and the participants’ family worlds.

The first stage of analysis of the parental data from the survey was done by using SPSS, which generated leads for the interview questions. The subsequent stages of interviews were all digitally recorded and later transcribed. The GTM was carried out through manual coding in that data were initially coded by reading through the transcripts several times while making notes which were then sorted into themes and integrated into a theoretical framework. A constructivist approach to GTM was used that is based on initial or open coding and selective or focused coding but deems axial coding unnecessary because it adds complexity with little benefit to the analysis (Charmaz, 2000). Only after the core themes were established was selective coding applied using the computer program NVivo 8 for the writing up of the findings. Using the GTM meant that the successive stages of research involved concurrent collection and analysis of data informing the next stage or constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). After all of the interview data had been coded a comparative analysis was conducted and theoretical saturation was deemed achieved (Morse, 1995) when all the data fitted into the theoretical framework of the main themes of family time and own time. The main point is that in family time, one is connected to family while in own time one seeks freedom from family commitments. The temporal (pre-, on- and post- holiday) element to family holidays is signified more by a continuation of the main themes which made the discussion of the thematic perspectives more predominant. The focus of this paper is on family time which emphasises the neglected social dimensions in tourism. Family time encapsulates the purposiveness of spending time together with the immediate and extended family and included idealised notions of novelty, social connectedness and social identities.

Social Dimension on Family Holidays

Social Motivations and Travel Patterns for Family Holidays

It emerged from the parental survey ($n = 110$) that of the $82\%$ of families ($n = 90$) going on a summer holiday, $24\%$ of families planned to stay with friends and relatives,
28% planned travelling with extended family and friends and 64% planned to visit friends and relatives on the next holiday. This means that the upcoming family holiday includes extended family and friends by travelling, visiting and staying with them. Thus, apart from spending time with the immediate family, visiting or meeting up with friends and kin is an integral part of family holidaying both domestically and internationally. The importance of this social dimension is also reflected in the motivations for family travelling (see Figure 1). The key motivation for the upcoming summer family holiday was ‘time with friends and relatives’ for 39% of parents and ‘time together’ as a family for 16% of parents. This indicates that family holidays for these participants were primarily about spending time together with the immediate family, extended family and friends and were less motivated by a break/change, relaxation or exploration of new places. The reasons that families go on holiday then have more of a social component compared to general holidaying individuals which is further illustrated in the quotes below.

**Family Holidays as Opportunities for Social Connectedness and Social Identity Formation**

The whole-family interviews provided insights into the social dimension on family holidays from the different generational perspectives of parents and children. The findings are presented here under the two sub-themes that emerged on family holiday
experiences and are part of family time: social connectedness and social identity formation. Selected quotes from the interviews are used to illustrate the key themes with New Zealand birds as pseudonyms for family names.

**Sociability and Social Connectedness**

The opportunity for more shared meal times on holiday were used as a coming together of the family that often provided the platform for conversations and activities such as playing cards. The commensality of food experiences were often mentioned as holiday highlights by all family members as illustrated by the Pukeko family in the post-holiday interview when asked about family highlights on holiday:

*Probably the meals because we all sit around. Meals are quite important for us as a family. We make a point at always sitting down at dinner and talking and when we camp, we play cards.* (Pukeko mother)

The common experience of sharing food on holiday as a highlight can include the gathering of food such as fishing and collecting mussels and the scenic beauty of the location. This is illustrated by the Kereru family commenting on a photograph in their post-holiday interview:

*The dining is always nice because we always sit down together. That was a very nice spot to sit outside and have a meal and have a barbecue or cook up mussels that we got off the rocks. The family dining is a nice part of the holiday.* (Kereru father)

This was contrasted with the realities of family life at the Kereru home who commented that it is not often that the whole family sits together for a meal. The special aspect of the shared family meal on holiday was often documented through photographs. The collective enjoyment of the shared meal on holiday provided opportunities for conversations, storytelling and other family activities and also offered opportunities for memory creation through photographic documentation. The sociability of family meals on holiday then took on special significance as time rich for each other that was remembered as highlights by all family members.

Holidays for the parents provided an opportunity for (re)connecting that was about bonding and getting to know their own family again through spending time together:

*"I would say it drew us much closer. You really get to know, it sounds funny, but about what they like and what they don’t like and things that you maybe didn’t realise.”* (Goldfinch mother, final family interview)

Holidays also enabled children to spend more time with their parents in a less stressed way, especially if the parents were working full-time:
“I have more time to spend with dad because he is at work from about 6 or 7am until we have dinner and then I go to bed. So it is really nice seeing dad more and mum not stressed about work. It is just seeing everyone and like talking more.” (Pukeko boy, 11, final individual interview)

In general, for the children it was less about the quantity of time but more about how parents were spending their time with them in a more relaxed way.

All the families in this study stayed with, visited, or had family and friends coming along on their summer holiday. Visiting friends and relatives (VFR), thus, played an important role for families to (re)connect with social relations:

“We tend to do a bit of a meander around to catch up with people, very much the same way continuing contacts and renewing friendships.” (Tui mother, final family interview)

For some of the children, and particularly the girls, holidays were predominantly about (re)connecting with the extended family like grandparents and cousins:

“Just grandparents and cousins make the holiday for me I reckon.” (Tui girl, 14, final individual interview)

In the case of the Tui family the grandparents came along on holiday as a way to spend time together on a multi-generational holiday.

Holidays were also about (re)connecting with friends who were considered part of the family, as the immigrant Goldfinch family from South Africa, who have no family living in New Zealand, demonstrated at the final family interview:

Mother: “And they are the kind of friends who became like family. I am 100% sure that both the families [we visited] will be friends for the rest of our lives.”

Girl, 10: “We are so close that I call them my New Zealand cousins.”

Friends for immigrants then become substitute family members to provide social connectedness in a new home country.

Family holidays then were primarily about maintaining social relationships where meaning was derived through social interaction within the nuclear family, extended family, adopted family and friends. Holidays represent the main opportunity for the family, especially children, to connect with their extended family and spend quality time together. VFR, thus, is intricately integrated with family holidays, which can turn to social obligation when there is a lack of choice as captured in the following response:

“The next [holiday] is purely because we have to see the family again. It is more a chore rather than a holiday.” (Tui father, final individual interview)

While (re)connecting with social relations was sought on family holidays there were also social connections that were viewed as obligations. The social dimension on family holidays then encompassed positive and negative elements; extended family
and friends could provide social connection as well as become an obligation. Issues of sociality and sociability such as those displayed in commensality were paramount to family holidays and were supported by photographic images.

**Social Identities and Traditions**

Holidays provided opportunities for identity formation and handing down of traditions that were linked to social connectedness. These were about social identities and perpetuating family rituals in the form of a holiday tradition. Family holidays signified a continuation of a tradition passed down from generation to generation as exemplified in these responses:

“For me it is a continuation of letting the children enjoy a summer beach holiday which is something of a privilege I had as a child.” (Kereru mother, final family interview)

Within the tradition of family holidays, there were also distinct rituals, such as family song and a log book, which reinforced the symbolic nature of holidays:

“<Wife> keeps a journal of the things that happened on the way and all the adventures and what time we were at such and such a place. Yes, we do have them going back to years and it is quite funny to take them all with you and read them on the way.” (Kereru father, pre-individual interview)

For the parents, the symbolism of maintaining a family tradition was linked to creating positive memories, which was part of a concern for establishing and guiding the next generation or generativity. Parents used holidays as an opportunity to create memories which were part of generating a social identity in its family members. The memories centred on special moments that were considered different from everyday life routines:

“And it is so special and it is memories that you will get that no one can take away from you. And it draws everyone in the family closer, those special moments that you share.” (Goldfinch mother, final individual interview)

Memory creation through family tales and lore were exemplified by an incident of dolphins that were mistaken as sharks as retold in the final Kereru family interview:

Mother: “The dolphins.”
Father: “The non-sharks.”
Boy, 10: “The ones you [family] thought were sharks.”
Mother: “A family legend.”

Photos in general helped in stimulating and creating the holiday memory. They became the tangible element of otherwise intangible and unreliable memories and perpetuated the tradition and symbolism of family holidays:
“And because the kids are young and we might forget we do take lots of photos as well to jolt the memory quickly.” (Kakariki father, final family interview)

Parents deliberately sought to recreate their memories of childhood holidays experiences for their children and maintain a family tradition over time. The holiday memories got reconstructed through photos, stories and family lore which constituted a more positive retelling and a (re)production of a condensed family time. For parents, this production of memory stories was part of a deliberate desire to provide meaning, permanence, and social belonging in guiding their children through childhood.

For some parents, holidays provided a conscious opportunity for guiding their children (or generativity) by instilling values, traditions, and skills:

“I think it [holiday] is a very important time to teach your children and that is something I remember from my childhood…We did those things and they were fun and maybe you hope that they are doing it for their children. There are lots of skills that I am hopefully passing on to the girls.” (Kea father, final individual interview)

Holidays were also about teaching family-specific skills and encouraging personal interests that reflected parental pastimes such as sailing, fishing, riding motorbikes, archery, and lighting fires outside the normal urban environment, as the Pukeko family at the pre-family interview demonstrated:

Mother: “We are all pyromaniacs, my dad is very happy that they all jointly build great bonfires, well supervised.”
Boy, 13: “It is a lot of fun.”
Father: “And it is not something you can do around here.”
Mother: “Not ever, but it is a really neat way to learn on how to do all of that is sensible and what can be done and how to keep it under control.”

Holidays also provided an opportunity for character development in the children by overcoming challenges and learning social and practical skills, which reflected the importance placed by the parents on acquiring general life skills:

“There are life skills everywhere, particularly on holiday because you are in a different environment and that is when their upbringing comes into play with the choices they can make.” (Pukeko father, final individual interview)

For the parents, especially mothers, holidays were also about heritage and belonging to an extended family:

“It adds a different dimension. Also it really helps the kids perhaps reinforce who they are and their heritage gets kind of passed on which to me is important that it reinforces them as a member of this family.” (Tui mother, post-family interview)
As a result, several mothers mentioned that their children grew up more during the holidays:

“The more experiences we have, they [children] learn something and you come back and find that they are not necessarily more mature but their knowledge has expanded. Their view of the world is expanded and they have grown up a little bit more.” (Pukeko mother, final individual interview)

All these responses demonstrated the parents’ deliberate efforts in generativity by transmitting family-specific skills and establishing family values. For the children, learning was usually related to specific activities and social relations:

“I am gradually learning about fishing and sailing, slowly but not specifically and learning a bit more about birds and stuff that are sometimes there.” (Kereru boy, 13, final individual interview)

“How fun it is to spend time with [extended] family and friends because I didn’t want to go first. I changed my mind when we got there.” (Weka girl, 8, final individual interview)

Generativity on holiday was related to skills which reflected family values and establishing traditions that shape the family’s social identities. There was a purposiveness or deliberation by the parents which was largely unrecognised by the children.

**Discussion**

The findings show that the majority of families on their holiday use travelling as an opportunity to visit friends or family, stay with friends or family or have friends or family coming along on holiday. It emphasises the growing importance of VFR tourism (Backer, 2012) because social networks are becoming increasingly dispersed (Larsen et al., 2007) in New Zealand and overseas. It emerged from the interviews that for immigrants with no immediate family present, close friends can take on the role of family. There is also the expectation to visit friends and family when travelling that can lead to social obligations. This is a representation of the dilemma between high levels of familistic solidarity and individual freedom (Portes, 1998) and highlights the more negative aspects of social capital as bound by the membership in social networks such as family (Putnam, 1995). Some families travelled together with the grandparents resulting in intergenerational reconnection travel that is becoming increasingly popular (Butlins, 2012). Family holidays then serve the purpose of (re)connecting people through tourism and can be seen as a social practice that involves networking, social capital formation and social obligation.

Family holidays can play an important role in strengthening social relationships and building of social capital within the immediate and extended family by overcoming time and mobility issues. They allowed for more quality time, increased intergenerational
communication and creation of shared memories (Carr, 2011). The meaning of social capital here is about social relations integrating people which goes to the core of sociology (Portes, 1998). For example, the increased frequency of family meals on holiday allow for commensality and sociality that can serve as memorable highlights (Lashley, Morrison & Randall, 2003). Photographic images capturing these intimate family relations help in the creation of social identities through producing rather than reflecting family life (Larsen, 2005). Holidays then were considered a symbolic time out of the normal that warranted remembering and were used for generating social identities in family members. This supports that tourism is an experience that creates and strengthens social relationships among people (Mura & Tavakoli, 2012) and facilitates family’s need for face-to-face and meaningful interaction.

This study highlights generational differences that bring a variance of purposiveness: the parental meanings are more about social connectedness (Shaw et al., 2008) and social identity formation whereas the children’s are primarily about social fun (Gram, 2005; Hilbrecht et al., 2008). The social capital construction makes a valuable part of the social identities formation although this remains unrecognised by the children at the time since they are more concerned about hedonistic pursuits and sociality. The social aspects for children then play out differently from their parents but together emphasise how the pursuit of social relationships through tourism provides an opportunity for many problems in society. It must be recognised then that the benefits of social tourism in its current understanding (McCabe et al., 2011; Minnaert, 2012) can be expanded across immediate and extended family tourism. This is also true for non-Western societies that are largely absent in tourism research (Mura & Tavakoli, 2012). The value of social aspects through tourism then needs a much broader application than currently acknowledged. For example, the academic dissemination of tourism and social identities (Burns & Novelli, 2006) needs to be inclusive of families.

Conclusion

Tourism is currently promoted more for its economic benefits than for any social benefits despite recent attention to the benefits of social tourism for disadvantaged families (Hazel, 2005; McCabe et al., 2011). Family tourism extends across a broader range of society and this study explores the possibility that bringing people together through travelling can alleviate some of the problems society faces today. Family holidays primarily serve the purpose of (re)connecting people through tourism and can be seen as a social practice that involves networking, social capital formation and social obligation that becomes integral to social life. The contribution here is to draw attention to the role that tourism can play in the pursuit of human relationships as an opportunity to strengthen connections in society (Putnam, 2000). It emphasises issues
of sociality and (re)producing social networks that are neglected in tourism research (Larsen et al., 2007; Obrador, 2012) but are of central importance to humanity. Instead of treating tourism as a frivolous form of consumption and part of societies’ problems, family tourism can be authentic and socially beneficial because of the connectedness it provides (Hall, 2011).

The study is limited in scope by being situated in a Western society and based on a small number of nuclear families. More research is needed across a wider and larger diversity of family forms (single parent, gay and lesbian families, blended families, among other forms) and extended into non-Western societies. Family travel is predicted to grow globally at a faster rate than all other forms of leisure travel, mainly because it represents a way to reunite the family and spend meaningful time together, away from the demands of everyday life. The social benefits gained from family tourism then deserve more attention in academia and public policy as people will always travel to reconnect. This can present the tourism industry with opportunities to better cater for this economically substantial market but is of even more importance to society for its extensive opportunities in building stronger communities.

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An Insight into Stereotypical Images and Encountered Reality of South Asia as a Tourism Destination

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Abstract: Destination image is a key determinant of visitation to any tourist attraction. Images can be formed as a result of continuous learning through knowledge resources, exposure to promotional media, or on account of personal experiences. National or regional destination identities are often constructed in the minds of people as holistic impressions that represent a stereotypical mental picture based upon image associations related to unique icons, people, socio cultural, geographic, economic, political, and legal environment of a place, among others. On one hand the images can be mere illusions or stereotypical representations and on the other, they may contain an element of genuine existing realities. In tourism, images are crucial as they evoke fascination, anxiety, fear, or mixed feelings about a destination and determine visitation intention. Taking the case of South Asia as a region that is registering a strong but gradual growth in tourism over the years, this paper explores the tenuous relationship between illusionary stereotypical images and encountered reality based perceptions of selected tourism destination countries within the region. The objective of the paper is to determine if the stereotypical images of countries are in congruence with the images reported by tourists as a result of their encountered reality at the destination. The exploratory study aims at gaining a better insight into the image of South Asia as a tourism destination and discusses implications for destination marketing organisations to construct images that transcend mere stereotypical symbolism.

Keywords: Destination image, stereotypes, South Asia

Introduction

Tourism has been registering phenomenal growth particularly in the Asia Pacific region. The international tourism statistics published by the United Nations World Tourism report that Asia Pacific was the best performing region with a positive 7% growth in 2012 (UNWTO, 2013). The statistics of Asia Pacific region report that the top ten arrival destinations of the region (in terms of international tourism arrival in millions) for 2011 were China (57.5), Malaysia (24.7), Hong Kong (23.3), Thailand (19.10), Macau (12.9), Singapore (10.3), South Korea (9.8), Indonesia (7.6) India (6.29) and Japan (6.2). These statistics indicate that from within South Asian region, only India figures among the top ten arrivals of Asia Pacific.

On the global scenario, while a country like Malaysia, from the South-east Asian region has entered the top ten ranking international tourist arrival countries, the countries of South Asia (particularly the countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, that is, SAARC region) namely, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Bhutan (excluding Afghanistan) capture only a mere percentage of the world’s tourism market share despite having an abundance of geographical attractions, a treasure of ancient civilization, and captivating religious and cultural diversity. Within the Asia Pacific region, South-east Asia ranks top in tourist arrivals, followed by North East Asia and South Asia. Most South Asian countries, being developing nations, the associated image of being economically and socially backward often overshadows the magnetism of the captivating attractions therein and becomes responsible for the relatively lesser number of tourists to the region. In addition the much publicised and at times exaggerated media coverage of adverse happenings in the region also becomes responsible for creating negative images thereby increasing the apprehensions of the cautious tourist market about visiting the countries of the region. Hence if images can account for determining visitation, it becomes vital for marketers to gain an insight into the nature of destination image present in the minds of potential and actual tourist markets. This study aims to explore the stereotype and encountered reality image of the countries of the South Asian region and compares the two to determine if there is congruence between them. A deconstruction of these images, their origin, and an identification of the extent of myth or reality behind them can provide valuable clues for developing, modifying, managing and promoting an appropriate image that is instrumental in attracting tourists.

Destination Image

Images are constructs or mental representations in the minds of people that offer clues for interpretation of people, objects, environment etc. while also giving rise to expectations thereby. Images can be positive (good), negative (bad) or obscure (not
clearly identified). In tourism, a destination with a positive image draws more tourists compared to a destination that suffers from a negative image. Hence the concept of destination image has attracted keen interest among tourism scholars and substantial research has been devoted to understanding the same (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Beerli and Martin, 2004; Butler, 1990; Cohen, 1993; Echtner and Ritchie, 2003; Gartner, 1993; Jeong, Jun, Gibson & Holland, 2012; Kim & Richardson, 2003; Kotler & Gertner, 2004; Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993; Lopes, 2011; Pike & Ryan, 2004; San Martin & Rodriguez, 2008; Tasci & Gartner, 2007. Although destination image has been described in a number of ways, no single definition of image has been unanimously accepted by tourism scholars.

From amongst the scholars, the explanation given by Crompton (1979) is widely cited. He describes destination image to be an assimilation of beliefs, ideas and impressions that people hold about a place. The formation of images is attributed to communication received by people through general information, promotional media, word of mouth through family and friends, and personal experiences that people have had. Describing formation of images, Gunn (1988) expresses that an image is formed at two levels, Organic and Induced. Organic image is formed prior to induced image. Non-commercial sources like educational books (that provide factual knowledge), independent news, media reports and unsolicited information from friends and family, all of which are uncontrolled, unbiased and autonomous agents (Gartner, 1993) contribute to the formation of the ‘organic image’ that is beyond the control of the destination area (Ahmed et al., 2006). This image is also termed as the ‘secondary image’ and is considered to be an authentic reflection of existing reality. The organic image may be appealing or may not. The induced image takes the organic image as a base and is formed in addition to it. It results from controlled, biased promotional sources (like advertising material) that are consciously tailored to create a desirable projection of a destination. The idea behind induced image is to create an appealing picture. Besides these two levels of image formation, finally the resultant ‘primary image’ is formed actually after personal visitation and experience at a destination. This primary image is more complex as it is a combination of both organic and induced image. The secondary and primary images are also termed as a priori (before visit) and posteriori image (after visit) respectively. Discussing the significance of images, it is argued that an image is crucial for a destination as it determines visiting intentions (Gartner 1989), facilitates destination selection process (Ahmed 1991; Andreu, Bigne & Cooper, 2000; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b; Chon, 1990, Gartner, 1993; Gunn, 1972; Milman & Pizam, 1995; Um & Crompton, 1990; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989; Zahra, 2012) and regulates tourist behaviour (Ashworth & Goodall, 1988). Destination image thus holds a lot of importance for destination marketing organisations in order to embark upon appropriate image creation and management.
Country Images and Stereotypes

Though studies have attempted to investigate the difference between country and destination image (Campo & Alvarez, 2010; Mossberg & Kleppe, 2005; Nadeau, Heslop, O’Reilly & Luk, 2008), a country image is often equated with destination image and no clear distinction has been identified between the two. A country image is said to reflect an ‘umbrella image’ or ‘collective identity’ of a nation based on symbolic associations arising from organic attributes of the country like history, geography, people, society, idiosyncratic culture, political and economic situation and iconic attractions of a nation. It is argued that a country image often encompasses a destination image, if the destination is considered to be a particular tourism place within the country (e.g. if the overall image of a country is of underdevelopment, that image may overshadow the unique destination image of particular city within the country that on the contrary may be developed). Explaining a destination image, Um & Crompton (1990) similarly describe it as a ‘gestalt’ or ‘holistic’ construct (based upon the concept of perception in Gestalt psychology that views an entity as a complete form, with the ‘whole’ to be greater than the ‘sum of its parts’). Hence the difference between the country and destination image remains unclear and needs to be understood by identifying what a destination is implying to, that is, a city, a region within a country or a broader region that includes a number of countries.

An image of destination can be created in the minds of tourists even if they have not actually visited a destination (Mayo, 1975) and these images provide a pre-taste of the destination to the potential tourists (Hunt, 1975). However, for tourists who have not travelled to a country, the organic images combined with induced promotion may often lead to the formation of an image in the form of a ‘stereotypical identity’ (Lawson & Bond-Bovy, 1977) that is an over simplified reality, not necessarily accurate and which may also be difficult to govern and manage (Kotler & Gertner, 2004; Rivas 2011). Such image identities are formed from a biased selection of impressions from among a number of impressions. Kotler & Gertner (2004) indicate that stereotypes images may be dated, based upon exceptions rather than patterns, and could develop from impressions rather than facts, but are nonetheless, pervasive. Stereotyped images of destinations (Nicoletta & Servidio, 2012; Chen et al., 2012) remain the primary association for non-visitors and could have a strong bearing on determining visiting intentions. Stereotypes, though stemming from an account of incidental happenings or experiences in a particular spatial and temporal context, tend to be positively or negatively generalised and also become relatively permanent. However, pervasive or outdated stereotypes as pre-defined images may lead to a continuous biased perception making the image relatively stable over a period of time and may hinder the understanding of changing realities. But, whether positive or negative, stereotypes are able to trigger an element of curiosity, fascination or awe.
about a destination (e.g. China-population, Japan-development, African countries-poverty, Paris-romance, United Kingdom-expensive, India-culture, etc.) that either attracts or tends to keep tourists away from visiting the country.

Studies have attempted to examine the image of a destination prevailing in the minds of visitors and non-visitors (Ahmed, 1991; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b; Dann, 1996; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Pearce, 1982). An image may continue long after the factors that molded it have changed (Crompton & Lamb, 1986). Therefore in order to assess its truth, it needs to be assessed in light of existing reality of the destination. For marketing and promotion purposes, it should be an imperative for destination marketers to continuously monitor the validity of images which is important in explaining the interest or disinterest of the market and can provide better clues for image creation and management. Rightly, Kotler, Haider & Rein (1993) explain the importance of Strategic Image Management (SIM) that can be adopted as an ongoing process for researching current images of the country in the minds of the target audiences, monitoring changes in these images, and trying to influence them over time.

In an attempt to identify the image of South Asia as a tourism destination, this study attempts to examine if the stereotypical images of South Asian countries, in the minds of non-visitors are congruent or not with the encountered reality images reported by actual visitors to these destinations. With this objective, this exploratory study attempts to answer the following research questions (RQ).

RQ1: What are the stereotypical image associations with respect to encountered reality images of countries in South Asia?

RQ2: What is the overall image of South Asia as a tourism destination?

**Methods**

As suggested by Boivin (1986), images can be measured through unstructured methods which use ‘free descriptions elicited through respondents’ instead of taking any pre-defined researcher identified attributes at the onset of the study. As suggested by Echtner & Ritchie (2003) that qualitative methods are conducive to measuring the holistic image components that can capture unique features, this study also made use of a qualitative approach, to identify two sets of images i.e. ‘Stereotypical Images’ and ‘Encountered Reality Images’ of selected tourism destination countries within South Asia. The approach of ‘free elicitation’ (Reilly, 1990) in combination with content analysis (Krippendorf, 1980; 2004) of textual data of responses that led to identification of ‘themes’ conveying impressions, emotional thoughts and associations related to a place, was used to identify the dominant stereotype and encountered images of each country.
Sample

Two sets of respondents were used for the study to compare the Stereotypical Image and Encountered Reality Image, respectively.

Sample 1

To study Stereotypical Image: Students studying at H.P. University, Shimla, India were taken as a non-visitor sample. All the respondents were Indian students who had not travelled to any other country of the South Asian region. In a classroom setting the respondents were asked one open ended question each, for each country (E.g. “What three images or characteristics come into your mind if I say Bangladesh?” “India?” etc.). The respondents were asked to note down their responses on a sheet of paper mentioning the first three images that came into their mind at the mention of each country in order to identify spontaneous stereotypical country associations.

Sample 2

To study the Perceived Reality Image: The researcher was looking for particular views of actual tourists post visit to the countries in the study. Therefore, the travel community website virtualtorust.com was chosen as it provides comprehensive user contributed information in the form of post visitation comments/feedback on each county. The visitor posted comments were taken as a sample to gauge the encountered reality image. (Though the researcher came across other top travel websites such as lonelyplanet.com and tripadvisor.com, these websites were more promotional in nature, not dealing with visitor feedback and hence were not used as the sample for the study). From Virtualtourist.com, only the comments describing the country ‘In a Nutshell’ were taken. The aim of the researcher was to study 100 posted comments for each country. However it was noted that for the destinations of Bangladesh, Bhutan and Pakistan, the comments posted were remarkably less (than 100) hence only the available number of posted comments (n) provided data for the same.

Analysis

Using both samples, the ‘most frequently mentioned word/s’ describing each country were extracted from the responses and noted down by the researcher to identify and compare the stereotypical image with encountered reality image. The words (noun, verb or descriptors) mentioned at a frequency of 10 times or more in the overall image association/comments for each destination were identified as the prime stereotype and encountered reality images for each country. Thereafter, the comparative tabulation of the same for each country, helped to investigate the congruency, if any,
between the two kinds of images. To substantiate the interpretation and discussion of results, the methodology also involved browsing through the introductory information of each country provided on the popular informational travel website Lonely Planet (http://www.lonelyplanet.com).

**Findings and Discussion**

The findings of stereotypical and encountered reality images are comparatively highlighted and elaborated independently for each country in the ensuing discussion.

**Bangladesh**

*Stereotype Images*

It is noted from the findings that when asked about Bangladesh, only two dominant stereotype images are reported by non-visitors that is, ‘misery’ (f-19) and ‘population’ (f-13). These images are primarily a result of negative publicity reported by the media. It holds true that Bangladesh has not been well promoted as a tourism destination and the little knowledge that non-visitors have about the country is restricted to what they have heard through media reports, especially coverage of disasters, natural calamities, poverty and human misery. Like any other Asian country, Bangladesh too has an image of a heavily populated country, coupled with the publicised negative media image of internal strife between factions of people and frequently occurring disasters. Even the website Lonely Planet mentions that the country is usually presented to the global community as a ‘basket case of disasters.’ Besides, the website mentions, that the country can be ‘quite confronting and is usually dismissed as a no hope destination,’ which is why she does not appeal to significant tourist markets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stereotype image (n=100)</th>
<th>Encountered reality image (n=36)*</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Misery ↓ 19</td>
<td>Population ↓ 22</td>
<td>Traffic, noise, crowded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population ↓ 13</td>
<td>Poverty ↓ 20</td>
<td>Beggars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dirt and pollution ↓ 20</td>
<td>Not clean, pollution,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People 11</td>
<td>Warm, natural, hospitable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: ↓ indicates a negative image; * only 36 comments were reported on virtualtourist website for the country; f= frequency of mention of word.*
Encountered Reality Images

The total comments reported on virtualtourist.com about Bangladesh were only 42 (n=42). This perhaps indicates that relatively few people dared to travel to Bangladesh as tourists compared to other neighboring South Asian countries that are comparatively more appealing. Tourists themselves have acknowledged in their comments that there are ‘hardly any tourists.’ With respect to the perceived reality images, ‘population’ is the prime image reported by actual tourists (f-22) as well. Tourists are taken aback by the sea of population in the country. Next to this, is the disturbing reality of ‘poverty’ (f-20). The ‘dirt and pollution’ (f-20) is another experienced reality that has left negative impressions on the minds of tourists who have been there. Hence for the few tourists who have ventured into this less attractive destination, the top reported images are dominantly negative. As rightly mentioned in one comment, the country is ‘not everybody’s cup of tea.’ Another problem experienced by tourists is that ‘English is not commonly spoken’ which is also associated with the backwardness of the country. However, despite the perturbing negative realities, an interesting positive image identified by tourists, is of the people (f-11) of the country who have been mentioned in several comments as ‘very warm’, ‘hospitable’ and ‘natural’. It may be understood that people living in poverty are most unpretentious and accommodating of guests. Most negative realities reported indicate that this developing country is still at a stage of struggling with her problems and has neither geared up for tourism nor promoted it, despite having some major attractive tourism resources like Sunderbans, Cox’s bazaar, beaches and wildlife. Holistic encountered reality impression of the country as reflected in comments of visitors states that this country ‘set back in time’, though ‘challenging’, is ‘interesting’ and for ‘real adventure’.

Bhutan

Stereotype Images

It is noted for Bhutan too, that non visitors do not have much information, awareness or any defined image of the country as free elicitation has not generated many responses. The stereotype associations with Bhutan are of the country’s ‘scenic beauty’ (f-14) and of dominance of ‘Buddhism’ alone (f-11). As also mentioned in the information on the website of Lonely Planet, the country is primarily identified with ‘pristine scenic beauty’, ‘monasteries’ and ‘Buddhist Lamas’. Among the South Asian nations, this country does not seem to be aggressively promoted for tourism. The reason is justified as the government is careful about keeping mass tourism at bay to protect the culture and rich environment. This is one country that values ‘Gross National Happiness’ (GNH) above Gross Domestic Product and is not aiming at pure economic returns through blind tourism development for profit. Access to the country is limited to only ‘high
end’ tourists who are charged a minimum of USD 200 per day, making it a rather expensive destination for mass/budget tourists. The day rate set by the government is aimed at preserving the culture and quality environment of the place. However, along with maintaining an authentic environment, the country still offers an ideal blend of ‘tradition with modernity’. Stated by Lonely Planet ‘Bhutan is straddling the ancient and modern world and these days you’ll find monks transcribing ancient Buddhist texts into computers as traditionally dressed noblemen chat on their mobile phones.’

Encountered Reality Images

It is noted in the findings that Bhutan does not have many comments mentioned on virtualtourist.com (n=45). This indicates that the country has not been visited by a large number of tourists. For tourists who have been there, the encountered reality is of ‘unspoilt’ and ‘untouched’, well preserved ‘scenic beauty’ (f-20). The ‘undiluted’ traditional culture (f-16) of the deeply Buddhist land has also left a mark on the minds of tourists as it rightly resonates in the remarks describing the country as ‘not westernized’, with ‘no McDonalds, Walmart or Hard Rock Café’, and as ‘one of the most original places in the world’ with ‘well kept tradition and dignity’. Besides, tourists have also found Bhutan to be a ‘peaceful’ (f-14) destination that is very ‘safe’ for tourists. It is true that any negative news about the country is virtually unheard of. However, the only negative image of some tourists have of the country is that it is an ‘expensive’ destination (f-12) and that it is not for ‘low budget travelers’. This reality is confirmed by the fact that the government charges a minimum per day rate in USD. Regardless, a comment mentions that if anyone travels to Bhutan, it is ‘worth every penny that one must pay to visit’. Hence in nutshell, the image of Bhutan is that of an ‘enigmatic country’ and a ‘remote land that warrants exploration’!

Table 2. Stereotypes vis-a-vis encountered reality images of Bhutan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stereotype image (n=100)</th>
<th>Encountered reality image (n=45)*</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scenic beauty 14</td>
<td>Scenic beauty 20</td>
<td>Pristine, scenic, beautiful, original, unspoilt, pure, untouched Himalayas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism 11</td>
<td>Culture 16</td>
<td>Deeply Buddhist, undiluted, blend of traditional and modern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaceful</td>
<td>Expensive 14</td>
<td>Peace, safety, silence, few tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expensive ↓ 12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Expensive, price</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ↓ indicates a negative image; * only 45 comments were reported on virtualtourist website for the country; f=frequency of mention of word.
India

Stereotype Images

The most striking and dominant image association of India is of ‘history and culture’ (f-56). People identify India with a landmass that embraces an amazing diversity of cultures, history, religions and attractions. Visitors or non-visitors, everyone associates the country with a ‘rich history’ and ‘architecture’. People seem to be well aware of the iconic attraction of ‘Taj Mahal’ with the image of the monument flashed in all promotions of the country. The other stereotypical image of India is of a country that has great ‘food’ (f-45) with a wide ‘variety’. This indicates India offers great gastronomical delights. However, even Indian respondents acknowledge and report that the negative stereotype related to India is of ‘dirt and pollution’ (f-44). Word of mouth experiences shared with others, and images captured in visual media seem to have been instrumental in building this negative stereotypical image of ‘traffic, smog, filth and animals on streets’ country.

Encountered Reality Images

The top perceived reality image reported about India is of ‘history/culture’ (f-78) congruent with the dominant stereotypical image. It is definitely the fascination of deep rooted civilisations, history, composite cultures and religions that attracts tourists to India. Comments state that India provides a ‘vibrant’, ‘pulsating’ ambiance that sparks a ‘soul stirring’ feeling and the country is the land where there is ‘never a dull moment’. The country is reported to be so captivating that it gives the feeling that ‘you are travelling through National Geographic.’ In addition, another positive image reported by visitors is of the ‘scenic beauty’ (f-46) that the country abounds in and it is rightly said that the country has ‘too much to offer’ being a ‘universe in itself’, abounding with a treasure of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stereotype image (n=100)</th>
<th>Encountered reality image (n=100)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History/Culture 56</td>
<td>History/Culture 78</td>
<td>Diverse, pulsating, Taj, architecture, temples, colorful, vibrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food 45</td>
<td>Scenic beauty 46</td>
<td>Exotic, fascinating, diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dirt/Pollution ↓ 44</td>
<td>Food 42</td>
<td>Variety, curries, spicy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dirt/Pollution ↓ 42</td>
<td>Not clean, pollution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poverty ↓ 40</td>
<td>Beggars, touts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ↓ indicates a negative image; f=frequency of mention of word.
natural attractions of mountains, meadows, forests, deserts and coastline beaches. In addition to this, is the amazing variety of flora and fauna found in different parts of the country. ‘Food’ (f-42) too is reported in several comments as a unique identity of the country. Tourists love the ‘variety’ of Indian cuisine. Among the negative realities that tourists have realised in India are ‘dirt and pollution’ (f-42) and ‘poverty’ (f-40). ‘Dirt and pollution’ (f-42) and ‘poverty’ (f-40) are reported in several comments as a unique identity of the country. Tourists love the ‘variety’ of Indian cuisine. Among the negative realities.

The country is referred to as ‘challenging’ and a ‘difficult’ destination that requires ‘tolerance and patience’ and it is rightly advised by one visitor to ‘go with an open mind’. But in essence, India has too much to offer (both good and bad). As a comment states, India is ‘more than beaches and elephants, more than just curries and sacred cows’. The tourists who have been to India mention that they have had an ‘unparalleled’ travel experience here, ‘an experience that will change you’. India is definitely a country that ‘has character, you may not like it, but you cannot deny’. A nutshell comment that ideally describes the country states that India is ‘like an old lamp that looks dirty, but rub it and it shines!’

Maldives

Stereotype Images

The results show that Maldives does not have any particular stereotypical image other than of ‘scenic beauty’ (f-24) of the island country. Most respondents do not seem to have much knowledge about the country. This probably also accounts for the fact that media has promoted the island only as a pure leisure destination, particularly for

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stereotype image (n=100)</th>
<th>Encountered reality image (n=100)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scenic beauty 24</td>
<td>Scenic beauty 35</td>
<td>Paradise island, picture perfect, stunningly beautiful, turquoise waters, marine life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beaches 35</td>
<td>Gorgeous, pristine, empty, blue ocean, clean, sunshine, snorkeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peaceful 29</td>
<td>Tranquil, remote, quite, secluded, no noise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring ↓</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Not much to do, boring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expensive ↓</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Expensive paradise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ↓ indicates a negative image; f=frequency of mention of word.
honeymooners. The scenic beauty in the minds of non-Visitors is visualised through clear ocean waters, beaches, palms and sunshine. Even *Lonely Planet* promotes the ‘blue waters’ and ‘coral reefs’ attractions through images of the same.

**Encountered Reality Images**

The results indicate that for tourists who have been to Maldives, the stunning ‘scenic beauty’ (f-35) of the not much explored beautiful island regarded to be the ‘last remaining paradise on earth’ is the most significant image that is congruent with the stereotypical image. This is reflected through a comment that says that the island is ‘a real paradise for beach lovers, snorkelers and divers’. The pristine ‘beaches’ (f-35) that offer ‘clear waters’, ‘sunshine’ and the ‘best snorkeling’ opportunities are another reality experienced by tourists. The country is also regarded as a ‘peaceful’ (f-29) destination for people seeking pure relaxation and seclusion, especially as mentioned, ‘if you want to do nothing in the sun, the place is for you’. However the peaceful environment can get ‘too quiet’ as there is lack of other entertainment opportunities and activities. Remarks state that the island can get ‘boring for long’, as it is ‘lacking variety’. It seems that the country is capitalising on her scenic attractions alone and not putting in much efforts to develop some alternative activities for tourists to keep them engaged. On a negative tone, tourists have mentioned Maldives to be an ‘expensive’ (f-13) destination. As mentioned in one comment, ‘you need to get a loan from your bank’. Yet the country is ‘expensive but worth it’.

**Nepal**

**Stereotype Images**

Considered as an ideal Himalayan destination, the main stereotypical identity of Nepal is of the iconic attraction of ‘Mt. Everest’ mentioned with the highest frequency (67). It

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stereotype image (n=100)</th>
<th>Encountered reality image (n=100)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mt Everest</td>
<td>Himalayas</td>
<td>Mt. Everest, majestic, best trekking, ‘some’ mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenic beauty</td>
<td>Scenic beauty</td>
<td>Breathtaking, stunning landscapes, architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maoists ↓</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>Warm, friendly, generous, authentic, amazing, wonderful</td>
</tr>
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*Note:* ↓ indicates a negative image; f-frequency of mention of word.
is realised that everyone, even not having been to Nepal, knows that the country is the home to the tallest peak of the world. Ranking as the second stereotypical identity that people associate the country with is ‘scenic beauty’ (f-32). The third mentioned stereotypical image, though by a small number, (f-10) is of the negative association of ‘Maoist’ rebels and internal political instability, perhaps on account of the adverse media coverage during troubled times of the country.

**Encountered Reality Images**

For tourists who have been to Nepal, the prime image of the country is of the ‘Himalayas’ (f-43)and of ‘Mt Everest’, an image congruent with the top stereotype identity. The mountains are one of the main motivations for people to visit. The ‘scenic beauty’ (f-32)comprising ‘stunning landscapes’ and unique Nepalese ‘architecture’ too have left impressionable images in the minds of actual tourists. It is interesting to note that the ‘people’(f-22) of Nepal have also struck a very positive image in the minds of actual tourists. The people are described as ‘warm’, ‘friendly’ and ‘generous’. Usually mountain people are regarded as very simple and friendly. It is even mentioned that the country is the ‘land of myth, culture and mountain trails’. In a nutshell, a comment remarks Nepal to be a land of ‘more than just the Himalayas’. Allaying the safety concerns of prospective tourists, one comment states ‘don’t be put off by the Maoists, they are not targeting tourists’. Ideally summarised in a few words by a tourist, Nepal is ‘a great introduction to Asia for the first timers’.

**Pakistan**

**Stereotype Images**

Pakistan has not been able to carve out a tourism destination identity in South Asia. Also acknowledged by Lonely Planet, despite the country’s resources, ‘tourism in Pakistan has always been a hard sell task’. She is projected and understood by non-visitors as a ‘country living in difficult times’ and surrounded by tough neighbours like Afghanistan and India. It seems that not many tourists are attracted to Pakistan. For non-visitors, the images formed of the country are largely a result of negative media coverage. Because of the existing reality of long standing internal political instability in the country, and association with extreme ‘Islamic fundamentalism’, people have easily come to associate ‘terrorism’ (f-47) with Pakistan as a prime identity. Lonely Planet mentions, ‘every time the country seems to be gearing up to refresh the palates of travellers jaded with last year’s hip destination, world media headlines send things off the rails – again’. Others who do not have much knowledge of the country tend to associate ‘poverty’ (f-16) with this developing South Asian nation. The ‘food’(f-15) of Pakistan, particularly ‘non vegetarian’ holds a positive stereotype image for non-visitors.
Encountered Reality Images

Not many comments are reported about Pakistan on virtualtourist.com, probably signifying that people usually shy away from visiting the country. However, from the limited comments it is surprisingly apparent that the few tourists who have travelled to the country, seem to have had a very good experience with the local population of the country. The ‘people’ of Pakistan are the prime image and have been referred to as ‘amazing’, ‘nice’ and ‘some of the most friendly and hospitable people on the earth’. The second reality based image is of ‘mountains’ of the country. The country is described as the ‘home to the second highest mountain peak in the world, Mt. K2’. As rightly mentioned by one tourist, the world seems to be oblivious that ‘all good trekking is not just in Nepal’ and that Pakistan too has great trekking routes. The history of the country has captivated the tourists as well, as Pakistan is the home to the Indus Valley Civilization, archeological ruins of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa and has a treasure of monuments relating to Mughal times. The country also leaves impressions of amazing ‘picturesque’ ‘scenic beauty’ (f-22). One of the negative realities experienced by actual tourists is that Pakistan is mentioned as ‘conservative’, (f-15) particularly ‘male dominated’ and ‘rigidly Islamic’. In Pakistan, according to one comment, ‘women may find it hard going’ and the country may be ‘difficult for single females’. It is also mentioned by one tourist that ‘some areas are not culturally open’. Another negative reality encountered by visitors is that of ‘dirt and pollution’ (f-14) which is common to most South Asian nations. The nutshell comments by real visitors mention statements like ‘it is a destination for those who dare’, is ‘generally considered a dangerous place’, but in reality is ‘not too dangerous’ as hyped by media. It is stated in an interesting remark by one tourist that the images of the country are

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<th>Table 6. Stereotype vis-a-vis encountered reality images of Pakistan</th>
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<tr>
<td>Stereotype images (n=100)</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terrorism ↓ 47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poverty ↓ 16</td>
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<td>Food 15</td>
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Note: ↓ indicates a negative image; * only 48 comments were reported on the virtualtourist website for the country; f-frequency of mention of word.

Encountered Reality Images

Not many comments are reported about Pakistan on virtualtourist.com, probably signifying that people usually shy away from visiting the country. However, from the limited comments it is surprisingly apparent that the few tourists who have travelled to the country, seem to have had a very good experience with the local population of the country. The ‘people’ of Pakistan are the prime image and have been referred to as ‘amazing’, ‘nice’ and ‘some of the most friendly and hospitable people on the earth’. The second reality based image is of ‘mountains’ of the country. The country is described as the ‘home to the second highest mountain peak in the world, Mt. K2’. As rightly mentioned by one tourist, the world seems to be oblivious that ‘all good trekking is not just in Nepal’ and that Pakistan too has great trekking routes. The history of the country has captivated the tourists as well, as Pakistan is the home to the Indus Valley Civilization, archeological ruins of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa and has a treasure of monuments relating to Mughal times. The country also leaves impressions of amazing ‘picturesque’ ‘scenic beauty’ (f-22). One of the negative realities experienced by actual tourists is that Pakistan is mentioned as ‘conservative’, (f-15) particularly ‘male dominated’ and ‘rigidly Islamic’. In Pakistan, according to one comment, ‘women may find it hard going’ and the country may be ‘difficult for single females’. It is also mentioned by one tourist that ‘some areas are not culturally open’. Another negative reality encountered by visitors is that of ‘dirt and pollution’ (f-14) which is common to most South Asian nations. The nutshell comments by real visitors mention statements like ‘it is a destination for those who dare’, is ‘generally considered a dangerous place’, but in reality is ‘not too dangerous’ as hyped by media. It is stated in an interesting remark by one tourist that the images of the country are
shaped by ‘the western media’s view of this country’, perhaps confirming the truth that the western nations and media due to their own differences and sour relations with Pakistan have played a major role in projecting a biased negative image of the country around the globe. However an encouraging comment mentions ‘look beyond the media image of Pakistan and you will find some of the world’s most beautiful people and scenery’. A daring tourist further comments for Pakistan, ‘give it a chance you won’t regret it’. A remark states that ‘a traveler will be particularly surprised at the touristic resources of the country’ and that the country is ‘underestimated, underrated and undiscovered’. Pakistan is indeed an ‘eye opening’ country and ‘is one of the world’s best kept secrets’!

Sri Lanka

Stereotype Images

Non-visitors do not have much knowledge of Sri Lanka besides identifying her with an ‘island’ (f-15) destination.Very few responses have been elicited for image association with the country. Others have only mentioned ‘cricket’ (f-10) as a prime association, acknowledging the famous Sri Lankan cricket team to be one of the fiercest in South Asia.

Encountered Reality Images

Tourists who have been to Sri Lanka seem to be quite fascinated by this Asian destination. The topmost remarks by actual tourists have been on Sri Lankan ‘people’ (f-42) being mentioned as ‘friendly’, ‘welcoming’ and ‘smiling’. Appreciative remarks mention Sri Lankans as one of the ‘nicest people you will ever come across’, having ‘best smiles’, ‘infectious smiles’ and the ‘biggest smiles’. Rightly remarked by a tourist who is humbled by the

| Table 7. Stereotype vis-a-vis encountered reality images of Sri Lanka |
|----------------------|------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Stereotype image     | Encountered reality image | Description                                               |
| Theme (n=100)        | Theme (n=100)          |                                                             |
| Island               | People              | Friendly, lovely, great, welcoming, smiles, English speaking |
| Cricket              | Beaches             | Beautiful, great, deserted, golden, exotic,                |
|                      | Scenic beauty       | Amazing, beautiful, tropical island, landscape, clean, tea |
|                      | History             | Architectural wonders, historical sites, cultural sites,   |

Note: ↓ indicates a negative image; f-frequency of mention of word.
Sonia Khan

warmth of the people, a comment reads, ‘they all smile back at you, Amazing!’ It is noted that for foreign tourists Sri Lanka is a rather comfortable country to travel in because of the fact that ‘English is widely spoken’ and tourists do not face any communication problems. A satisfied tourist happily remarks ‘lots of English spoken’. ‘Beaches’(f-21) are rated as another top identity of the country being described as ‘deserted’, ‘beautiful’ and ‘golden’. The ‘scenic beauty’ (f-20) of the country too has captured the interest of actual visitors through greenery, ‘landscape’, ‘tea plantations’ and ‘animal life’. The country has further been appreciated for her rich (but lesser known)‘history’ (f-13), being the home to several UNESCO world heritage sites, ancient ruins and temples. In a nutshell, Sri Lanka is ideally described through comments as ‘a country that has overcome colonisation, civil unrest and natural disasters’, ‘an untouched and remarkable jewel of the orient’, and ‘the pearl of the Indian ocean!’.

Overall Image of South Asia

In essence, for both visitors and non-visitors, the identity of South Asia is dominated by several positive images of ‘history, culture, scenic beauty, people and Asian hospitality’. The negative image associations about the region can be summarised in the words of ‘intimidating population, pollution, poverty, political instability, economic and social backwardness and safety concerns’. The region has complacently and easily succumbed to these negative images rather than capitalising on its rich tourism resources and diversity to create a compelling attractive identity. Non-visitors particularly are oblivious to parts of South Asian countries that are developed and modernised and are at par with developed and progressive cities of the world. Though captivating, interesting and fascinating, the South Asian region is viewed as ‘quite challenging’ by both actual and prospective tourists. The encountered reality confirms certain stereotypes, both positive and negative, but conveys a strong undertone that regardless of the drawbacks that the destination countries in the region suffer from, South Asia no doubt is unique in offering an unparalleled ‘experience’ for tourists, who despite the negative images, have dared to travel to the region. Reality also confirms that South Asia largely remains ‘unexplored’ because of the few negative stereotypes hyped by media that easily influence the views of people and overshadow the power of innumerable attractions that abound in the region. Perhaps this remains the major reason as to why South Asia receives the lowest number of tourists within the Asia Pacific region compared to South East and Northeast Asia.

Conclusion and Implications

This study has investigated the image of South Asia as a tourism destination through an assessment of the stereotypical and encountered reality images of the South Asian nations as perceived by non-visitors and visitors, respectively. From the study it is
found that South Asian nations share a unique identity being associated with culture, history, poverty, chaos, dirt and pollution. The countries of the region are also recognised under the banner of developing nations’ which limits the ability of the region to attract a good share of tourists from the international tourism generating market. Though the countries of the region embarked upon promotional campaigns in the past like coining the tagline “Magic that is South Asia” and even having declared “South Asia Tourism Year” in 2005, such efforts have not yielded positive results in terms of increasing international tourism arrivals significantly. This suggests that a lot is still desired of the countries to build a strong appealing image.

Hunt (1975) supports the view that a tourist as a decision maker acts upon his images, beliefs, and perceptions of the destination, rather than his objective reality of it. Fakeye & Crompton (1991) have also emphasised the importance of images, suggesting that images have the power to change and rearrange the tourists’ impressions and perceptions of a destination and also give people a ‘pre-taste of the destination.’ (p. 10). In light of this, it is suggested that in order to promote the region as an attractive destination, the marketers of the South Asian nations need to continuously monitor, assess, and if need be, reinvent their destination image. As stereotypical imagery held over the years may overshadow understanding of changed or existing realities, outdated images (that often become stereotypes) need to be continuously dealt with by the marketers and promoters. From the perspective of image management and destination marketing, this research also establishes that an insight and understanding of images held both by ‘non-visitors’ and ‘visitors’ is crucial for developing successful marketing strategies. It is also an important and challenging task for marketers to create images that are believable and based on reality (Kotler & Gertner, 2004), even though some may be disturbing.

The researchers acknowledge that due to time and geographical limitations, only available Indian respondents were taken as sample for assessing the stereotype image. Such stereotypes images could be studied by sampling other countries too. In studying the encountered reality image, although virtualtourist.com provided the ideal required data, the origin country of the respondents was not mentioned in the comment postings. Thus, origin had to be neutralised taking the perceived reality through comments of ‘tourists who had visited the country (regardless of the origin)’. The knowledge of origin of respondents could be valuable in future studies for assessing biases in image perception. As computerised content analysis was not performed, human errors may have arisen in the frequency analysis of textual data which further adds to the limitation of this study.

However, the results of this study can be valuable for the tourism marketers from the particular countries to gain an in-depth understanding of the destination image from the perspective of actual and potential tourists and thereby devise strategies for future image management. As images are not static, for future research it is suggested
that such similar studies with larger samples should be conducted repeatedly from time to time to gain a better insight into country images that can provide clues to marketers for identifying the need to continuously mould images in accordance with changing realities at the destination.

References


Research Paper

Malaysia as a Food-Haven Destination: The Vision and its Sustainability

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Taylor’s University, Malaysia

Marcella Aloysius
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Abstract: The paper uses a case study of food and culinary tourism development in Malaysia, to explore the relationship between food heritage, its economic function and tourists. Drawing on qualitative informal interviews with government officers from the Ministry of Tourism, we used an approach based upon a generalisation of knowledge in relation to food as a cultural product in the tourism development plan. Simultaneously, we gathered existing data from the Eighth National Plan (8NP), 2000-2005 to Ninth National Plan (9NP), 2006-2010 and 1Malaysia Tourism Key Performance Indicators (1MTKPI) 2010. Our narrative findings show that food heritage has yet to be incorporated in the national sustainable development plan of tourism. Nonetheless, the food and beverage segment is not totally neglected especially in the national promotional and marketing activity plan. Concomitantly, the country has a vision to be the most competitive food-haven destination in the region. Such conclusions posited are vital for our understanding of the links between food heritage as a cultural tourism product and its sustainability in the global, regional and domestic market. This paper points to the importance of having a comprehensive sustainable culinary tourism development plan that needs to be integrated into the country’s national plan. We suggest that the government consider building a supportive policy and planning framework that is conducive to national food heritage development. Simultaneously, they need to be more cautious in making food identity as a commodity tourism product through the current extensive marketing and promotional activities. This could result in negative implications on the sustainability of their food heritage and may risk losing the national cultural integrity value, either through ethnicisation or de-ethnicisation processes.

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Introduction

In the recent decade, food heritage has emerged as one of the leading segments in the cultural tourism global business (United Nation World Tourism Organisation [UNWTO], 2012). The cuisine of a touristic destination is widely advertised by many countries (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Essentially, the cultural and heritage assets have been featured prominently in destination-brand strategies. They play a pivotal role in representing the cultural identity of the destination and represent a community's unique feature that evokes strong emotional ties between the tourist and destination (McKercher & du Cros, 2009). In the sense food is one of the best ways to understand the local destination's cultural heritage, it has in turn created a niche tourism demand (UNWTO, 2012). It can also be considered as one of the most essential ‘must do’ list when visiting a destination. By indulging in the local flavours and culture, tourists are able to experience a ‘local social reality’ by learning the cultural value and history of the nation. For the visitor to get a glimpse into the culture and get closer to the history and the people of a place, local traditional products play a role, for example, the case of a meal of Voss sheep head in Norwegian food culture (Mykletun & Gyimothy, 2010).

Nevertheless, it is to be noted that food and culinary tourism are associated with the food and beverage industry. Hence, due to the industry’s demand-driven activity nature, it is hard to control the diversification of cuisine and restaurant as part of the national development plan. It deals with tourists and locals who have diverse taste and expectations. For this reason, Hu (2010) explained that modern tourism and hospitality organisations face formidable challenges that revolve around three crucial aspects: (i) consumer demand for higher quality food and of novelty; (ii) government guarantee of food safety by minimising risk factors; and (iii) increased efficiency of owners and shareholders in relation to food consumption. Therefore, cultural heritage spots with tourism potential share a number of common features for a sustainable future as stated below:

They are known beyond the local heritage community; they provide experiences that can be consumed; they are interesting and unique; they are robust; they can absorb visitation; and they are accessible. Most important, they provide the tourist with some compelling reasons to visit, even if they are lower-order attraction. (McKercher & du Cros, 2009: 33).
For these reasons, the development plan must ensure that the needs, wants and desires of tourists to eat local delicacies are satisfied (Sims, 2010; Tse & Crotts, 2005). For instance, Sims (2010). In the case of the United Kingdom (UK) food tourism, developed a conceptual framework explaining the country’s development policy plan and the negotiation of originality to ensure food heritage value and integrity of its cultural aspects are not overly commoditified by the tourism industry. According to her, the government must be able to associate and encourage ethical development and socio-cultural and economic balances. This is because the development of food heritage as part of tourist activity will remain a challenging aspect and a strong factor for the sustainable development of any country. It is imperative to get all related stakeholders to be involved in the national development plan and be dictated by its sustainable core principles, such as Venice Charter (International Councils on Monuments and Sites [ICOMOS], 1994) and the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. As suggested by Carlo Pertini, the founder of the slow food movement, food is to be given equal importance as the historical buildings, monuments and nature sites (see also, Slow Food Movement website: www.slowfood.com).

Therefore, this paper serves as our first attempt to examine sustainable tourism development in Malaysia by focusing on the food and beverage segment. Malaysia was chosen as a case study based on a number of criteria. First, the tourism industry is a second major economic contributor to the nation (1MTKPI, 2006-2010). Second, unlike its other counterparts from the Southeast Asia region specifically, Indonesia and Thailand, Malaysia is quite new in terms of sustainable tourism development as well as in tourism management. Previously, the government focused and emphasised on promotion and advertisement activities, which were handled by the Malaysian Tourism Board (MTB). Third, the Ministry of Tourism Malaysia (MTM) is new and was officially launched in 2004 by the former Prime Minister, Tun Abdullah Badawi (Malaysia Tourism Promotional Board [MTPB], 2012). Nonetheless, despite being a new ministry, the country’s tourism industry has achieved numerous remarkable achievements globally (1MTKPI, 2006-2010). Fourth, more importantly, Malaysia has a vision, to be one of the most competitive food-haven destinations at the global level as shown in the current promotional activities, for example, ‘Food Asian Trails’ (www.food1fab.com.my, 2012).

In line with the culinary tourism global trend, Malaysia has also identified, the food and beverage segment as a new potential product since the Eighth National Plan [8th NP] (2000-2005). A few initiatives have been carried out, especially marketing and promotional activities. However, our initial findings show that the country has yet to have a comprehensive sustainable tourism development plan. By taking into consideration the dynamic nature of the global cultural tourism market and the importance of Malaysia having to sustain its competitiveness as a food-haven destination in the region, it is pivotal for the government to consider building a supportive policy
and planning framework conducive to the sustainability of their food heritage as a cultural tourism product. For those reasons, the paper elucidates the importance of food heritage and its economic function, which in turn, explains the relationship between food and tourists from before, during and after their journeys.

**Food Heritage and Its Economic Function**

Food heritage has been used by many nations, societies and communities as a symbolic border in the convergence of taste. Thus, it can be seen as one of the most ideal identity, identification and nation building tools in a country. Food heritage comprises two significant elements. These are (i) rich cultural value and (ii) historical insights that belong to the societies, which can be traced from their food trails, for instance, the recipe used and technique of cooking. The rich cultural value creates a sense of ‘belongingness’ and helps to enhance people’s pride which in turn could possibly lead to their willingness to conserve and preserve their food cultural heritage. Meanwhile, the historical facts provide knowledge of the past. This could be used as part of efforts to instill people’s national ethos that brings ‘togetherness’ among the people. By doing so, it increases the level of understanding among the people especially those coming from a pluralistic country like Malaysia. The knowledge also helps them to learn and continue to negotiate their cultural differences. This has led to the food cultural diversity becoming the country’s valuable asset.

The food culture distinctiveness entices the tourist’s curiosity to eat the local delicacies. In fact, Poulain (2008) agrees that food is central to the tourist phenomenon as it provides the opportunity to access the destination’s culture and history. For example, France attracts approximately 80 million foreign tourists a year. He explains tourism valorisation increases the interest in local food cultures, which also allows for a revalorisation and re-appropriation by the people of the place. However, the food culture valorisation is not only about the local food culture that is used as a commodity tourism product. Therefore, it is vital to understand the food system context which ranges from production to the consumption level (Poulain, Tibere & Bessiere, 2013: 1337-1344). According to them, the selling of merchandise (farms, poetry and handicraft products), and services during the stay, increases the value of regional products, and in turn stimulate further the local economy.

In the sense, food heritage is socially constructed at the local level, the role of the community in food heritage is not to be taken for granted. They must be able to comprehend the importance of how their daily involvement with food production can benefit them. This could help to produce local products for market consumption. Such daily activities provide the ‘social reality scene’ for tourist consumption, either edible or non-edible products. However, due to the vulnerability of food culture to the commoditisation forces of the tourism industry, it is imperative to build a conducive
policy and outline strategies to reduce the ethnicisation and de-ethnicisation process, from diluting further the cultural integrity value.

**Relationship between Food and Tourists**

Food imagination and tourist imagination are often inter-related as part of the construction of identity process, especially between the local actors and tourists (Poulain et al., 2013; Quan & Wang, 2004; Cohen & Avieli, 2004) From the tourist’s perspective, the link between food culture and place is established by eating locally which helps to elucidate the symbolical consumption of the geographical history of the place that includes the region, province, climate, history and landscape. In other words, the *sacralisation* of certain tourist sites is used in the local food sector (Berard & Marchenay, 2004). To explicate further, institutional tourism structures are also derived from the available culinary attraction and tourists’ needs and desire. Thus, it can be considered as collective rallying points, common frameworks around rural sites which at times become a pilgrimage site for the so-called ‘food-tourist’ in search of dietary reconciliation. In fact, Amirou (1995) pointed out the similarity between the itinerary of both the tourists and pilgrims created by those acts of collection. It means the self-consciousness of the tourist or pilgrim relate to their decision making process to visit the site. This involves organising their trip, from before, during and after the journey.

**Before the Journey**

Usually, before visiting any place, people will visualise their forthcoming journey. As the imagination revolves around the intended destination, people will visualise everything related to the place. Whether it is an organised journey or otherwise, the tourist is often beset with excitement mixed with apprehension. Nonetheless, most of the times, it is quite difficult to imagine what to anticipate with the journey due to its location and distance. In order to manage such anxiety, many tourists will gather the visual through literature, film, travel agencies, travel guides, friends and family. Today, most people gather their preliminary information about the journey through social media networks like GoogleTalks, Facebook and Instagram (to mention a few). To a certain extent, these elements influence their mind about the destination and its local food. This perhaps explains why tourists consume the local cuisine and break their routine during the holidays. In other words, human curiosity is one of the strongest inner forces that drive people to explore the world around them and this curiosity varies between individuals (Tse & Crotts, 2005).

Holidays remain as special moments to break away from daily eating habits, which means distancing from dietary restrictions back home. However, it is admitted that is also possible at home due to the diversification of cuisine and restaurant available in most countries. They can always consume the others’ food, for example,
exotic cuisine from ethnic restaurants. Thus, the restaurant has become a point of reference for them. Despite, such opportunities, eating a similar cuisine in the country of origin, may bring about a different sense of eating pleasure. It means their trip offers different opportunities of contact with the local food culture, from both tangible and intangible aspects, for example, dishes, ingredients used, local plants and animals, utensils, table dressing, the symbolism of food, social values, hierarchies, etiquette, social links and culinary savoir-faire.

The role of travel agencies and travel guides play a significant role in providing the relevant information and guidance, specifically, during the preparation of the intended journey. Many of these establishments are also using current social media networks. They provide a cultural frame of reference and economic and historical backgrounds, which in turn, create a preconceived image of the destination. Their role in formatting such expectations has led to recognition, verification of images and words that are already buried in our memories (Urbain, 1991). Such expectations may not necessarily match the actual site reality. As a result, tourists may not be able to experience the local food culture experience, but in its place the ethnicisation of local cuisine due to the tourism industry itself.

**During the Journey**

Being in a foreign place, the tourist is forced to discover local food. This elucidates the realms of what is edible, the degree and type of cooking, meal structures, food intake, the body techniques used, table manners, food etiquette, the daily schedules, supply sites, hygiene and many more factors, as the boundary of their food culture compared to the host food culture. At this point, the tourist and host food culture may either converge or diverge. The acceptance of eating the local food and not eating it will depend on their level of food liberalism. As Morin (1962) posited, by eating someone else food – as they do or with them – constitutes an internal journey. It relates to their readiness and decision-making process on what to eat before visiting the restaurant. This decision is largely influenced by the available food guide materials, companionship and the cuisine specialty during their trip.

Nevertheless, the level of access to the local food culture also varies from one place to another. In the so-called local gastronomical notion, two types of catering play significant roles to tourist accessibility. First, promotional showcase in promoting the ‘popular’ catering to tourists. In most cases, these places remain as a social immersion place for tourists to have a local food culture experience. The showcase allows them to fantasise the authenticity of the cuisine, for example, packaged in recipe books which can be purchased by tourists. Further, the packaged culinary products as tourist souvenirs also include the utensils, table dressing and dried ingredients. Second, the non-staging food culture, usually savoured by more adventurous tourists by exploring...
Beyond the popular sites. They can capture the moment and treasure it as a memorable food journey.

For these reasons, the relationship between the tourist and local food during their trip can be articulated. According to Quan & Wang (2004), the attraction and the level of contact with local cuisine will depend on whether it is psycho-centred or allo-centred. Therefore, Cohen & Avieli (2004) suggest two aspects to be included; the first is ‘recreational’ and corresponds to a relaxed or even playful relationship with food during the trip; the discovery of local cuisine, even if it is positively perceived, does not constitute a purpose. The second, referred to as ‘experimental’, is influenced by the search for culinary authenticity. This is a vital element in providing the local experience in tourism. However, Cohen (1972) explained that even though novelty and uniqueness are essential elements in the tourist experience, not everyone is ready to immerse himself wholly in an unfamiliar social environment.

In order to explain why some travellers and tourists are not interested in exploring the local gastronomy, Mallout (1995) elucidated that health reasons or a simple lack of interest or neophobia may prevent them from looking forward to try exotic cuisine. For example, it is common for Dutch tourists to bring food from their country when they travel (Poulain, Bessiere & Tibere, 2013). Therefore, the adaptation is almost inevitable and could happen in various levels, either in a more or less conscious, unequivocal fashion (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Hence, seen as the unreasonable, unclear consideration of tourist expectations. These aspects become a testament to the importance of awareness raising or training schemes from the local actors (including producers, restaurateurs, waiters/waitresses, distributors who allow for the acquaintance of knowledge of food heritage, its local ownership and the ability to explain it to tourists (Poulain & Tibere, 2006; MacCannel, 1986).

**After the Journey**

The souvenir is much an inconvertible memory of the tourist’s trip as the places visited, in an immutable logic of ‘doing’ and the photos taken (Amirou, 1995). In fact, Morin (1962: 83) mentioned that (after a vacation) we will attempt to recall the rituals, photos, landscapes, food and many other nostalgic memories. He declares, ‘sometimes, the memory of a meal, for instance, chianti reminds us of Italy; paella brings us back to Spain and even ‘bouillabaisse’ reminds us of the sunshine.’ In this sense, these culinary or gastronomic souvenirs remain as a significant experience for them, which they bring from their visit at the place. The souvenir also can be seen as a ‘symbol’ of their trip either as a gift or personal consumption, for instance, by buying or bringing home local products (like wine and cheese from France). The culinary souvenir allows them to relate between ‘here’ and there; and at the same time, could turn into a ‘new here’ in the everyday life (Urbain, 1991: 256). The souvenir
indirectly ‘reduces’ the distance between the ‘last trip’ and the ‘next’ (Urbain, 1991), as the so-called magic refreshes the memories through images, atmosphere, flavours and smells of the journey by inserting them into the routine of a sedentary life.

However, to note, the traveller or tourist does not only transform himself/herself into a collector of exotic objects, but mixes the ‘worlds’ far-away worlds with the everyday world; free and constrained; new and habitual. In that sense, these culinary souvenirs make the tourists’ experience last. Nevertheless, due to food being a perishable item, the aspect related to eating them, is not enduring, with the exception of certain types of food culture, such as table dressings, wrapped or packaged products for display purpose and recipe books. At the same time, in order not to forget the culinary experience totally, they can go to the restaurants which offer a similar cuisine of the country visited. This also can be deemed as part of a similar process of immersion into the memory of their previous trip. For instance, simply eating with chopsticks after a trip to a Vietnamese restaurant, evokes the memory of their recent (last) visit, in turn, more often, embellished exoticism into everyday life.

**Methodology and Limitations**

We conducted this exercise by making a comparison with the available empirical evidence in Kuala Lumpur city. We started by examining the Kuala Lumpur Plan (KLPlan) [2020], specifically, the food and beverage and entertainment development zone. We found that the development plan is designed to focus on international food and beverage development, which is expected to help and supplement the current local food sphere. This local development plan has been anticipated as a beneficial effort by the local authority for the tourists and locals. However, based on the current Malaysian Tourism Promotional Board’s (MTPB) promotional and marketing activities as well as the National Plan, we were unable to trace the link between the existing local food sphere and sustainable tourism development. There is a missing link between the local authority development plan and the national development plan.

Simultaneously, we gathered existing data from the Eighth National Plan (8NP), 2000-2005 to, Ninth National Plan (9NP), 2006-2010 and 1Malaysia Tourism Key Performance Indicators (1MTKPI) 2010. The data obtained from those relevant reports, have been used to examine the sustainability of the country’s food heritage. First, we conducted a narrative-content analysis, followed by a qualitative informal interview with three officers from the Ministry of Tourism. We used an approach based upon a generalisation of knowledge, in relation to food as a cultural product in the tourism development plan. Nonetheless, our narrative findings are confined to the scope of discussion and objectives of the study. In view of this limitation, future research is essential to examine Malaysian culinary cultural sustainability by elucidating further the diversity interaction pattern in the local food sphere.
Malaysia Culinary Tourism

The Achievement

Evidently, the Malaysian tourism industry has proved itself to be remarkably resilient to the various crises happening around the world (see also the 7th, 8th and 9th Plans), and still managed to maintain its position as the ninth most visited country in the world since 2009 (MTPB, 2012). A total of 24,577,196 tourist arrivals in 2010, contributing RM56.5 billion in tourist receipts and 5.9% growth (Table 1). The food and beverage segment represented the third highest contributor with a 4.6% increase in growth.

The National Development Plan

The tourism industry is a key foreign exchange earner that provides positive growth, investment and employment, and has continued to strengthen the service account of the balance of payments for the country (9th National Plan, 2006-2010). Hence, high priority has been accorded to achieving a sustainable tourism industry with a more integrated approach to tourism planning and implementation as tabled by the National Plan. As a result, the role of the State Tourism Action Councils (STAC) have been strengthened and are responsible for monitoring, surveillance and evaluation of the project’s outcome on a regular basis as seen in the assertion below:

“… Emphasis will be given to preserving and enhancing existing natural and cultural assets that are susceptible to environmental damage. Local authorities and communities will be encouraged to be more actively involved in project preparation, implementation and maintenance to ensure adverse environmental impact is minimised… This is to reinforce, among others, the environmental impact assessment and other relevant guidelines, which

Table 1. Components of tourists expenditure (2008-2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(RM Million)</td>
<td>(RM Million)</td>
<td>(RM Million)</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>15,463.1</td>
<td>16,573.8</td>
<td>17,343.2</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>13,282.4</td>
<td>15,103.1</td>
<td>16,213.3</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food &amp; Beverages</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,772.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,290.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,716.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local transportation</td>
<td>5,154.4</td>
<td>5,253.1</td>
<td>5,423.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>1,486.8</td>
<td>1,594.0</td>
<td>1,751.3</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic airfares</td>
<td>2,428.5</td>
<td>2,274.7</td>
<td>2,259.7</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organised tour</td>
<td>2,032.0</td>
<td>2,271.0</td>
<td>2,429.2</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>941.7</td>
<td>1,007.5</td>
<td>1,355.8</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>49,561.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>53,367.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>56,492.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MTKPI (2010).
continue to be important considerations when formulating and implementing projects and related infrastructure … specific criteria and guidelines on carrying capacity of environmentally-sensitive tourist areas such as islands, highlands and coastal areas…”

[9th National Plan, 2006-2010].

Based on the extract, undoubtedly, there were serious efforts towards a sustainable tourism development plan. However, it focuses on environmental damage, and has neglected the intangible cultural aspect, specifically, the food heritage. With the convergence of global taste, it is pivotal to address the de-ethnicisation process elements by taking precautionary measurements to reduce the dilution process in the Malaysian cuisine identity as shown below:

“The preservation and restoration of historical sites, buildings and artefacts will be continued as part of efforts to conserve national heritage as well as increase the number of tourist attractions. In pursuance of this strategy, several historical sites and buildings have been identified for preservation and restoration during the Plan period. These will include Kota Kuala Muda in Kedah, Fort Alice in Sarawak and Bukit Tengkorak Neolithic site in Sabah. Heritage trails will be developed based on specific themes including the Baba Nyonya heritage, the Portuguese and Dutch era in Melaka, war relics in Kota Bahru as well as Bunga Mas in Kedah and Kelantan.”

[9th National Plan, 2006-2010].

The above extract shows that the government has incorporated the national cultural heritage into the national development plan. However, the preservation and restoration focus is only on the historical sites, building and artefacts. Although, those states mentioned in the plan, have their own regional food culture, it is not deemed as part of the cultural aspects. Under the specific themes, culinary culture is not mentioned, too. It emphasises only artefacts as a tangible cultural aspect.

The Marketing Strategies

“The promotional efforts will focus on a number of areas such as commercial and non-commercial performing arts, museums, art galleries, handicraft and entertainment centres as well as theme parks. Cultural attractions will continue to be promoted to showcase Malaysia’s diverse ethnic and cultural festivals. Malaysia will also promote its multi-ethnic population. In this regard, innovative food trails based on distinct specialties of states, regions and communities will be developed to attract tourists to savour local delicacies”.

[9th National Plan, 2006-2010].

The food and beverage segment is not totally neglected in the plan. It has been categorised as part of the cultural, entertainment and the arts tourism products. However, it is yet to be incorporated as part of the national development plan. This
segment is a new potential product for Malaysia. Therefore, preliminary focus will be on the promotion and marketing activities only.

“Malaysian food reflects a multiethnic and multicultural society with each state offering unique distinctive delicacies, producing a wide ranging national menu. The menu consists of ethnic flavours as a haven for culinary delights which are available on a 24-hour basis in most places. It also represents an amalgamation of Southeast Asian flavours which have been influenced by both western and eastern cultures.

[Tourism Malaysia Official Website, 2012].

The above assertion describes the diversity of Malaysian cuisine. In fact, culinary diversity has enhanced the Malaysian food heritage value. It reflects unity in diversity as a way of managing the cultural differences among the various ethnic groups in the country. At the same time, it exhibits serious efforts in showcasing Malaysian food trails. As a result, Dato Ng Yen Yen, the then Minister of Tourism launched a website known as, ‘www.fab1food.com’ in 2011 to attract tourists to savour local delicacies. The website is entitled: ‘Southeast Asia food trails’ as a celebration of ‘so much’ to serve on the Malaysian plate.

Development and Allocation

Under the 9th Plan, RM1.8 million has been allocated for development of the tourism industry. It appears that the allocation is linked to the National Tourism Sustainable Development Plan (9th National Plan, 2006-2010), a reflection of the importance of the preservation and protection of natural habitats and environmental concerns in the context of responsible tourism. The food cultural heritage budget allocation is meant for promotion and marketing aspects only. This is not much compared to the other programmes, as shown in Table 2.

Further, the interview sessions with Officers A, B and C also indicate that the food and beverage segment has yet to be established as part of the cultural and heritage tourism products. Although the segment has been identified as a new potential

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>8MP expenditure</th>
<th>9MP allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment protection and beautification</td>
<td>241.1</td>
<td>652.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities, infrastructure and maintenance</td>
<td>459.4</td>
<td>1,034.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>115.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>783.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,847.9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

product (8th National Plan, 2000-2005), it has not, however, been incorporated into a sustainable national development plan policy except in the promotion and marketing strategy plan. It could be, due to the Ministry’s ‘age,’ which is less than nine years old. Nonetheless, since the verbatim from these officers were obtained during our casual conversation with them, the narrative extract shown below are not to be quoted but must only be used as a supplement to our preliminary finding.

Officer A
“… We don’t have anyone in particular in charge of our gastronomic development plan…, because it is not part of the plan; what we have now, is focused on advertisement and promotional activities.”

Officer B
“We had launched our ‘fab1food’ website last year; last year… it was under the charge of a different officer but you can contact our ‘Event Section’ for the event; if you want to know about our gastronomic development plan, … you mean as part of, the heritage development plan, we don’t have anyone in charge that I know of… I don’t think it is part of the plan yet.”

Officer C
“… Food and beverage is our new tourism product, but we are only in charge of the advertisement and promotional activities, and for the time-being, we don’t have someone to oversee this segment, maybe when the need arises.”

The Implications
Based on these three verbatims and Table 2, as well as using our general knowledge in relation to food heritage as a cultural tourism product, we can state that greater efforts have been extended to promotional and marketing activities. However, the evidence shows that the development plan emphasised two main segments, the accommodation and shopping segments. Since Malaysia has a vision to be positioned as one of the most competitive food-haven destinations, it is imperative that we understand the important elements to preserve and enhance the food heritage value from negative impacts for a sustainable future. Thus, a sufficient budget and planning is equally important in this case. At the same time, there is a need to be vigilant in relation to the ethnicisation and de-ethnicisation processes from within the tourism industry itself. This could reduce the cultural integrity value. Therefore, Cooper (2005) suggested that it is pivotal for a national development plan to encapsulate sustainable tourism development to ensure its sustainability in the global, regional and local markets.
Discussion and Conclusion

Globalisation has created a niche market, thus making the tourism industry more diversified. This has certainly put more pressure on Malaysia to be constantly innovating in developing a ‘new’ product. Evidently, the country has identified the food and beverage segment as their new and improved product in the 8th Plan (2000-2005) and 9th Plan (2006-2010) respectively. The government is aware of the need to diversify and customise the industry and ensure its sustainability as seen in the national sustainable tourism plan efforts. In fact, their cultural tourism segment holds a great potential and is developing rapidly. For those reasons, it is pivotal for the government to consider building a supportive policy and planning framework conducive to the Malaysian food heritage development. There is a need to be more cautious in making their food identity as a commodity tourism product through extensive marketing and promotional activities, that is, to avoid or minimise the risk of losing the cultural integrity value, due to the ethnicisation and de-ethnicisation factors.

With regard to the current tourism strategies, we recommend that the existing environmental and tourism heritage be integrated with food heritage in the national policies and plans for sustainable tourism development. Such considerations can be preceded by understanding the economic function and the relationship between food and tourists, as well as the social and technological dynamics of the globalisation of the tourism industry because the ability to operate under the ever-changing business conditions would require a decision cycle and the responsiveness to face any form of competition. Furthermore, to be more effective, an active role for local society must be initiated, in order to achieve broader and more substantive progress in applying the principles of sustainable tourism development.

In other words, the policy makers must continue to understand, preserve, enhance and integrate the development of culinary culture as a core tourism heritage product. The fact is, the prospects for tourism economic growth do not become brighter without concerted and effective policy making by the government. At the same time, these efforts must be supported by efficient business decisions by other stakeholders, which in turn help to increase competitiveness and sustainability in the global, regional and domestic markets. This collaboration with the relevant stakeholders is definitely beneficial to the people, in the sense, that local people will become aware about their unique and diverse culinary cultures as well as the history of the region. This increases the awareness of the social and cultural aspects of sustainable tourism development with the potential to stimulate new trends in tourist demands.

As for the implementation of such development policies and strategic plans, we suggest three aspects of the relationship between food and tourism be taken as the fundamental guideline. The first is a socio-economic. This is, to be associated with
local development processes and re-strengthening of food subsidiaries in host
companies and local areas. The second involves heritage as a collective social construct.
It means tourism is constituted by the destination where the food culture is taking
place, which is reinforced by the identity formation process in terms of the selection
and sharing of the existing diverse Malaysian culture. Finally, a crucial link lies in the
tourist’s perspective of the food culture of the country. These three aspects elucidate
the socio-anthropological interest in food and culture based on the tourist perspective,
from before, during and after their trip.

Consequently, the paper demonstrates the complexity of tourism as a research
topic. This elucidates the need for a multidisciplinary approach. Therefore, it is necessary
to redefine the sustainable tourism development context for the country. The social
and cultural aspects need to be integrated into the current national ‘responsible tourism’
context. Nonetheless, in view of the limitations of our finding and scope, the paper
suggests that future research, specifically in the field of sociology and tourism,
studies the social interaction pattern in the local food and culinary culture, which
would be a beneficial contribution towards a more comprehensive sustainable tourism
development for the country.

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Perceptions of Selected Attributes in Tourism Management of Music Festivals: A Case Study of Pattaya Music Festival 2012

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Abstract: A music festival serves as a dynamic activity in tourism as it draws a large number of visitors to festival venues, creating greater tourism related businesses. According to Lea (2006) tourist studies have predominantly considered music festivals in terms of motivations of attendees or revenue generation. Stebbins (1979; 1996; 1997a;1997b) has also stated that festivals often attract targeted tourists, actively attending the event as an art form or socialisation. Considering that tourism, arts and music festivals are linked, it is generally accepted that performing arts and the music festivals are now a worldwide tourism phenomenon. This research focuses on the most positive, as well as least positive aspects and the attributes which should be improved regarding the music festival at Pattaya through a study of respondents at the Pattaya Music festival 2012. Particularly, it examines respondents’ satisfaction with regard to Logistics and Direction, Artistic Direction, Marketing and Communication and Participation in Tourism. The information was collected through administering a questionnaire to 100 respondents to understand the relationship between attributes and satisfaction. Study results indicate that respondents who attended the event were satisfied with regard to the given attributes. The results would be useful for the public and private tourism organisations, as well as event organisers of music festivals to ensure an an effective, enjoyable event.

Keywords: Perception, attributes, tourism management, music festival


Introduction

This research aimed to identify the most positive as well as the least positive aspects of tourism management of the Pattaya Music Festival 2012. It is hoped that identifying
these aspects particularly the latter could lead to better management of the Pattaya Music Festival in the following years.

The questions in the questionnaire covered aspects related to appropriate scheduling of the festival (date and time), attractiveness and level of satisfaction of tourists. An assessment was also made of the teamwork exhibited by organisers and hospitality and tourism business and if the music festival made an interesting contribution to Pattaya city, Chonburi province, Thailand.

This research focused only on tourists who visited the Pattaya Music Festival 2012 and their level of satisfaction with the Pattaya Music Festival 2012 with regard to some attributes of the event. Although the research investigates the perception of tourists in terms of satisfaction with the Pattaya Music Festival 2012, the findings could be useful for hotels and other accommodation/restaurants/tourism agencies/the organisers and especially the Tourism Authority of Thailand in drawing up effective programmes for the next Pattaya Music Festival 2013.

A music festival draws a great number of visitors or tourists. Events such as concerts, recitals, talent shows, or workshops constitute the major elements of the music festival. In a way, music festivals help create demand for tourism. The history of year-long booking with dynamic promotion of the music festival leads to greater expectations from music lovers and visitors alike. The organisation of the Pattaya Music Festival in Thailand has, in the past decade, evolved and developed to a great extent. There has been a growing number of not only visitors, but also sponsors, music makers, related organisers, and stakeholders whose major aim is to make the Music Festival both efficient and sustainable.

The sustainability of the music festival means an assurance of tourist growth and constructive development of the related tourism sites. Growth of festivals depends largely on the Thai people’s perception of the music festival; their culture of going to a concert or attending a pop music show seems to be different from that of westerners. Coupled with songs – Thai and foreign ones – in the country’s popular culture, the nature of an open-air concert such as a music festival is regarded as a novelty, with the danger being a brief shelf-life. Nevertheless, tourism development in Thailand needs to pace itself, with a clear structure and direction, given the competitive environment regionally and globally. The music festival of Thailand needs a model. A model that is conceived for the music festival should not only support and maintain the music related activities but also those related to tourists. This model of the music festival could serve as a prototype for other tourist programmes as well as contribute towards the sustainable growth of the country’s tourism amidst the fierce competition in ASEAN.

Therefore, in order to construct a model for music festivals, we need to identify the perception of tourists who participate in mega events such as music festivals.
In Thailand, the music festival is considered to be a mega event generating a great number of tourists every year. Besides enjoying Thailand's famous innumerable beaches and islands, Thais and foreigners love to rejoice and celebrate the various musical festivals held here. One such important festival is the Pattaya Music festival, which also boasts of being Thailand's biggest festival that takes place in the lively city of Pattaya. The festival is a must for all music lovers who also take the opportunity to visit Thailand. The Pattaya Music Festival showcases free concerts at three stages which start at 6pm and end at midnight. The visitors enjoy live performances of different genres of music such as pop, dance, hip-hop, jazz and other types. Opera singers also perform at this event. Along with the performance, cassettes and CDs are sold on the beach.

The study by Matheson(2005) used empirical data from a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews with festival producers and consumers of a Celtic music festival in Scotland and suggested dimensions of the backstage region of festival social space: first, through participating in ‘real’ culture in an intimate environment; second, by playing an instrument or singing; third, through the strengthening of social networks.

The second study of relevance is that of Saleh & Ryan(1993) where “Quality of programme emerged as the most important factor for tourists, but contextual elements including accessibility and programme arrangements were also important.”

Meanwhile Kay (2006) states that the media in its many forms has been instrumental in popularising tourist venues and can have the impact of introducing tourism to these places or boosting tourism numbers. His paper emphasises that the area which has not been explored in sufficient detail is the marketing of tourist attractions/venues in music so as to be heard by substantial listeners globally.

These studies indicate that it is necessary to identify the attributes that are important in the organisation of music festivals and play a role in tourist satisfaction in these events. This paper therefore aims to study the attributes and satisfaction levels of tourists with respect to one music festival in Thailand.

**Literature Review**

**Arts, Entertainment and Tourism**

Hudson (1992) states that there is no particular form of arts or entertainment that is specific to tourism and it is difficult to identify what will and what will not have an appeal to tourists. The seaside variety show is, however, often thought of as being a typical holiday tourist form of entertainment. This includes a range of different acts such as dancers, magicians, “comics, singers, sand-dancers, conjurors and men who balanced girls in swimsuits on their noses” and is “light” and undemanding. Originating
from the music-halls of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century cities, this entertainment moved on to the seaside. Much has been said on the decline of this form of seaside entertainment but it is still a common feature of many seaside holiday towns. Nonetheless any artistic performance in any location may have tourists in the audience.

Any play, show, concert, festival etc. that has the potential to attract audiences from a geographical area that is not local is an element of the arts-related tourism product such as music festivals that include a number of events and performers over a short period of time and may be particularly successful in attracting such audiences like open air summer concerts and plays in Central Park, New York. They may not be decisive factors in drawing visitors to the city but there will nonetheless be a sizable proportion of visitors in the audience. Concerts and productions in holiday areas such as the summer programme at Saratoga Springs (New York State) which, in 1999, included the New York City Ballet and the Philadelphia Orchestra may be more likely than others to attract non-local audiences but all have the potential to do so (Hughes, 2000).

**Tourism and Music Festivals**

In one of the more recent transformations of tourism, music in different genres and guises has rapidly become a new rationale for travel, and therefore a draw for attracting tourists in a rapidly expanding industry. As tourist numbers increase, and tourism becomes a regular phenomenon, the quest for new sites, sights and experiences has grown more complex, with travelers seeking specific forms of tourism that meet their personal needs. This is in part a response to, and rejection of, the mass tourism that had transformed areas like the western Mediterranean coast. Niche tourism has become increasingly significant with, one such niche being ‘music tourism’, where people travel, at least in some part, because of music and the significance of this for culture, economics and identity (Gibson & Connell, 2005).

The rise of music tourism took music from being simply an expected, or occasionally quite unexpected, adjunct of a holiday to a central role. As tourism became organised around different music genres, the diversity of relationships between place and music has become evident. From an initial focus almost entirely on places of performance, as in 19th-century Bayreuth and Vienna, tourism has extended to include cemeteries and birthplaces, places of music creation and production, such as the extraordinary Opera House in Manaus (Brazil) or La Scala (Milan), and places identified in lyrics, such as the restaurant in Rio de Janeiro from which “The Girl from Ipanema” emerged. Most recently, it has involved museums (Rossi, 1995).

Gibson & Connell (2003) clarified that in a number of places, the rise of music tourism reveals ways in which localities have attempted to confront structural economic
changes, as old industrial hearths decline and service economies take their place, or are engineered to take their place. Music tourism may constitute one component of strategies within local economies to generate new kinds of economic growth. Moreover, music tourism generates questions about how music can actively shape places, both in a discursive sense, by representations and stereotypes of places, and materially, through altering the built infrastructure of cities and towns. The role of music in social constructions of place varies substantially, from sites that have deep histories of musical expression and production, where tourism strategies build on an existing spatial and cultural discourse (for example, in New Orleans), to others where musical connections are to a certain extent “invented” for example at Tamworth, Australia or Branson, Missouri as part of wider strategies to reinvigorate local economies or foster local cultural distinctiveness.

Sellars & Wilson-Youlden (1996) state that music tourism has become a distinct component of the new cultural tourism and has been generally seen as an area of substantial future expansion. The cultural industries – music, literature, film, art – relate to tourism in various ways, appropriating myths of place, transforming localities materially and discursively, thus supporting tourist development (Quinn 1996).

Music tourism, like other elements of cultural tourism, might be thought of as simply linking nostalgia with some concern for heritage and authenticity. Cultural tourism, of which music is a part, has been perceived as “the pursuit of a social transforming minority elite” undertaken by “cosmopolitans” who adopt “an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness towards divergent experiences from different national cultures” (Urry, 1994). Music tourism cannot exist apart from other elements of tourism; most tourists seek experiences of landscape, food and drinks, choose particular modes of transport and accommodation, and shape their experiences and itineraries according to factors – such as financial status and time available, distinct from the music.

**Event Administration of Music Festivals**

Music festivals are considered to be a part of fairs and festivals in events. Goldblatt (2002) discussed that just as in ancient times, people assembled in the marketplace to conduct business, commercial as well as religious influence have factored into the development of today’s festivals, fairs, and public events. Whether a religious festival in India or a music festival in the United States, each is a public community event symbolised by a kaleidoscope of experiences that finds meaning through the lives of the participants. The music festivals have shown tremendous growth as small and large towns seek tourism dollars through such short-term events. Some communities use the music festivals to boost tourism during the slow or off-season, and others focus primarily on weekends to appeal to leisure travelers. Therefore, event
administration is considered to be an important part as it assures the success of music festivals. The discussion that follows will describe aspects that need to be addressed for effective management of events and music festivals.

Planning and Logistics for Music Festivals

With the event plan in place, the problem of logistics needs to be addressed, including logistics of site management, security, communication, traffic and protocol. However, event planning tools help to ensure that the schedule is on track. Therefore, in order to avoid problems of logistics emerging, a feasibility study needs to be done before staging the music festival. McCartney (2010) suggested that the feasibility study should include the following:

**Event Description** – A clear understanding is initially required of the type and characteristics of the event that is proposed. This involves a description of the theme, activities, programme, geographical location, physical set-up and dates.

**Feasibility of Making a Bid** – The bid preparation itself will involve costs. Assessment should be made on whether it is worthwhile to bid and forecast the chances of winning. The consequences of losing should be considered beyond economics, such as the impact of a lost bid on local pride.

**Budgeting and Financing** – This should be based upon accurate research and projections. As the event is in the future, calculated assumptions will be required as well as factoring in contingencies for unexpected costs. Sources of event revenue such as ticketing and sponsorship should be offset with a list of fixed and variable costs.

**Fit with Overall Tourism Strategy** – Events are a major part of tourism development. They also involve huge resource commitments. The event should be considered in terms of the overall development aims and objectives of the destination as well as short, medium, and long term benefits. This may require a balance of year round events addressing visitor seasonality. The event should also have some degree of synergy with existing attractions and destination image.

**Impact Audit** – This is a projection of possible impacts likely to emerge as a consequence of the event. The event will impact the community and local community. Events can be highly political, with governments and other event stakeholders involved due to resource commitments and the potential exposure that the event can attract. Event management must not only look to the event’s operational success but be aware of and manage any resultant impact.

**Opportunity Cost** – Resources may be taken from elsewhere such as for construction, education, health and welfare. The effect this has on other industry sectors should be understood.
Stakeholder Support – The degree of support and consensus among potential event stakeholders will impact the event outcome. Involving related stakeholders can help with the various skill and knowledge sets as well as volunteers that will be needed. Politics and internal jostling for power can be stressful and time-consuming and it is best to get an understanding of stakeholder needs and objectives as soon as possible.

Sponsorship – A sponsor can be a major event stakeholder and financier. Sponsorships can be sought from governments, associations and corporations, each with varying objectives for their involvement. There will be some degree of creating recognition and awareness. Sponsorship packages and amounts can vary but will be an important calculation on the economic viability of the event.

Support Services – Even with stakeholder collaboration within the destination, external help may be needed for providing the venue, transportation, staffing, media reporting and other suppliers for the event. Contract costs and legal obligations should be considered.

Event Delivery – An assessment must be made as to whether the event can be delivered on time and within the budget, and satisfy the event objectives. Factoring in available resources and preparing a calculation on critical paths and time frames from planning to staging can give an indication of the capacity to deliver an event.

Competitive Audit – Depending on event type, participant profile and situational factors, some destinations may be more appealing for the event. A destination lacking the financial resources to fund an event could focus on attraction attributes such as its cultural diversity and national environment. Making greater use of available resources could make an event bid successful.

infrastructure and Capacity – Assessing physical visitor capacities at destination entrance and exit points, local transportation, accommodation, road networks, venues, restaurants, bars and attractions should reflect the ability to effectively handle large numbers of event participants. Temporary measures can be implemented (such as marquees for venues, restaurants, additional airplanes, trains, coaches and temporary immigration points). Exceeding capacity levels, though, can result in negative impacts on the destination.

Marketing and Promotion – Factors such as positioning statement, target audience, creating an event brand and how to make the event attractive will be core in bringing people to the event. More than raising awareness of its logo or slogan, the event should create an actual intent to visit and participate.

Creating an Event Legacy – Hosting an event for the first time can take greater effort and commitment of resources than maintaining it year after year. An assessment should be done on the possibility of creating a recurring event. Careful planning is needed on the use of venues, facilities and infrastructure created for the event after it
is finished. Legacy strategy needs to be in place and implemented before the event is concluded.

Human Resource Management for Music Festivals

Goldblatt (2002) pointed out that the event management industry is primarily a service industry, and therefore its vital part consists of intangible things such as customer service. We cannot touch it or smell it, but it exists, and moreover, it can make our events a disaster or a complete success. Event managers are being paid for creating memorable positive experiences, and staff are the critical resource that makes a guest’s experience memorable. Issues such as human resource organisation, training, and employee retention are vital in order to remain competitive. For example, most event management organisations offer similar services, but it is their people that make the difference.

Goldblatt (2005) mentioned further that it is not only human resource management (HRM), but human resource development (HRD) or training that is considered a vital function in managing staff. Training may take the form of a social gathering, such as an orientation, or it can be formalised instruction in the field at the actual event site. It does not matter how this training is delivered as every group of staff will require a different method in order to help them learn. However, what is important is that they are tested for mastery to make certain that they are learning and applying the skills that are imparted. Testing for mastery can be done through a written exam, observation, or a combination of both. Moreover, the on-site management of staff entails coordinating their job performance to ensure the goals of the events are accomplished. Depending on the skills level of the staff, team leaders or supervisors must be assigned in sufficient numbers to oversee their performance. Remember that the coordination of staff involves coaching and mentoring. It is vital to make certain that team leaders or supervisors are skilled in these areas.

The final key factor in human resource management is rewarding excellent, high-quality performance. Do not wait until the end of the event to say “thank you”. Some organisations publish staff newsletters; others host music festivals to thank the staff for their help during the annual music festival. Giving staff early, frequent, and constant recognition is a critical component in developing a strong and loyal staff team. It may help to create an annual contest for “staff of the year” or some such recognition to encourage good-natured competition among team members. Astute management of staff is necessary to effectively recognise and reward their service to the event (Goldblatt, 2005).
Risk Management for Music Festivals

Risk management is considered to be a crucial component of music festivals. For example, with global warming, the weather appears unpredictable especially in Thailand. Therefore, for music festivals, risk management should be contingency planning on ways to deal with risks that may occur. McCartney (2010) briefly describes prevalence of risks at various levels which require suitable response measures.

**Financial** – Careful attention and strict control needs to be given to the balance sheet and to monitor event expenses and revenues. Depending on its objectives, an event is generally designed to create profits either directly or as a consequence of the event occurring.

**Weather** – Asian destinations, especially in Thailand, are constantly affected by adverse weather conditions such as flooding, typhoons and drought.

**Security** – Political unrest and terrorism can cause security concerns for participants, performers and VIPs. Concerns of potential local criminal activity at events involving distraction related crimes such as pickpockets, ATM and credit card scams or having personal belongings stolen can also deter visitors.

**Destination Image** – Music festivals can draw international attention. The degree of success or failure of the music festival can impact perceptions of the destination. There is also a risk to the community in the extent of civic pride and sentiment to the organisers or their government as a result.

**Food Safety** – Food poisoning or food tampering can affect anyone from guests at a cocktail reception to the participants.

**Failure of Public Utilities** – Electricity blackouts or brown-outs can occur, as well as disruptions to water supply. Contingency measures need to be planned

**Corruption** – Elements of corruption may be discovered in the building of facilities for events or event planning which may cause bad press coverage

**Venue Failure** – Temporary or permanent structures may collapse. There may be problems with the venue with regard to participant capacity and crowd control.

Crowd Management for Music Festivals

Tarlow (2002) mentioned that when people riot, they cause a great deal of destruction to both property and life. They also create negative impressions of the event destination, which can contribute to that area’s negative collective memory. Parades, demonstrations, and sports events are not the only crowd management challenges facing event risk managers. Event risks managers are keenly aware that almost any event can quickly change from leisurely fun to chaos and even death. In fact, in the 1990s over 150 people have died at rock concerts. All events – sports events, concerts, young people’s “happenings”, political rallies, to name a few – may degenerate from...
orderly gatherings into disorder, chaos, and riots. These disorders can destroy a destination’s reputation and its economy, and, at times, they can even define a city within the nation’s vocabulary. The “Woodstock Music Festivals” have become part of American “Cultural History”. All event risk managers must understand how an orderly crowd can be transformed into an angry mob. They should also know how mobs work and what precautions need to be taken in relation to security professionals and law enforcement officials, to ensure that an orderly event does not disintegrate into a destructive mob. To manage crowds, the risk manager must first have an understanding of the sociology of the crowd. Therefore, we should first look at the sociology of a crowd and investigate how crowds become mobs. Then we can examine some of the techniques used in controlling crowds and some of the resources for orderly crowd control such as fire prevention.

The classical work of Canetti (1973) suggests how crowds develop, gain power, and have the potential to move from an orderly assembly of human beings into an uncontrollable mob. His arguments are premised on the following principles of the crowd:

- Humans have a desire and a fear of being touched by the unknown.
- To deal with fear of being touched, humans set boundaries.
- In crowds, there is a loss of fear of being touched; crowds create equality, there are no distinctions in crowd; crowds have tendencies to grow, open crowds have no boundaries.

In other words, when we find ourselves within a crowd, we both enjoy the contact, at the same time, fear it. However, Tarlow (2002) offers suggestions for event crowd control in order to facilitate the organisers on how to manage the events properly as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of incidents</th>
<th>Contributing factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Festivals (Music festivals)</td>
<td>Drugs, alcohol, sudden noises, fighting, gunfire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Speeches, planned violence, drugs, gunfire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street events</td>
<td>Alcohol, drugs, boredom, fighting, sexual acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport events</td>
<td>Alcohol, drugs, boredom, fighting, sexual acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student events/ parties</td>
<td>Alcohol, drugs, sexual promiscuity, tolerance by authorities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Methodology**

To find out the satisfaction of tourists at the Pattaya Music Festival 2012 with regard to Logistics/Services, Artistic Direction, Marketing and Communications and Participation in Tourism activities, a detailed questionnaire was prepared. This
questionnaire considered several attributes with respect to the management of the event such as arrangements, access to the location, questions pertaining to the event itself and on-stage activities. The questionnaire also focused on media arrangements, use of social networking with regard to the event and public relations efforts for the event. The last part of the questionnaire dealt with attractions for tourists, sustainable tourism and whether the event could be a brand image for the place. The questionnaire was administered to a total of 100 tourists at the venue of the festival from 27 to 29 April, 2012 at Pattaya. The relationship between tourist attributes and satisfaction was measured on a scale of five to one, with five as “strongly agree” four as “agree”, three as “neutral”, two as “disagree” and one as “strongly disagree”.

Findings

Based on Table 1 on Logistics/Services, evaluation reveals that organisers had provided adequate stage facilities with a good location. There were sufficient toilets with sanitation facilities. Sufficient food stalls and shops had been provided. The study also revealed that sufficient signages and adequate directions were provided. The level of satisfaction by respondents for access to the location with facilities was above average. Thus, overall, the respondents were satisfied with the Logistics/Services provided by the organisers of the festival.

For Artistic Direction of the festival, Table 2 reveals that the respondents were satisfied with the professional musicians and bands, the selection of artists, the backstage arrangements and control; professional quality of stage props and advanced technology of musical instruments. The respondents were highly satisfied with the selection of professional artists. Thus, overall the Artistic Direction of the music festival was more than satisfactory for the respondents.

For Marketing and Communications of the festival, Table 3 reveals that the respondents were satisfied with public relations activities, outdoor advertising, use of TV channels and Radio channels and social networking sites like Facebook to provide detailed information on the music festival.

Table 1. Above average rating for Logistics/Services of the Pattaya Music Festival

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logistics/Services</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Adequacy of stage and location</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sufficient toilets with sanitation</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sufficient shops and food stalls</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sufficient signages and directions</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Overall access to location and adequacy of facilities</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Above average rating for Artistic Direction of the Pattaya Music Festival

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artistic Direction</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Selection of professional musicians/ bands</td>
<td>4.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Selection of professional artists</td>
<td>4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Professional backstage arrangements/ control</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Professional stage props</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Level of technology of musical instruments</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Average rating for Marketing and Communication of the Pattaya Music Festival.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing and Communications</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sufficient public relations/ news releases</td>
<td>4.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Adequate outdoor advertisements, e.g. Billboard</td>
<td>4.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sufficient festival details given through TV channels</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sufficient festival details given through Radio channels</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sufficient festival details given through social network sites, e.g. Facebook</td>
<td>4.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Above average rating for Participation in Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation in Tourism</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Event created an enormous number of tourists</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Event contributed to sustainable tourism (Environmental concerns)</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Crowd management was well-organised</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Successful destination management</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Event served as brand image of Pattaya</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Participation in Tourism, Table 4 reveals that the respondents felt that this event resulted in an enormous number of tourists and contributed to sustainable tourism and environmental concerns. They also felt that the crowd was well managed. The respondents considered the event as successful destination management and that it functioned as a brand image for Pattaya.

**Discussion**

The questionnaire contained 20 questions on the attributes which were considered important to measure tourists’ perception of satisfaction level of the Pattaya Music Festival 2012 at Pattaya Beach, Chonburi, Thailand. The attributes included in the questionnaire dealt with the management aspects of this music festival as these are key
attributes for the successful management of an event. Logistics/Services regarding good location, toilets and sanitation, food stalls and shops, signage and direction and easy access to location of Pattaya Music Festival were also assessed in the questionnaire and were found to be satisfactory. Similarly, respondents expressed satisfaction with attributes regarding Marketing and Communications, Artistic Direction and Participation in Tourism. On all counts, the respondents had a more than satisfactory rating of the Pattaya Music Festival.

This study found that tourists who visited the Pattaya Music Festival 2012, which was organised by the private/public organisers in cooperation with Tourism Authority of Thailand, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, were satisfied with the festival and its arrangement and management aspects. As Saleh & Ryan (1993) indicate, the quality of the event emerged as the most important factor for tourists but contextual elements including accessibility and even the arrangements were also important. Thus, these attributes should receive importance when organising a music festival. The present study therefore included factors related to the quality of the event. Respondents were asked about the professional selection of musicians/bands. Their views were sought on the selection of artists who performed at the festival. Backstage arrangements and control are important for the successful management of a music festival; hence respondents’ perception toward these arrangements was also sought. Advanced technology of musical instruments used at the festival is important and respondents were asked about this as well. The majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with all aspects of the staging of the Pattaya Music Festival.

The other aspects of organising a music festival which are equally important are Marketing and Communications. Respondents were asked about public relations efforts of the organisers and if sufficient information was given about the festival. They were queried regarding sufficiency of outdoor advertising like billboards. Further, TV channels are an important media conduit and respondents were asked whether these channels provided enough details regarding the music festival. Radio channels equally complement other media outlets and respondents were asked whether this channel was utilised to give further details about the music festival. As the Facebook is an important tool of communication and marketing, this attribute was also included in the questionnaire. All aspects of marketing and communications were reported as satisfactory by the respondents. Saleh & Ryan (1993) have concluded in their paper that “There is some evidence to assess what might be termed ‘accessibility and context’ factors of the festival. Such items include not only the ease of physical access in terms of road access, but also access to information such as its inclusion in guides, and the provision of supplementary services such as an 800 telephone number.

Thus, respondent’s reaction to the festival was positive and affirmative. They appreciated and positively evaluated the event.
Conclusion & Recommendations

As indicated in several studies, Festivals and Music Festivals are evaluated through systematic approaches to identifying strengths and weaknesses of the events, which should lead to further improvement in festivals and music festivals for the benefit of tourists, travelers (or) excursionists, etc. As indicated by earlier studies, this study also reiterates that the quality of the programme is as important as accessibility and programme arrangements. Other important attributes include advertising and publicity, participation in tourism and artistic direction.

The findings on perception of the tourists in relation to the Pattaya Music Festival 2012, Pattaya Beach, Chonburi, Thailand indicate that, in general, the tourists are satisfied with the appropriate logistics and services, artistic direction, marketing and communications of the event. They also expressed satisfaction with tourist participation in the event.

This study is of importance and value to practitioners, policymakers, and industry and festival organisers as it indicates the attributes of value to visitors at the festival. To make future events more popular and better organised, organisers need to be cognizant of the important aspects of the festival discussed in this study and take them into account while making arrangements. These basic factors build a successful music festival.

Future research on this topic can help support the findings in this research to create a successful music festival experience in Thailand. In order to promote Thailand as a hub for mega music festivals, further studies should be concerned with attracting other new music festivals, varieties of target groups, and equally important, the concepts of perception and satisfaction of tourists at music festivals. Moreover, the study on the relationship between carrying capacity and music festivals should also be considered.

References


The Relationship between Food Constraints and Destination Choice of Malaysian Muslim Travellers

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Abstract: Previous studies on destination choice mainly relied on the context of destination image, motivation of travelling and characteristics of tourism products (Theocharous & Seddighi, 2002). The issue of *halal* food and Muslim’s travelling behaviour remains limited in academic research. This study aims to explore food constraints of Muslim travellers while developing a theoretical framework interconnecting food constraints and destination choice. It investigates the Muslim travellers’ behavioral dimensions regarding food constraints. It measures the weight of the *halal* concept in the Malaysian Muslim context. The methodology first followed a qualitative approach applying semi-structured interviews with tourism-related segments to generate an insightful understanding. A quantitative approach was then used to verify and analyse the practices and behaviours. The findings support the correlation between food constraints and decision making on destinations by Malaysian Muslim travellers. Connections proved to be varied according to travelling situation and travelling exposure. Furthermore, religious obligations were found to have a remarkable weight on the destination choice decision. The results of this research offer practical applications for destination stakeholders such as hospitality and tourism operators, food and beverage caterers, travel agencies, tourism marketers as well as policy makers who aim to cater to the Muslim market.

Keywords: Malaysian Muslim travellers, *halal* food, religious constraints, social influence, tourism, destination choice


Introduction

Food is a significant component of overall tourist spending (Steinmetz, 2010). A generally accepted estimate is that tourists spend, on average, one-third of their travel expenses on purchasing food (Meler & Cerovic, 2003). New Zealand statistics show
the share of total tourism expenditure on food and beverage in 2009 to be 11%. This is compared to expenditure on accommodation which is 9%; other tourism products 12%; and retail sales 21% (New Zealand, 2010). Being a basic necessity of life, the demand for eating is inelastic to price with basic spending on dining out during a holiday constituting approximately a third of all tourist expenditure in a destination (Quan & Wang, 2004). Increasingly, researchers are expanding the relation between food and tourism (Matson & Vermignon, 2006). Most studies in this field have been limited to food safety, hygiene, analysis of culinary festival attendance, examination of supply side issues such as business processes, food productions and its role in tourism (Michell & Hall, 2003). Though studies have been done on the impact of Muslim food consumption, it has not gained much attention (Scott & Jafari, 2010).

The Muslim market has been growing rapidly over the last decade due to the effects of globalisation, increasing levels of mobility, along with prosperity in Muslim countries in areas of retail, banking and travel. Alhamarneh & Steiner (2004) note that the importance of intra Muslim traffic has led to higher focus in some countries on Islamic tourism and halal products development. It aims to better cater to this group. Retail groups like Carrefour, Casino, Auchan and Tesco have already begun their quest to segment their strategies to the Muslim market in France, UK and other EU countries. Islam remains a sensitive topic and normally marketers will use the most neutral language in order to avoid offending the non-Muslims. In Muslim countries, generally, the context of eating habits is officially defined by Islamic standards. In Malaysia, according to the constitution, a Malay individual is legally known as a Muslim without consideration on his ethnic heritage. This definition affects Malays with distinctive and restrictive food taboos. This study explores the impact of religious constraints and social influence on food and travel destination choices of Malaysian Muslims. It first defines the relationship of Islam and tourism, followed by Malaysian Muslim definition on halal food. The linkage between food constraints and destination choice is then discussed against relevant theoretical support.

Islam

Islam means “submission to God,” and Muslim means “one who submits to God.” Muslims believe that Allah is the only true God and that the Quran, the holy book, teaches the correct path of beliefs and practice (George, 2000). Muslims believe that Islam is a universal and uniform religion for all people and cultures with little variety in its major beliefs and practices. Islam is a world religion characterised by missions, mobility, and militancy (George, 2000; UNESCO, 2011). Islam has expanded far beyond its Middle Eastern origins over 1,400 years. Today more than one billion Muslims are spread over every continent. The largest concentration of Muslim
population worldwide is located in South Asia and South-east Asia. Malaysia is part of this region.

**Islam and Tourism**

While tourism generates economic activities worldwide, less than 10% of the global tourism revenue goes to countries with an Islamic culture. Four countries - Turkey, Malaysia, Morocco and Egypt - dominate the destinations (Alhamarneh & Steiner, 2004). From 2009 to 2011, Indonesia, Jordan and Malaysia reported 14.4%, 33.4% and 1.4% increase, respectively, in visitor arrivals (UNWTO, 2011). Despite political turmoil in Egypt, the overall growth has been significant in most of these destinations. Between 2004 and 2011, the growth in Malaysia was over 90%, growing from 13 million to 24.7 million (Tourism Malaysia, 2011). These countries attract mostly tourists from non-Muslim countries and the development of tourism has been challenged by a fundamental interpretation of Islam. Tourism development in Muslim countries has been largely defined as western inclined. This situation has favoured the emergence of an attempt to redefine travel by Islamic principles (Din & Kadir, 1989).

Islamic Tourism is defined as tourism practice that is compatible with Islam. The religion requires adherence to stipulations about attitude, food choice, dressing and prayer (Farahani & Henderson, 2009). According to Robinson & Goodman (1996), *halal* food and family-oriented environment are amenities which are highly rated by Muslim travellers, and cater to the *halal* market by encompassing a plethora of genres. Religious tourism exhibits perspectives of both culture and economics. Exploring and developing religious attractions and facilities would lead to growth in tourism within Islamic countries (Vijayanand, 2012). There are specific religious rituals that the Muslims need to fulfill with food choice; food preparation is particularly important. While certain religious provisions regulate what a Muslim can and cannot consume such as pork and alcohol, it does not actually exert any real influence on the mode of tourism development in a Muslim country. *Halal* procedures summarise a Muslim’s requirements towards food and nutrition.

**Halal Food**

According to Ahmadi (2005), *halal* originates from the Arabic word mean “lawful and permitted” which is contained in the *Akta Perihal Dagangan Halal* (1975). The term *halal* applies not only to food practitioners but also to healthcare products, food contact materials as well as makeup products. The Secretariat of the World Health Organization (WHO) has published the permissible rules for food products to be termed *halal* and to be marketed to Muslim consumers. The *halal* food industry is a particularly important economic sector in the Muslim countries. The most reliable guidelines of the *halal* criteria are found in the Food Standard Program (2001).
Halal Food Criteria

Lawful Food
Following Islamic law, foods originating from most sources are considered lawful. However, there are few food sources and its subsidiaries that are considered non-halal.

Food of Animal Origin
Animals that are not slaughtered according to Islamic law are not considered halal. Wild animals which are carnivores such as tigers, lions and other animals that hunt and prey on other creatures, as well as pests such as centipedes, rats, scorpions and birds of prey with claws like eagles are not part of the Muslim diet. Furthermore, meat from of animals such as ants, bees, lice, mosquitoes, frog, crocodiles, mules and domestic donkeys is also prohibited. Monkeys, dogs, snakes and others poisonous and hazardous aquatic animals are not in the Muslim diet too. Lastly but probably the most known rule is the prohibition on consumption of pork and pork-derived food.

Food of Vegetal Origin
Muslims are not allowed to consume food from plants that are considered harmful to the human body or plants with a stimulating function. However, exemption is permitted if the final products carry no harmful or stimulating substance.

Beverages
Under Islamic law, Muslims are prohibited from taking drinks that contain alcohol or any others ingredients that lead to intoxication, stimulation and potential bodily harm.

Labeling Requirements
Labeling provides information to ascertain the halal status of a food product. Thus, the term halal and the authorised logo should be displayed on getting permission from the related authority.

Labeling and Accrediting
Due to the demand for halal food in Malaysia, the Malaysia Government aims to safeguard and guarantee the halal status of food. The establishment of legal guidelines and infrastructure is facilitated in correspondence to Muslim consumers. Besides the existing “Guidelines on Foods, Drinks and Goods Utilised by Muslims” prepared by JAKIM (Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia – Department of Islamic Development Malaysia), the Standards & Industrial Research Institute of Malaysia (SIRIM) provides
standards for *halal* foods to facilitate production of *halal* food according to Islamic requirements by both local and international food manufacturers.

Muslim consumers can identify *halal* food products based on the *halal* logo introduced by JAKIM and officially approved by Government. The *halal* verification certificate is a legal mechanism that empowers sellers, importers and food handlers to label themselves as “Halal proved”. Since labeling is the only tool to guarantee consumers confidence, it is potentially a convincing marketing tool. Some industries are of the opinion that having a *halal* logo and label would add value compared to a product that had not been certified *halal* (*The Star Malaysia*, 2012). Between a *halal* and non-*halal* certified product, some buyers would prefer the *halal* product, and therefore the *halal* certification appears to be a marketing strategy. However, food constraints are more complex than just a single requirement of religion. Thus, food constraints need to be understood as an outcome of various forces.

**Food Constraints of Malaysian Muslims and Travel Destination Choices**

In Malaysia, Muslims comprise 62% of the population of 28 million (2012 census). Most are ethnic Malays, but there are also some Orang Asli communities, and other Islamic ethnic minorities in Sabah and Sarawak (Woronoff, 2009). Islam is the authorised religion of Malaysia, in its Sunni tradition (as opposed to the minority Shi’ites).

The ethnic Malays, positively seek for interaction and reactively respond to other ethnic groups (Robinson & Goodman, 1996). This forms the mold of what we know today as the modern Malay in multicultural Malaysia. As Southeast Asia becomes increasingly more developed, Muslim consumers have clearly emerged as an important market. Specific food consumption offers have to be developed by the destinations that want to target this market. It is assumed that the issue of food choice by Muslims in foreign countries will soon revolve around the availability of *halal* food (Fischer, 2008).

**The Theory of Planned Behaviour**

Ajzen (1980) established a Theory of Reasoned Action that was later extended into a new model of the Theory of Planned Behaviour - TPB (Ajzen, Joyce, & Sheikh, 2011). The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) explains that behaviour is under the control of an individual. Volitional behaviour, which shows the will of conduct, is well predicted by TPB. According to Ajzen (2012), TPB is an efficient tool to predict behaviour from social psychology to food choice research which covers the context of the current study. This theory assumes that *halal* food choice can be approached through social psychological research to attitude-behaviour relationships.

This approach implies that food choice is largely influenced by an individual’s attitude and belief. In the content of *halal* food choice, the concept of perceived or
believed value of halal food could be directly translated into practice within the Muslim community. However, the planned behaviour model might not be absolute in the context of tourism. Cultural, social, economic and ethnic concerns will directly influence attitudes on halal food especially in the absence of a habitual daily environment. This study mainly looks at religious and social elements.

Further investigation has revealed that intention is formed by two components: the attitude of an individual on whether the behaviour is perceived as good, pleasant or beneficial and perceived social pressure to perform in a certain manner (social norm). These linkages are shown as a simplified framework (Figure 1). Malaysian Muslims persistently hold a positive attitude towards Islam, emphasising obedient practices including their choice of food. Moreover, Malaysian Muslims are brought up within an environment where halal food is an apparent norm. Despite the predominant factors of attitude and subjective norm, the TPB also contains a set of perceived controls in order to convey a prediction on behavioral intentions as well as function as potential factors on intention - behaviour link (Figure 1).

Specifically, the accumulation of a Muslim traveler's beliefs towards the outcome on certain behaviour (going against halal requirements) or the individual evaluations on these results as positive or negative is the ground to predict attitude. Moreover, the subjective norm is measured by the accumulation of normative beliefs, which are presented as perceived pressure from the social environment Muslim travel takes place (family, friends, working environment) and the degree of compliance of an individual towards these social groups. Similarly, perceived control is predicted by

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**Figure 1.** Theory of Planned Behaviour towards consumption of halal food while travelling (Adapted from Ajzen, 1991)
certain control beliefs, for instance, an individual’s perception on ease or difficulty of performing the particular behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

**Conceptual Framework**

In this paper, the theory of planned behavior was modified to adapt to the context of intention to consume *halal* food while traveling and intention to travel to a destination. Three main drivers of intention towards *halal* food choice were considered. Attitude and level of norm towards *halal* food were examined to predict the intention to consume *halal* food. In order to facilitate the analysis, a fixed travelling context (non-Muslim destination) was prefixed. Thus, the third element (*perceived control*) was omitted since Muslim travelers would only have limited control on the *halal* food supply from the country they choose to travel.

**Methods**

Both, qualitative and quantitative approaches were selected to investigate this topic. First, a preliminary interview session was conducted to review the areas of research and define the relevant topic. Since the basic framework and factors were

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**Figure 2.** Relationship between attitude and subjective norm towards halal food choice while travelling and travel destination choice (Huynh & Bouchon, 2013)
predetermined, a qualitative approach was developed to help understand how Malaysian Muslims react to food, and travel. It was designed to identify factors influencing their choice before it was validated in a quantitative approach.

**Qualitative Data Collection**

Five semi-structured interviews were conducted with Malaysian Muslim key stakeholder professionals before designing the research questionnaire. Respondents’ age range was between 20-45 with 60% being female. They were divided into two main categories. Two respondents worked with a tour operator, two were chefs and one was a hotel marketing executive. Travel agents brought knowledge on the current tourism market and demands of tourists which could contribute much to the current study. Some significant discoveries emerged such as the impact of family on the perception towards halal food and acceptance of Malaysian Muslims towards non-halal food were further explained during these sessions.

**Quantitative Data Collection**

Based on the qualitative results, a set of quantitative data was collected from Malaysian Muslim respondents. A strata sampling method was employed in this research based on socio-demographic distribution as well as the criteria cited in previous literature (George, 2000). This particular method is adaptable for this research due to availability of a Muslim sample in Malaysia that can overcome the linearity of the regression.

Since actual travel of 82% Malay tourists is distributed within the age range from 18-57 (Badaruddin & Yusnita, 2005), a total of 250 questionnaires was distributed to Malaysian Muslims above 18 years who had the intention to travel. The three main distributing locations were Kuala Lumpur, Shah Alam and Bandar Sunway which are surrounded by an urban population that is exposed to travel. The probability of reaching Malaysian Muslims is higher due to the high concentration of a Muslim population in these areas. According to the report from Department of Statistics Malaysia (2010), the population distribution of Malaysian Muslims is significant in Shah Alam (69 % Malay, 18 % Chinese, 20 % Indian and 1 % other race) and in Kuala Lumpur (45% Malay, 35% Chinese, and 20% Indian).

**Findings and Discussion**

This study aims to interpret the data related to the presence or absence of the relationship between destination choice and travel food constraints. The cause and effect of such a relationship will not be discussed in detail in this study but is expected to be examined in the proposed framework through future research.
Respondents were required to rate the importance of religious constraints and social influence in their choice of halal food while travelling. This rating would indicate their perception on food choice when travelling rather than the usual food choice experience of the respondents. However, we cannot discard usual food choice experience as it will influence their perception on food choice when travelling.

The objective of identifying the factors that affect food choice of Muslims when travelling abroad was achieved by analysing the mean rating of selected food choice dimensions (Table 1). In order to assess these perceptions, all the attributes were measured by rating the attributes on a five-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree).

Amongst Malaysian Muslims, religious influence reflects a high mean score of 4.315 which indicates the significance of this factor on their travelling diet. However, the influence is not absolute, with a small number of respondents (4.3%), having a high acceptance for non-halal diet which presents both an opportunity and a risk in halal food demand. Social influence, including peer pressure, family and concerns of travelling partners is an influential force on level of norm towards halal food choice with a high mean score of 4.213. This is due to the tight social structure and the legal framework that is built within the Malaysian Muslim community. The influence is subject to variance according to the type of tourism experience that one expects to receive as each carries different weights while travelling, for instance, family trip, friends’ trip or independent backpack travel.

Influence of Demographics and Travel Experience on Religious Constraints

Age Group Influence on Religious Constraints

ANOVA test was used to verify the hypothesis on the perceptions of different age groups on religious constraints. The significant value of (p)= 0.006 is lower than 0.05 which shows that perceptions towards religious constraint vary with different age groups.
groups (Table 2). The mean difference shows that respondents who were aged 48 and above had a higher mean score which underlines the higher influence of religious constraints on this age group. Thus, it indicates that these “senior travelers” have more concerns towards halal food.

**Gender Influence on Religious Constraints**

A T-test was run to examine the extent of influence of gender on perceived social influence on halal food choice with mean and SD value and T-test value. Based on the results, the value (p) of 0.000 shows a significant difference of almost 99.9% (Table 3). Thus, the perception of social influence is different between genders. It shows that female respondents play the role of a ‘rule keeper’ on halal food compared to males.

### Table 2. Age group influence on religious constraints (One-way ANOVA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-22</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8.06</td>
<td>1.569</td>
<td>3.128</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>1.795</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-32</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8.47</td>
<td>1.552</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33-37</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8.62</td>
<td>0.728</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38-42</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>8.81</td>
<td>0.603</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43-47</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8.71</td>
<td>1.160</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 and above</td>
<td>129.33</td>
<td>9.33</td>
<td>0.492</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>8.63</td>
<td>1.109</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( p \leq 0.05 \)

### Table 3. Gender influence on religious constraints (Independent T-test)

**Group statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>8.41</td>
<td>1.437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>8.77</td>
<td>.814</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Independent samples test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious constraints</th>
<th>Levene’s Test for equality of variances</th>
<th>T-test for equality of means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious constraints</td>
<td>18.744</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( p \leq 0.05 \)
Travel Experience Influence on Religious Constraint

A T-test was run to examine if respondents with travel experience would react differently to religious constraints compared to those who had not travelled previously (Table 4). The travel experience data, mean, SD value and T-test value, show a significant value (p) of 0.003. This reflects a significant difference up to almost 99% between these two types of travellers. Comparing the mean shows that ‘experienced travellers are more concerned about halal food compared to non-experienced travellers.

The older generation was found to be more religious in relation to halal food products while travelling. This sensitivity might be due to the high religious level prevailing in this age group. It could also depend on previous experience where they might have encountered much hearsay on the ‘halalness’ of food in a foreign region. Meanwhile, the younger generation with high exposure to multiple cultures would have a relatively higher acceptance level for food. The finding is supported by the family structure of Malaysian Muslims where women have always played the role of a ‘tradition keeper’ in food habits, even to the extent of travel and tourism practices.

For centuries, Muslim women have been responsible for the daily meal of family members. Essentially, this means that halal food ingredients and cooking methods are predominantly guarded by Muslim women from generation to generation. Muslim women are still primarily responsible for preparing home meals, even if they work away from home (Abu & Sharon, 1991). In the 21st century, Muslim cultural practice continues to shape how Muslim women live and prepare meals for their families (Haddal, Jane, & John, 2003). When home bound, Muslim women serve as ethnic androids, preserving ‘traditional’ rules through elaborate and time-consuming cooking. With increased exposure to travelling, Muslim travelers are able to realise the importance

Table 4. Influence of travel experience on religious constraints (Independent T-Test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Travel experience</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>8.78</td>
<td>0.953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>1.332</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Levene’s Test for equality of variances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levene's Test for equality of variances</th>
<th>T-test for equality of means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious constraints</td>
<td>9.216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p ≤ 0.05

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and difficulty of getting halal food while travelling. Thus, respondents who have travel experience tend to have more religious demand in relation to food choices compared to those who have never been out of the country.

Impact of Religious Constraints and Social Influence of Halal Food Choice on Travel Destination Choice of Malaysian Muslims

A regression analysis was run to analyse the proposed hypothesis relating religious constraints and social influence on food choice with destination choice. Food choice determinants (religious and social influence) were the independent variables with destination choice to non-Muslim countries being the dependent variable (Table 5). The results of the regression test of religious constraints and social influence are significant ($p<0.05$). This indicates that religious constraints and social influence have an influence on destination choice. Their relationship appears to be negative, indicating that respondents who are more concerned about these dimensions will tend to choose Muslim countries. It also shows that the relationship between religious constraints and destination choice to non-Muslim countries is relatively stronger, followed by social influence.

The level of multicollinearity can be detected with the variance inflation factor (VIF) (Table 5). The VIF value signifies a slight hint of the existence of multicollinearity. However, the VIF value of this study is still acceptable since it is lower than 5. This explains that the underlying dimensions of religious constraints and social influence, appear to be slightly colliding but are of minimum concern. Religious and social influence could be treated as independent variables that influence destination choice. In conclusion, a relationship between religious constraints and social influence related to destination choice is observed in this study.

Based on influence of food choice factors between Muslim and non-Muslim countries, it appears that there is a more favorable perception of Muslim countries compared to non-Muslim countries amongst Malaysian Muslims. Respondents were

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardised coefficients</th>
<th>Standardised coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Collinearity statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B  Std. error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>-.374 .051</td>
<td>-.418</td>
<td>-7.358 .000</td>
<td>.870 1.149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>-.143 .036</td>
<td>-.243</td>
<td>-4.010 .000</td>
<td>.765 1.307</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Relation between religious constraints and social influence of food choice with travel destination choice (Regression test)

Dependant variable: destination choice to non-Muslim countries
required to reveal their destination of preference based on food choice determinants. Respondents showed a favorable intention (69%) to visit Muslim destinations (Figure 3). Muslim destinations which had the highest preference (up to 65.6%) were Indonesia followed by Maldives (15%), Turkey (9.4%), Egypt (6.2%), Morocco (2.5%) and Iran (1.3%). According to reasons provided by respondents, halal food products are easily found in Indonesia, a liking for Indonesian food (19.1%), similarity of Indonesian to Malaysian food (71.4%), their partners (husband or wife) like to eat Indonesian food (1.9%) and others (7.6%).

On the other hand, the respondents state that the most favorable non-Muslim country is Singapore (52.8%) followed by Thailand (25%), Hong Kong (11.2%), China (6.9%), Macau (2.8%) and Vietnam (1.3%). The reasons given for this choice are: Malaysian food is easily found in Singapore (77.7%); they like Singapore food (19.4%); and others (2.9%) (Figure 4). It can be argued that the cultural proximity and importance of flows between Malaysians and these countries might affect the overall findings.

**Proposed Group Typology with Theory of Planned Behaviour**

Based on the research results, respondents were grouped into three main categories that carry different characteristics. The plus sign (+) and negative sign (-) are used to
demonstrate the positive or negative reactions of respondents to food constraints (halal rules) to different indicators under the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

Conservative Group (27.1%)

In terms of attitude and subjective norm, this group members perceive having food constraints (halal rules) as a positive practice, that is, it is a norm in their daily diet. They also believe that they should have control over their consumption and seek only halal food, even when abroad. Thus, their intention and actual behaviour to consume halal food is high. They represent the group that is the most favorable towards Muslim country destinations (Figure 5).

Figure 4. Non-Muslim countries that Malaysian Muslim would consider as travel destination based on their food constraints on halal food while travelling

Figure 5. Theory of Planned Behaviour in relation to consumption of halal food - Conservative group
Adaptative Group (67.8%)
The respondents under this group hold a similar attitude and level of norm towards halal food as the conservative group. Yet, they believe it would be difficult to get halal food while travelling since they would not have much control over the food that is available in the destination. Thus, the intention and actual consumption would be low. They express more flexibility towards destination choice (Figure 6).

Adventurous Group (5.1%)
Even though members of this group still perceive having halal food as a positive action, they would not mind breaking the norm if they were put under circumstances that would be assessed as extraordinary. They represent the most open-minded group within the study and are characterised by a small percentage. Their intention to visit a non-Muslim country is relatively higher compared to other groups (Figure 7).
Implications of the Research Findings

The study reveals that the main food choice requirements for most Malaysian Muslims is the availability of halal food. Though non-Muslim destinations are able to cater to halal food, policy makers of non-Islamic countries should now “take a serious look” at Muslim travellers. According to Mohamed & Rezai (2012) factors such as absence of JAKIM Halal logo, food products from non-Muslim countries, unfamiliar brand and no clear list of ingredients make Muslim consumers feel less confident with food products. In order to gear up to the potential halal market in non-Muslim countries, the Malaysian Government could consider the export of halal ingredients or introduce JAKIM halal certification to help protect Malaysian Muslim travelers while expanding the halal market to overseas tourist destinations. However, the research has also revealed a risk in that halal food is not an absolute case for all Malaysian Muslims. However, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to Muslim tourists generally as the number of respondents in this study is relatively small and further research needs to be done.

The weight of social influence is as important as religious constraints. One’s action could be a result of the social environment where the action is conducted. Family, friends and travelling partners could influence what Malaysian Muslims choose to consume. To be specific, Malaysian Muslim travelers tend to consume similar food types that their travel companions choose to eat. Such behaviour can be positive when a country has an in-depth understanding of the traveling pattern and food barometer of Malaysian Muslims. Otherwise, it would be a big challenge to predict demand when there is no clear direction of food consumption of Muslim travellers. In previous research, food has been considered as a secondary factor contributing to a destination’s image, which eventually influences the visit intention. This study provides a preliminary theoretical framework that relates food choice factors with travel destination choice in the context of Muslim travelers. Future research could re-examine and expand the framework according to a specific population. It could also offer an opportunity for research in a destination aiming to develop Muslim products.

Conclusion

The research objectives were categorised under three main components. First, it was to explore food choice determinants of Malaysian Muslims while travelling aboard. Secondly, it aimed to discover the correlation between food choice factors and destination choice. Lastly, based on the findings, it was to design a suitable marketing strategy on food products for a non-Muslim country which targets the Malaysian Muslim market. The overall objectives were achieved with the enhancement of the proposed framework between food choice determinants and destination choice of...
non-Muslim countries. The proposed hypothesis has further delved into the relationship between food choice determinants and destination choice. Since the Muslim market is a profitable market with prospective returns, related research such as halal food development, Muslim gastronomy and halal destination image will help to achieve a better understanding of the halal traveller’s preference and behaviour. A non-Muslim country such as Vietnam, which has a great potential in providing ultimate travel experience is somehow eliminated by Muslim tourists due to the lack of halal food or specific campaigns aiming at Muslim tourists. It has not only set a boundary between two countries but created a barrier in communicating or cultural exchange. Since Malaysia is leading the halal market, the country should work towards establishing itself as a halal hub which is likely to result in access to halal food in non-Muslim countries like Vietnam. Both countries are then likely to enjoy positive trade, beneficial to both parties.

References


Visiting Friends and Relatives Travel, Host-Guest Interactions and Qualitative Research: Methodological and Ethical Implications

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Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Abstract: This paper examines the methodological and ethical considerations and implications of conducting studies on ‘visiting friends and relatives (VFR) travel in the context of host-guest interactions using a qualitative approach. When reviewing the VFR travel literature, experiences are only often captured within the world-view of the tourist or traveller. Studies of VFR travellers generally neglect the significance of the host in the travel experience. However, VFR travel is multi-faceted and dynamic, mainly resulting from host-guest interactions. Therefore, capturing the potential range of meanings attached to various aspects of host-guest interactions would provide a holistic approach. In contrast to quantitative studies which are relatively static and cannot convey much about human experiences resulting from the host-guest social interaction, this study integrates VFR travel and host-guest interactions through qualitative methods. Dealing with pairs of hosts and guests at the micro-level has certain methodological and ethical implications which are discussed since these participants have personal knowledge about their relationship.

Keywords: VFR travel, host-guest interaction, qualitative research, methodology, research ethics


Introduction

Studies of visiting friends and relatives (VFR) in relation to tourism, travel, and hospitality research have become a significant area of analysis. This paper explores the methodological and ethical implications of conducting studies on VFR travel in the context of host-guest interactions using a qualitative approach. While quantitative studies have contributed to a better understanding of VFR travel, they fail to address
social interactions occurring between hosts and guests. Qualitative methodology will reveal the interactions between hosts and guests in a more in-depth manner and contribute to the development of empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

This paper largely reflects my current research which examines host-guest interactions at the micro-level between first-generation Filipino migrants to New Zealand who acted as hosts in their new homeland for their respective VFRs from their former homeland, the Philippines. Reisinger & Turner (2003) suggest the need to examine the cultural background of tourists and hosts and determine how cultural differences in their backgrounds (and similarities) affect their social interactions. In my study, however, while the hosts and VFRs still share the same culture, the former, who have established themselves in their new homeland, may have the potential to transform, articulate, contest, and communicate their evolving cultural identity like any other host communities (Lacy & Douglass, 2002; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006).

Currently, there are now more than 214 million international migrants all over the world (United Nations, 2010). This scale of global movement of people should certainly highlight the importance of international migrants as catalysts in promoting VFR travel. The growth of permanent migrant communities as a global phenomenon becomes a major source of tourists as a result of immigrants developing and extending relationships and kinship in their receiving country. These relationships underscore the role and experiences of diasporic communities as well as those of their relatives and friendship networks. Yet, VFR travel remains understudied.

Coles & Timothy (2004) have identified six distinctive patterns of travel and tourism associated with the spaces and places occupied and travelled through diaspora, including: (1) members of diasporic communities who make trips in search of their roots and their routes with the aim of reaffirming and reinforcing their identities; (2) the search for roots and routes gives rise to genealogical, ancestral or family history tourism; (3) residents of the original ‘homeland’ may make trips to diaspora spaces to discover how co-members of the diaspora have adapted to their living conditions in another place (the opposite of the first pattern) that may be considered VFR travel in the consumption of experiences beyond ‘home’; (4) diasporic destinations as notable attractions and features on ‘mainstream’, non-diaspora tourists’ vacation itineraries either deliberately or unintentionally; (5) diasporic scattering in transit spaces; and (6) destinations, resorts, retreats and vacation spaces developed by diasporic communities in their host state as a result of post-arrival colonisation. The global movement of people should certainly highlight the importance of immigrants as catalysts in promoting VFR travel. As local residents, immigrants may show VFR travellers around their new homeland and thus engender a sense of belonging to their new community. The real significance of migration to travel and tourism is not in the one-way trip in itself, but in the long-run implication of a transplanted demand for travel and the creation

This paper will address the following questions:

1. How are qualitative methods currently reflected in VFR travel studies?
2. What are the methodological and ethical implications of doing qualitative studies on host-guest interactions in the context of VFR travel?
3. What are some key considerations when conducting studies of VFR travel using qualitative methods?

The intended outcome is not to establish generalisations in studying VFR travel using qualitative methods, but to carefully consider ways of examining the meanings of host-guest interactions. This type of evaluation is effectively carried out using anthropological methods which are subjective enabling the field of tourism to supplement scientific (etic) with humanistic (emic) tools and orientations (Walle, 1997: p. 534).

Review of Related Literature on VFR Travel

Due to the fragmentation of the field of tourism studies, synthesis, bounding, and problem generation become key aspects of the problem formulation (Pearce, 2012). In contrast to Griffin (2012) who conducted a content analysis of articles on VFR travel from 1990-2010, the aim of this study is to review and synthesise extant literature on VFR travel, link this with host-guest interactions as another theme, and address the gap in knowledge in terms of how qualitative methods are reflected. I have also highlighted the progress in VFR travel research and its link with international migration as my topic deals mainly with immigrant communities.

Studies related to VFR travel were catalysed by Jackson (1990) who argues that this form of travel remains undervalued. This was further emphasised in *The Journal of Tourism Studies* in 1995 that dedicated a special issue to the topic. Results from the empirical studies from this international journal shows that VFR travel is a significant market and, as a result, has provided a better understanding of its contribution to market analysis and segmentation (Brown, 2010; Morrison *et al*., 2000; Moscardo *et al*., 2000) leading to consideration of friends and relatives separately in VFR travel research (Seaton & Tagg, 1995); analysis of the use of commercial accommodation by international VFRs (Lehto, Morrison & O’Leary, 2001); and VFRs’ economic benefits (Asiedu, 2008).

Pearce & Moscardo (2005) outlined the substantial scale and socio-economic importance of VFR markets in domestic and international settings as an integral part of the broad definition of tourism. Moreover, Moscardo *et al* (2000) provide five defining features of the VFR tourism: sector (VFR as a major motive/trip type or as an activity); scope (international and/or domestic); effort (short- and/or long-haul);
accommodation used (accommodated by friends/relatives, commercial accommodation, or a combination); and the focus of the visit. VFR being the focus of the visit was further disaggregated by Seaton & Tagg (1995) into those visiting friends (VF), those visiting relatives (VR), and those visiting both friends and relatives (VFVR). They are thought to have different motivations for travel and trip purpose. Further, Backer (2007; 2010a; 2010b; 2012a) developed a definitional model of VFR travel as a form of travel involving a visit whereby either (or both) the purpose of the trip or the type of accommodation involves visiting friends and/or relatives.

Looking at the relationship between VFR travel to other forms of human mobility, Williams & Hall (2000) have established the relationship between tourism and migration. The special edition of *Tourism Geographies* in 2000 was dedicated to exploring the convergence of tourism and migration through examining the relationship in the context of production and consumption. Similarly, research on diaspora in tourism terms has been positioned under the umbrella of VFR (Causevic & Lynch, 2009; Coles & Timothy, 2004; Moscardo et al., 2000; Seaton & Tagg, 1995). Morrison et al. (2000) have described the relationship of tourism and diaspora as a function of ethnic tourism where people visit destinations with an interest in exploring their own ethnic origins. However, tourism and diaspora have been observed via narrow host-guest relationships such as the mapping out of commercial aspects of the interaction (Causevic & Lynch, 2009).

In addition, when reviewing the VFR travel literature, experiences are only captured within the perspective of the tourist or traveller. Studies of VFR travellers generally neglect the significance of the host in the travel experience (Brocx, 2003; Slater, 2002). Yet, host-guest interactions are socially constructed phenomena (Smith, 1977; 1989; Smith & Brent, 2001) which are actively produced by both hosts and guests who create their own meanings within the context of social interaction. Studies examining the host-guest relationship usually create an illusion that involves an element of ‘othering’ where such interaction is a meeting of strangers (Di Domenico & Lynch, 2007; Heuman, 2005; Joseph & Kavoori, 2001; Smith & Brent, 2001; Su & Wall, 2010) that may not be applicable when examining VFR travel. With VFR travel, there is a personal relationship between hosts and guests as they know (of) each other either as relatives or friends.

Shani & Uriely (2011) suggest the need to focus on the sociological aspects of VFR travel including issues of ethnicity and migration as the latter may have a strong association with VFR travel. Similarly, Young, Corsun & Baloglu (2007) determined that both hosting and visiting are social functions based on relationships. Since the tourism industry is economically-driven, greater weight has been put on quantification (Riley & Love, 2000). Recently, Griffin (2013) examined VFR travel and the role of immigrants as hosts, and its importance to communities with high levels of immigration.
While there is an attempt to interpret the meanings of host-guest interactions in the context of VFR travel, studies on tourism either focus on one perspective – either of the host or the guest (VFR). However, there is a current lack of conceptual and theoretical understanding that links VFR travel and the host-guest phenomenon. Also, the meanings and interpretations attached to the range of host-guest interactions that exist are poorly understood.

A holistic approach would examine host-guest interactions in giving these two groups a voice in order to provide an understanding of the meanings of their relationship. However, quantitative research is seldom able to capture the subject's perspective since it has to rely on more remote, inferential empirical methods and materials which are different from qualitative research which puts emphasis on capturing the individual's point of view (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative approaches provide a better understanding of VFR travel including its meanings as compared to quantitative studies (Griffin, 2012). It is important to understand how host-guest interactions occur and how they impact tourists in terms of their on-site behaviours, experiences, and destination evaluations, which are key considerations for tourism planning and management (Smith & Brent, 2001; Su & Wall, 2010). Nonetheless, dealing with immigrants who have experienced hosting together with their respective VFRs remains a challenge including its ethical implications which are highlighted next.

Discussion

This section provides an overview of the implications of using qualitative methods in VFR travel studies. Then, methodological considerations are discussed such as identifying the context of the VFR trip, recruiting participants, and dealing with other cultures. Ethical implications of conducting research on host-guest interactions are also highlighted. Nonetheless, the methods selected should be appropriate to the epistemological orientation, the questions asked, and the population studied (Ambert, Adler, Adler & Detzner, 1995).

Implications on Identifying the Research Paradigm

In the context of VFR travel, understanding the range of meanings of host-guest interactions cannot be addressed through quantitative studies. Qualitative research in the social sciences rests on a departure from static, quantitatively measurable knowledge and tends towards a focus on understanding and expressing an aspect of being which is dynamic, experienced and elusive of the positivist researcher (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001). Through qualitative methods, one is able to capture what actually takes place and what people say. Researchers using qualitative methods strive to understand phenomena and situations as a whole (Patton, 1982; 2002).
However, the majority of tourism research textbooks do not address the theoretical paradigms that underpin tourism research (Jennings, 2010: p. 34). There has been difficulty in identifying or locating the theoretical paradigms used in VFR travel research as previous studies are informed by positivist approaches. The fact still remains that VFR travel is underestimated (Backer, 2012a; Griffin, 2013) and still in its nascent stage (Backer, 2011; Griffin, 2012). Accordingly, there is an absence of articles examining VFR travel research associated with using qualitative methods that reflect the perspectives of both the hosts and guests resulting from their social interactions. However, Young et al. (2007) recognise that hosting is a social function based on relationships with their guest(s) which may be relevant beyond their clear marketing implications. There are multiple explanations or realities to explain the host-guest phenomenon in the context of VFR travel rather than one causal relationship.

In my current study, I have chosen phenomenology as the underpinning paradigm for my research. It explores how human beings interpret an experience and transform that experience into consciousness, both individually and collectively through shared meanings. Phenomenology is not introspective but retrospective and reflects on lived experience which is always recollective; it is a reflection on experience that has already passed or been lived through (Patton, 2002; Van Manen, 1990).

Capturing the potential range of meanings attached to host-guest interactions would provide a holistic approach as VFR travel is multi-faceted and dynamic, resulting from social interactions. I describe the temporal dimensions of the social interaction between the hosts and VFRs as the psychological processes that concern the anticipation of the visit (pre-trip), the actual visit (during), and the recollection of the visit (post-trip) (Larsen, 2007). A distinguishing feature of VFR travel is that the pre-trip experiences are rooted in the host-guest relationship and past interactions. The during trip experiences explore the host's/guest's face-to-face social interaction resulting from the resource exchanges between them and as understood from their respective perspectives. Post-trip experiences are provided by the recollections of experiences and may lead to the anticipation of future interaction or diminish the likelihood of subsequent interaction. These three temporal dimensions may provide a broader picture of the hosts and VFRs' social interactions.

When developing our research agendas and framing our research questions, we need to look more explicitly at what we need to know to increase our understanding of a particular issue or problem and what this new knowledge will contribute both theoretically and practically (Pearce & Butler, 2010: p. 6). Since the underpinning paradigm in my study is phenomenology, qualitative methods that entail interviewing the hosts and VFRs who are still in the during trip phase of the visit do not qualify as these participants are still making sense of their experience and transforming such experience into consciousness, both individually and as a shared meaning (Patton,
2002: p. 104). As such, this entails interviewing the hosts and VFRs separately so they may reflect on the shared recollection of their social interaction. Nevertheless, there is a need to make sure that research questions underpinning a research paradigm are answerable within the context – and where different qualitative approaches are used – such as interviewing the hosts and guests (in the during trip phase) together may produce a different research project having its own merits, particularly when focusing on in situ interactions between hosts and guests. Other interpretive paradigms may also be explored (e.g., symbolic interactionism) when interviewing both the hosts and guests about a previous trip – such that the context is either the return visit of the VFR to the host and/or the current trip (or both) which creates an opportunity to interview them together.

**Context of VFR Travel**

VFR travel is motivated by a range of reasons where specific obligations are fulfilled through host-guest social interactions. In contrast, VFR visits are trips but not typically tourism trips as VFR travel may become more of an obligation (Boyne, Carswell & Hall, 2002). Hence, VFR travel may not always involve a leisure experience. For example, the purpose of the visit may be sensitive and one needs to carry out the interview with care and tact as the host or the guest may have been confronted with severe illness during the previous trip or when these participants need to fulfill certain obligations such as taking care of the sick or attending a funeral. This may cause some psychological distress for the participants when a qualitative interview is conducted as they may be recounting a matter linked with some strong emotions. Similarly, in some cultures such as Chinese, they are often hesitant to talk about death as this is considered bad luck (Braun & Nichols, 1997). In qualitative methods, research on VFR travel studies should therefore take into consideration the purpose of the trip in order to avoid any ethical issues. There is a need to structure interviews in such a way that it does not cause the participants emotional pain (Rosenblatt, 1995). Subjecting participants who may be in grief regardless of the purpose of VFR travel (e.g., attending a funeral or taking care of a person who is in a critical condition at the time of the trip) may pose some ethical issues that the researcher needs to think about in qualitative interviews. While participants may fit the criteria set for the study, emotionally distressed hosts or guests might have to be omitted from the study due to the emotional toll of having to revisit grief in a series of interviews.

**Recruitment of Participants**

The recruitment of participants is often a challenge for the researcher due to the ethical constraints which is compounded by the participation requirements. Recruiting
participants through snowball sampling may have possible ethical implications as other community members could possibly identify the participants in the study. Other than the use of traditional bulletin boards to post the announcement in commercial establishments where the study population usually converged, this study employed the recruitment of participants within the Internet communities where immigrants maintain their social network. In terms of virtual communication, Eysenbach & Till (2001) suggested the need to first obtain permission from the ‘list owner’ or ‘list manager’ (the individual responsible for maintaining the list) or moderator (if any) before posting as they may know the online community better than the researcher. When posting the announcement within the Internet communities, specific instructions should be made for them to contact the researcher privately if they wish to participate.

Several tourism and travel studies have contributed in providing parameters that define VFR travel. However, hosts for VFRs may warrant a different definition of hosting. During the participant recruitment phase of my research in New Zealand, particularly those who have hosted a visiting friend or relative – some first-generation Filipino migrants find it confusing to be involved in a study whether they qualify as hosts during the initial phase of study because they interpret or define ‘hosting’ differently. The announcement that I posted to the Filipino community was written in the English language as I did not want to favour Tagalog despite being one of the major languages in the Philippines. In general, first-generation Filipino migrants are bilingual with English as their second language yet, language differences reflect underlying cultural value differences (Church, Katigbak & Castaneda, 1988). The notion of hosting may be different for immigrant communities particularly with regard to their obligations to their guests from their former homeland. Some prospective participants that I approached interpret hosting for VFRs as equivalent to sponsoring their friends and family members to enter their new homeland which includes providing proof of financial support by the host (or sponsor) to bolster the application of their guest as a requirement by the immigration office before granting a tourist or visitor visa. Therefore, the Western concept of hosting may be problematic in engendering the meaning of a ‘host’ and as understood from a different language or cultural context.

Another issue that I confronted in recruiting participants was where to get my sample population of Filipino migrants in New Zealand. Initially, I only focused in

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1 The national language of the Philippines is Filipino, a language in the process of modernisation; it is based on the Manila lingua franca which is fast spreading across the Philippines and is used in urban centres in the country. However, the structural base of Filipino is Tagalog. See Gonzalez (1998) for a discussion on the sociolinguistics and historical literature of the languages in the Philippines.
Wellington (for practical reasons) but I noticed that the inherent intimacy within the community would enable other people to identify the participants and the research would no longer be confidential. The Filipino community in Wellington basically know of one another based on their profession, common friends, ethno-linguistic or geographic origin in the Philippines (e.g., Ilokano, Cebuano, Bicolano), interests (e.g., sports, performing arts), or religious beliefs (e.g., as Roman Catholics or as member of other Christian fellowship groups). I also noticed that as Filipino families celebrate special occasions such as baptism, birthdays, debuts2, weddings, etc., as these become highly publicised not only within social media, but also in Filipino newspapers in New Zealand. These are also occasions when other people not only get to meet the host, but also the VFRs who celebrate with them. Hence, this led me to recruit more participants outside the Wellington region so that participants would not be easily identified.

As the study deals with host-guest social interactions, it is important to ensure that both the host and their VFRs are willing to be interviewed. This remains a challenging task in properly conducting the study. Since the structure of my study involves interviewing pairs of host and guest who know each other, this becomes more problematic when for example, the host withdraws from the study, which in turn means deleting the data pertinent to the guest (or vice versa). Also, another potential issue to consider is whether the host and guest social interaction resulted in any personal conflict – whether caused by the trip or past interactions – and the researcher has to be impartial on the matter(s) during the course of the interview.

**Dealing with Other Cultures**

There are various complexities in VFR travel studies in the context of conducting research on immigrants. Birman (2005) suggests that the inclusion of cultural insiders on research teams is necessary to ensure that researchers act ethically as broad ethical guidelines will never be sufficient to help resolve situation-specific ethical dilemmas that may arise with culturally diverse populations. Having a cultural insider provides the ability to share the values of the sample population and allow the participants to express themselves from their own cultural perspective (Watkins & Gnoth, 2011). Also, participants tend to believe that they have common experiences and viewpoints with the researchers who share the same race or ethnic background (Liamputtong, 2008).

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2 A formal occasion celebrating the 18th birthday of a young woman to formally introduce her into society.
Ethical Implications of Examining Host-Guest Interactions in VFR Travel Studies

An ethical implication of qualitative interviewing of each pair of hosts and VFRs is the lack of anonymity. Since both hosts and guests who will be interviewed know each other, they could comment on each other’s behaviour. Within the ethics literature, confidentiality is commonly viewed as equivalent to the principle of privacy (King & Horrocks, 2010). Apparently, the researcher should maintain confidentiality by using pseudonyms and where confidentiality is not possible, informed consent should be obtained. Total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in spite of the removal of names and other details of personal identity from participant’s responses as the hosts and VFRs share knowledge specific to their relationship. However, it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that strangers and common acquaintances will not be able to identify participants as they will lack the detailed and personal knowledge of the hosts and VFRs. Participants could undermine confidentiality by reading through the summary of the findings and identifying others whom they believe they know through the examples or the narration that were provided.

The researcher should also point out to the participants that specific examples and anecdotes provided by them could make them identifiable to one another or to the rest of their family members or friends participating in the study. Likewise, when conducting and transcribing the interviews, the researcher should indicate to both hosts and VFRs that they are unable to read the transcripts of the conversation of the other party. The information sheet and consent form should reflect these points with regard to the ethical implications of interviewing the hosts and guests where VFR travel provides a fluid space for inter-cultural engagement, encounter, and exchange.

Conclusion

Studying VFR travel using qualitative methods needs further methodological development and this paper provides an original contribution towards considering the methodological and ethical implications of studying VFR travel in the context of host-guest interactions. There is a need to address the complexity of social interactions between hosts and guests, both methodologically and ethically, as it deals with friends and relatives who travel to see one another as opposed to ‘strangers’ typically involved in tourism who do not know one another. I argue that qualitative methods could complement the existing quantitative-oriented epistemologies and methods used in VFR travel studies, particularly when examining the meanings and interpretations of the host-guest social interaction and the cultural context embedded in their relationship. Since the research design focused on hosts and guests who know of each other, methodological and ethical implications should be considered when studying VFR travel.
The global demographic change definitely highlights the importance of immigrants as a substantial market in promoting VFR travel. The earlier discussion of studies related to VFR travel was used to examine the interaction between immigrants and their VFRs as hosts and guests, respectively. Further exploration of the social interaction between these actors provides a holistic view in considering the perspectives of both the hosts and guests. Studies that look into the relationship between tourism and migration have only analysed the aspects of production and consumption (Coles & Timothy, 2004; Hall & Williams, 2002; Williams & Hall, 2000). It should be well-understood that VFR travel is distinct in that it requires more than just economic exchange and consumption of experiences not only for VFRs, but also for the hosts. This should also primarily deal with relationships where the role and experiences of family and friendship network through social interaction within the context of VFR travel which remains undervalued. Across the distance, the opportunity to renew ties with friends and family is important for families because celebrations and other occasions cannot be done alone (Backer, 2012b). As many countries are becoming culturally diverse due to permanent migration, understanding the values of their ‘other’ residents and the interaction with their guests would be useful in catalysing VFR travel in the future.

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References


Book Review

Kastarlak, I.B. & Barber, B. (2012). *Fundamentals of Planning and Developing Tourism*  
New Jersey: Prentice Hall  
*By Zilmiyah Kamble,* Taylors University, Malaysia

*Fundamentals of Planning and Developing Tourism* focuses on planning and sustainable development of tourism in destinations of diverse economic markets for constructing social changes, sustainable growth and alleviating poverty. The major aspect highlighted in this book is the significance of tourism development within the context of national development in a developing country or region. It is well structured in five major parts. The first part discusses principles of planning and developing tourism with four chapters providing an understanding of the tourism product, identifying the role of tourism development, world development, and tourism trends, introducing a broad theory of tourism planning and development, fundamentals for sustainable tourism and advancing to discuss general and special interest based tourism.

The second part focuses on planning issues for tourism development with the chapters discussing the issues that need attention while planning and developing tourism in diverse economic systems through sustainable tourism development concepts. The third part examines the planning processes for tourism development where the chapters focus on steps in tourism planning and development followed by governments and the private sector in the different economic systems and regulations for promoting tourism. While the fourth part touches on the research, procedures and techniques for planning and developing tourism, the fifth part contains enriching case studies to illustrate tourism planning from various parts of the world.

Through the chapters, the author introduces the BIK (named after his initials- Bulent I. Kastarlak) system where he has conceived a general theory of tourism planning and development. Kastarlak (2012) in this book has suggested a ten-step process or technique for planning the growth of sustainable tourism and calls for the close coordination between tourism development plans and municipality development. It claims to target three kinds of audiences; firstly students, researchers and academicians who could use it as a core text for tourism development planning; secondly for professionals working in government and private sector business who can use it as an

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operational manual or planning guide and thirdly travelling public & travel agents who can use it as a support for planning vacations for special interest tourism.

This book is based on the vast work experience and exposure of the author, of working in various countries and on different tourism planning projects and organisations. It offers a micro and macro view of tourism planning and development in the context of a developing country. It endeavours to provide an understanding and realistic application of the planning and development process. Some general conclusions that can be summarised in the book are: tourism has to be proven to have potential for the country hosting and developing it; tourism gets affected by changes in the world economy; it must be planned and developed in a sustainable manner; that it looks after the local culture and environment; tourism can also be developed in any economic system; one of its main purpose is to reduce poverty especially for less developing countries; tourism can take many forms and various special interest tourism products can be developed sustainably. The recommended BIK system analyses the tourism products separately through four levels of planning namely, local, regional, national and international destination levels.

This book, indeed, makes a worthwhile contribution to the field of tourism planning and development by bringing together in one single volume theoretical explanations, practical applications and inspiring case studies from diverse developing regions. It builds on the author’s enriching experience across thirty-five countries. It includes a complete review of the fundamentals and methods of planning tourism. A significant contribution of the book is that tourism planning and development has been examined at four levels i.e. international, national, regional and destination and a helpful step-by-step process for planning and developing sustainable tourism is recommended, which is different from the way tourism development and planning is approached in other tourism books. However, Dieke (1989), in his work, also stresses the need to develop tourism in developing countries at different levels. Furthermore it covers all steps used for analysing and planning tourism development in a free market, mixed, and centrally-planned economies. Kastarlak also provides a fine explanation of general and special interest forms of tourism, providing suggestions of activities which can be planned, thus making it useful for tourists and travel operators.

Since tourism occurs mostly based on the interests (either general or specific special interest) of tourists, one way forward in sustainable tourism development for any destination is the identification of special interest tourism avenues as pointed out in the book. This has also been pointed out earlier by Trauer (2004) and Opaschowski (2001), that tourists are willing to pay more if provided with more optimal experience that stimulates their personal interests within a limited time frame. Also, Wearing (2002) stated that the 21st century tourists are all looking for new and exciting forms
of tourism as opposed to mass tourism. However, it is a challenge to be able to provide successful special interest tourism products sustainably considering that interests, likes and dislikes of tourists can change (Varley & Crowther, 1998). Consequently there is a necessity to stay updated with tourism trends in order to be sustainable; furthermore this book discusses world tourism trends reasonably. Moreover, it provides insights in designing, permitting and building tourist attractions and facilities; highlights the three-way correlation between attractions / facilities and seasons and throws light on various aspects that can achieve poverty reduction through sustainable tourism.

However, whilst terminologies such as sustainable tourism development, tourism, tourist, and the various forms of special interest tourism have been explained and defined, discussion or relation to past or other definitions could have been included to provide a clearer understanding. Also the manual application of the recommended BIK system may turn out to be lengthy and time consuming. Even though case studies used do cover a larger region but they are chosen subjective to the areas that the author has worked in and perhaps more case studies representing different regions of the world especially less developing countries should be presented to give wider global context.

Although the book is meant to target three kinds of audiences, it however, can be suggested for students as additional or suggested reading but hardly as a textbook or core text since the book is also subjective, given that it is mainly based on the author's experiences. In addition there is lack of relevant or related literature discussed in the chapters to support the theory and it also includes some websites that are unreliable e.g. Wikipedia and websites that keep changing. To add, the references listed in the bibliography have not been cited within the text making the identification or retrieval of related and relevant research used difficult to relate and trace. Similarly although it can provide some ideas or understanding to tourism professionals from government and private sectors, it can hardly be called an operational manual as it tends to be more descriptive than prescriptive.

On the whole, the book is a very useful contribution to tourism planning and development literature. Its multiple facets make it different from other works on tourism planning and development. The author's vast experience and knowledge is reflected throughout the book with suitable examples. The real life case studies carefully chosen and presented in the book, illuminate both successes and failures in tourism planning and development. The greatest strength of the book is the step-by-step procedure it recommends for planning and development at different levels and the BIK system developed by the author based on urban and regional planning principles.
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