

TOURISM REVIEW INTERNATIONAL

An Interdisciplinary Journal



Apologies for cross-posting

Editor-in-Chief
Gyan Nyaupane, Ph.D.
Professor, School of Community
Resources & Development
Arizona State University
411 N. Central Avenue, Ste 550
Phoenix, AZ 85004-0690

Email: gyan@asu.edu

Volume 26, Number 2

[The State of the Art of Emotional Advertising in Tourism: A Neuromarketing Perspective](#)
Sara De-Frutos-Arranz and Maria-Francisca Blasco Lopez

[Business Innovations and Interorganizational Relationships in the Hospitality Industry: Does Partner Diversity Matter?](#)
Thais González-Torres, Eva Pelechano-Barahona, and Fernando E. Garcia-Muñia

[Disclosing the Unnoticed Power of Market Segments in the Tourism Growth Nexus Discussion](#)
George Ekonomou

[Destination Arrangement for an Emerging Tourist Market: An Application of an Acculturation Model](#)
Chidchanok Anantamongkolkul

RESEARCH NOTE

[Did Closing Borders to Tourists Save Lives? Tourist Arrival, Self-Protective Leadership, and COVID-19 Casualties](#)
Mulyadi Robin, Sharif Rasel, Girish Prayag, and Mesbahuddin Chowdhury

Full Text Articles Available:

<https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/cog/tri>

To Submit Papers:

<https://tri.scholasticahq.com/for-authors>

Submission Instructions:

<https://cognizantcommunication.com/publication/tourism-review-international/#tab-id-4>

ISSN 1544-3721
E-ISSN 1543-4421

TOURISM REVIEW INTERNATIONAL

An Interdisciplinary Journal

Editor-in-Chief
Cyan Niyasane

N Destination Arrangement for an Emerging Tourist Market: An Application of an Acculturation Model

Buy Article:

\$30.00 + tax

(Refund Policy)

ADD TO CART

BUY NOW

Author: Anantamongkolkul, Chidchanok

Source: Tourism Review International, Volume 26, Number 2, 2022, pp. 201-213(13)

Publisher: Cognizant Communication Corporation

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3727/154427222X16438247292319>

...

Abstract



References



Citations



Supplementary Data



Suggestions

This research applies the concept of bidimensional acculturation to the Indian tourist market in order to seek a greater understanding of how short-time travelers adapt to host cultures. A qualitative research design using the snowball sampling technique was applied. In-depth interviews with 12 tourism stakeholders in Phuket were conducted. The applicability of the acculturation model became evident as the Indian tourists were more likely to apply the separation strategy of cultural adaptation. All the informants completely agreed that Phuket has great potential to host tourists, including the Indian tourist market, because of being a world-renowned tourist destination. Nevertheless, it was evident that key informant implied Indian tourists were likely to adopt the separation strategy of the acculturation model. The interview analysis suggests the evidence of three key themes underlying the adopted strategy, namely, seeking home comfort and suitable food and activities, maintaining their unique characteristics, and spending time with a big group of family. The research findings benefit both private and public tourism organizations. Unique challenges and destination arrangement for a destination in order to host an Indian tourist market are suggested.

Keywords: ACCULTURATION MODEL; DESTINATION ARRANGEMENTS; INDIAN TOURISTS; STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS

Document Type: Research Article

Publication date: April 1, 2022

This article was made available online on March 30, 2022 as a Fast Track article with title: "DESTINATION ARRANGEMENT FOR AN EMERGING TOURIST MARKET: AN APPLICATION OF AN ACCULTURATION MODEL".

[More about this publication?](#)

We recommend

Cultural Values and Service Quality: Host and Guest Perspectives

Thuy-Huong Truong et al., *Tourism Culture & Communication*, 2010

Representations of a Destination Brand in Online Tourism Information Sources: The Case of Slovenia

Velvet Nelson, *Tourism Culture & Communication*, 2014

Measuring Tourist Satisfaction with Nautical Destinations: The Effects of Image, Loyalty, and Past Destination Choice

Yen E. Lam-González et al., *Tourism in Marine Environments*, 2020

Measurement of the Impact of Music Festivals on Destination Image: The Case of a Womad Festival

Paulo Duarte et al., *Event Management*, 2018

The Temporal Relationship between Mass Tourism and Alternative Tourism in Southern Thailand

Nick Kontogeorgopoulos, *Tourism Review International*, 2009

Collaborative Strategies and Tourist Competitiveness in Medium Mountain

Destinations: Study on the Positioning of Tourist Actors in the Natural Park of Serra da Estrela

Gonçalo Fernandes et al., *Euro Jour of Tou, Hosp and Recr*, 2021

Exploring and Studying the Attractive Experience Attributes of Cultural Tourism Project — Beijing South Luogu Lane as Example

Ying Liu et al., *World Scientific Book*

Augmented Reality in Shopping Tourism: Boosting Tourism Development Through Innovation in Barcelona

Jonathan Gomez Punzon, *Euro Jour of Tou, Hosp and Recr*, 2021

London calling! Travelers seek 'trust' in holiday destinations

Phys.org, 2018

What most attracts us to a tourist destination? Attractions, culture and gastronomy

Phys.org, 2019

Powered by **TREND MD**

Destination arrangement for an emerging tourist market:

An application of an acculturation model

Chidchanok Anantamongkolkul, PhD., Assistant. Professor

Affiliation: Faculty of Management Sciences,
Phuket Rajabhat University, Phuket, Thailand

E-mail address: chidchanok.a@pkru.ac.th

Mailing address: Faculty of Management Sciences, Phuket Rajabhat
University, Phuket 83000, Thailand

Destination arrangement for an emerging tourist market:

An application of an acculturation model

Introduction

Phuket is a key strategic destination for Thai Tourism. It is one of a number of Thai provincial cities that is attractive to different types of tourists (Department of Tourism, 2016). Therefore, destination management marketers should plan to host various tourist markets where preparation and arrangements differ from segment to segment. Thus, the purpose of this research is to explore the specific arrangements a destination should coordinate in order to host an emerging tourist market, Indian tourists in particular.

Tourism statistics show that the number of international tourist arrivals in Phuket has been increasing for many years and reached approximately 13 million in 2018 (Department of Tourism, 2018). As well as the European and Australian markets, the Chinese tourism market was a major source of tourism business in Phuket in past years. However, Indian tourists have become one of the most important markets for the local tourism business as Indian arrivals have accelerated in the past few months. The rapid expansion of the middle class among India's 1.3 billion people has prompted Thai authorities to upgrade their estimates of Indian visitors. At least 10 million Indian tourists are now expected to arrive by 2028, a more than five-fold increase. In addition, changing life styles and increasing income levels have led to an increased frequency of travelling among Indian people (Verma et al., 2018).

This research applies the bi-dimensional acculturation concept of Berry (1997) to seek a greater understanding of how short-time travelers, the Indian tourist market in particular, adapt to host

cultures. There is a lack of studies focusing on this emerging group of tourists as few studies have investigated the key challenges of hosting this emerging tourist market and its required destination management.

Literature review

In the tourism literature, destination competitiveness refers to a destination's ability to attract a greater number of visitors, to increase tourism expenditures, and to provide visitors a pleasurable experience. A destination is able to compete with others when it is able to offer tourists' satisfaction. In order to do this, a destination is required to compromise needs across various tourism stakeholders including local residents (Richie & Crouch, 2003). Thus, obtaining destination competitiveness suggests collaboration across tourism stakeholders with each stakeholder performing a unique role. While a key stakeholder in tourism destination management is the public sector, the private sector provides most tourism products and services. For example, the government should ensure infrastructure development in a travel destination while the private sector should strive for product development and improved service quality. The host community and local residents have the right to participate in tourism developments as local residents are required to host and deliver memorable tourist experiences.

A number of tourism researchers have suggested the key to destination competitiveness begins at the government level. For example, Duarte Alonso and Alexander (2017) found that government regulation was the key concern. Political destabilization and lack of importance given to the tourism industry were stated as the main obstacles to obtaining tourism destination competitiveness. Recently, sustainability is seen as vital for tourism competitiveness (Graci & Van Vliet, 2020). In addition, a number of indicators for destination competitiveness

measurement come from the private sector. Key elements defining such competitiveness include product and service development, product quality, and destination branding. For example, the existing studies (e.g., Aqueveque & Bianchi, 2017, Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013, Kim & Jogaratnam, 2015) have revealed that basic services, including connectivity and tourism amenities, were a key element for destination achievement. Other important elements included the memorable experiences offered by a destination and community participation. They further found that the important drivers included tourism business standardization. Limited attention has been paid to the particular arrangements needed for specific tourist markets. Further investigations in this area that focus on a particular tourist market will be theoretical contributing to tourism literature.

In the context of Thailand, tourists from Europe and Australia have been a major source of tourism markets in past decades. Recently, Russian and Chinese tourists have become the main tourist segments to this destination. As a renowned travel destination, Thailand, including Phuket, offers services and travel experiences that meet tourists' needs despite the different characteristics among tourist markets. For example, the literature suggests, at least, two main segments for Australian travellers, long-stay tourists and backpackers. Thai tourism businesses are familiar in dealing with these segments. As such, there are a number of arrangements that cater to these particular tourists. For example, Australian senior tourists are likely to long-stay in Thailand, especially Phuket (Anantamongkolkul et al., 2017) and preferred to engage in only a few activities each day while on long holidays. In addition, Anantamongkolkul et al. (2019) suggested that a number of long-stay tourists had the willingness to immerse themselves in the local environment. Thus, the local Thai government has initiated a long-stay accommodation policy, including homestay and guest house accommodations, to suit a wider range of tourists.

In addition, Australian tourists have favourable Thai food image perceptions (Promsivapallop & Kannaovakun, 2017). These findings suggest tourism businesses should prepare types of accommodations and activities for specific tourism markets. For instance, a self-catering accommodation would attract long-stay tourists, while a city hostel should be provided for backpackers. In terms of more recent tourist markets, unique arrangements for each segment needs to be addressed. It can be concluded that tourist markets enjoy a destination because the basic services and other destination attributes meet their preferences.

The literature emphasizes that different tourist markets require unique planning that takes into account tourists' preferences. Therefore, insights regarding such uniqueness would be beneficial for destination planners and policy makers. Despite domestic rural tourism becoming increasingly popular in India (Chowdhary et al., 2020), Indian tourists have become one of the most important markets for Thai tourism businesses in the past few years (atta, 2019).

Chowdhary et al. (2020) indicate that Indian tourists travel to rural areas in their own country for family retreats and escapism. However, the reasons why they take a vacation overseas is still in need of more research. Although Thailand is a world destination where tourism facilities are ready for tourists, the particular requirements needed by the Indian market are unclear. As well as core tourism resources and destination attributes, the literature suggests that demand orientation is another key aspect of tourism competitiveness. The ability to identify what tourists want and respond to such wants makes a destination more competitive. Travel experience is, therefore, accepted as a suitable variable to gain a better understanding of destination competitiveness attributes (Neto et al., 2020). A study from Azzopardi and Nash (2016) illustrates that insights into tourists' cultural and social profiles assist a destination in improving tourism services and experiences. Hence, investigations have been conducted recently where

destination competitiveness varies according to tourism niche and within tourism segments in the same markets (Neto et al., 2020).

In addition, for many international travellers, activities at a host destination need to address their cultural background. This exploration employs the concept of acculturation as a foundation for understanding the experiences tourists encounter in a new cultural environment. In his seminal study, Berry (1997) illustrated that the concept of acculturation refers to the cultural changes resulting from migration encounters. In addition, the concepts of psychological acculturation and adaptation are used to represent the psychological changes and eventual outcomes that occur as a result of individuals experiencing acculturation. Tsai et al. (2002) later defined the term acculturation more broadly as the process of adjusting to different cultures. The term often refers to the adjustments made by people who are immigrants or belong to refugee groups. People's attitudes toward acculturation creates a direct relationship between tourism and acculturation because these attitudes explain the degree to which tourists are willing to immerse themselves in a local culture or wish to maintain their home culture. Further understanding of this relationship is expected to provide better directions for tourism businesses when it comes to offering suitable services to potential travellers and ensuring the competitiveness of the industry.

Early work by Berry (1997) developed the seminal bi-dimensional acculturation model explaining that individuals can either adopt approaches of assimilation, separation, integration, or marginalisation in a new cultural environment. The two key issues of host cultural acquisition and home cultural maintenance underlie these four strategies. These four strategies are different from each another and are not a continuum. According to Berry (1997), an assimilation strategy is one used by individuals who wish to seek daily interaction with other cultures and ignore their own identity. Taking a separation strategy means that individuals want to retain their own culture

and stay away from the local culture. Taking an integration approach refers to the situation where people are interested in participating in both the host and home cultures simultaneously. When taking a marginalised option, there is little interest in cultural maintenance or having interaction with others. It should be noted that the four strategies of acculturation are based on the assumption that individuals are free to choose how they want to acculturate. For instance, an integration strategy can be freely chosen and successfully pursued only if the dominant society is open and inclusive in its orientation towards cultural diversity (Berry, 1997).

Numerous researchers have adopted the acculturation model for their investigations into how people adjust to new environments. Most populations sampled in previous studies are immigrants, residential tourists, and international students who normally stay permanently or for more than one year at a host destination (e.g., De-Juan-Vigaray et al., 2021; Pedersen et al., 2011; Xiao & Hung, 2013). One common finding is that those who preferred to take an integration strategy experienced less stress and better adaptation to a host culture than those who remain marginalised. The literature also suggests that extended stay provides more opportunity for an individual to engage in local cultural adaptation—for instance, interacting with local people, understanding and participating in the local culture, learning the local language, and identifying themselves as locals (e.g., Anantamongkolkul et al., 2019; Pedersen et al., 2011). Less is known in regard to short-stay travellers who aim to explore tourist attractions.

Limited studies exist in the tourism literature that attempt to understand the process of acculturation in the context of international tourists. These exceptions support the applicability of the bi-dimensional acculturation model (Anantamongkolkul et al., 2019; Rasmi et al., 2014). The study by Rasmi et al. (2014) conducted an investigation using respondents from China, Germany, and the United States. Their findings show potential tourists can be grouped into

categories of integration, marginalisation, assimilation, and separation. The study also found that behavioural, holiday, and activity preferences related to tourists' acculturation strategies and indicated the degree to which they would adapt to the local culture. A tourist's place of origin was found to be a moderating factor of tourist intention of host cultural participation. For example, the Westerners in their study were reported to be more interested in the host culture than were the Chinese tourists. Furthermore, a recent study from Anantamongkolkul et al. (2019) categorised four distinct levels of intercultural adaptation strategies from the perspective of international long-stay tourists in Thailand, namely, staying in a home comfort zone, exploring the local neighbourhood, immersing in the local environment, and adopting the host destination as a second home. Particular strategies were applied by long-stay tourists with different preferences. For example, those who were not likely to seek new experiences would employ the strategy of a home comfort zone, while others who were likely to explore an unfamiliar cultural environment were grouped in the category of exploring the local neighbourhood. Those who applied this strategy showed their willingness to make an effort towards local adaptation, however, with some conditions applied. It was also found that the level of cultural integration found corresponded to the level of adopting the host destination as a second home and immersing in a local environment, respectively. It should be noted that Anantamongkolkul et al. (2019) defined their long-stay tourists as those who made a visit to a destination for between 10 to 90 days. In addition, their respondents were Oceanians, Europeans, Americans, and South Africans and their average length of stay was three weeks. The majority of informants were repeat visitors to Phuket and were travelling as a couple or in a group. These demographic characteristics could be a significant reason why international tourists chose a particular local adaptation behaviour. We lack information regarding first-time travellers'

cultural adaptation while at a destination. This review also suggests that, to date, investigation into the processes of tourist acculturation has been scarce, despite the fact that tourism provides the most common setting for face-to-face intercultural contact (Berno & Ward, 2005).

Methodology

A qualitative research approach was adopted in this study using an in-depth interview technique to gain a deeper understanding of tourism stakeholders regarding tourism challenges and destination arrangements when hosting a specific tourist market in light of the bi-dimensional acculturation model. The Indian tourist market provided the research context. The interview technique was flexible and allowed interviewers to ask for further clarification of answers.

Population, sample, and sampling technique

Previous studies have sought to investigate the cultural adaptation from the perspective of visitors and travellers (e.g., De-Juan-Vigaray et al., 2021; Pedersen et al., 2011; Xiao & Hung, 2013). There is a lack of examination focusing on other tourism stakeholders. While the majority of travel behaviours have been studied using tourists' opinions (e.g., Anantamongkolkul et al., 2019; Rasmi et al., 2014; Verma et al., 2018), an understanding of tourist behaviour from tourism stakeholders, while some novel evidence from their perspective may arise, is under researched. The target population of the study, thus, was the local Phuket tourism stakeholders who served Indian tourists. A purposive sample included tourism staff, business owners, and government officers. In this study, one local person from community-based tourism, two hotel entrepreneurs, two tourism attraction entrepreneurs, one tour guide, one restaurant manager, and one souvenir shop owner were included. In addition, two employees from tourism businesses and

two people from tourism based public organizations were recruited. Twelve research participants, as suggested by Guest et al. (2006) were interviewed.

A snowball sampling method was used in this study. This sampling technique has been adopted in various tourism studies (e.g., Batle et al., 2020, Manyara & Jones, 2007). It is a nonprobability sampling technique where existing study subjects recruit the next subjects using their connections (Babbie, 2020). The Indian tourist market is an emerging group in Phuket. Therefore, it is time consuming to locate Indian tourist service providers and the snowball sampling method addressed this issue as it is quicker to contact samples from referrals. Nevertheless, the researcher considered some of the disadvantages of snowball sampling and sought to minimize those issues. For example, a sample gained from the snowball technique may obtain only samples who share a similar background or business area. In order to minimize this drawback, the research specified areas of the tourism business and the staff of interest to be included.

Data collection method

30 to 45-minute in-depth interviews were utilized. This time frame allows for in-depth probing across a range of information but does not disrupt the tourism business staff unreasonably. Specifically, this study employed face-to-face in-depth interviews because it is more advantageous to approach local tourism stakeholders, who were the sample of this study, in person than by phone. For example, the non-verbal behaviour of an interviewee when answering questions can be obtained during face-to-face interviews.

This study applied semi-structured interviews. This type of interview offers structured questions based on constructs drawn from the literature review but also allows an interviewer either to skip

or generate new questions when appropriate. This degree of customization is required to explore aspects relevant to tourism stakeholders. The interview guide used for the current study contained questions in Thai and was prepared by the researcher before the interviews were undertaken. The semi-structured interview guide consisted of three main sections for recording general information, key questions, and a reflection note. The interviews were conducted at various times of the day from 6 am to 6 pm for the key informants' convenience. Twelve interviews session were conducted. The interview data was saturated after interview 9.

Interview data analysis

A thematic analysis was utilised in this study. The process of thematic analysis involves coding comments and ideas into themes and interpreting them for meaning. A number of procedural steps were undertaken to enhance the trustworthiness of the data. First, field notes contained information not found in the recorded conversations. While data saturation seemed to have been reached by the ninth interview, further interviews were conducted to check for contrary ideas. As the acculturation strategy of separation started emerging as the predominant strategy for the Indian tourist market, the three main themes supporting this strategy were cross-checked by a research assistant, who subsequently refined the dimensions for each theme through a process of interpretive iteration. An additional analysis was undertaken by the researcher for triangulation purposes to check for consistency and/or contrary interpretations.

After each interview, the researcher transcribed the recording on the same day of the interview in order to maintain the freshness of the ideas reflected in the conversation. Then the data gathered from the interviewees was coded, transcribed into themes, and interpreted for meanings. Preliminary analysis and interpretation were undertaken progressively. Following this process,

to ensure credibility, which is accepted as a strength of qualitative studies, the double interpretation process was used and the finding reports were compared to ensure that all of the findings accurately represented the participants' perspectives.

Results

The interviews consisted of 12 cases which were obtained on-site in Phuket, Thailand. Eight interviews were with males and four sessions were with females. Respondents' ages ranged from the twenties to the sixties. The most experienced respondent had worked for the tourism industry for more than 20 years, while the newest staff for the Indian tourist market has been in the industry for two years. The profile of the interview participants is summarised in Table I. All participants were given a pseudonym for the purpose of anonymity.

Insert Table I here

Qualitative Interview Findings

The interview transcripts explored the unique arrangements a destination requires in order to host a tourist market on the basis of host cultural adaptation willingness. The emerging Indian tourist market formed the context of the study. In general, all the informants completely agreed that Phuket has a great potential to host tourists—including the Indian tourist market. After all, Phuket is a world-renowned tourist destination. This finding supports the existing studies (e.g., Aqueveque & Bianchi, 2017, Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013) that argue that the basic services offered to tourists is the key element for destination achievement. The implication from the interview transcripts is that Phuket provides basic infrastructure and tourism facilities to potential visitors, including accommodation, transportation, and activities. For example, "Phuket has enormous potential for tourists all over the world" (Informant 11). "We can host any group of

tourists, including FIT, sport, leisure, and luxury segments” (Informant 5). “Now we are more than ready. We have direct flights between Phuket and Mumbai and so on. Our environment is being revived during COVID-19. I believe after the pandemic; we are more than ready to host tourists again” (Informant 7).

An acculturation model was applied as an overarching research concept using Berry’s (1997) four strategies for cultural adaptation: *assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization*. It was evident that the key informants implied that Indian tourists were likely to adopt the separation strategy—in which individuals want to retain their own culture while taking a vacation. In particular, the interview analysis provides evidence of three key themes to support how Indian tourists pursue the separation concept of Berry’s acculturation model.

Seeking home comfort, familiar food, and activities

All of the informants mentioned the food consumption behaviour of Indian tourists during their vacations. While Australian tourists preferred local food while on holiday (Anantamongkolkul et al., 2019; Promsivapallop & Jarumaneerat, 2018), this research found that Indian tourists prefer their home cuisine while they are at a destination. “Indian food” and “vegetarian food” were often spoken of. This finding supports the separation strategy of Berry’s (1997) acculturation model. For instance, Informant 4 expressed that “The first time I worked for Indian tourists, I really had a hard time because they always asked for their Indian food.” In addition, “They will go for dinner at an Indian restaurant only” (Informant 1). “They don’t care where they are as long as the Indian food is available” (Informant 6).

Many interviewees shared why the tourists were looking for their traditional cuisine. Perhaps, cultural differences are the key reason why they preferred to stay in the bubble. One informant

explained a possible reason of this preference. “I think it is because of their culture. I think people with food conditions may prefer to play safe and don’t want to feel guilty by eating things they don’t know” (Informant 1).

In addition, being a vegetarian is another possible reason. There are many types of vegetarians. Some of them eat no meat products, including seafood, but still eat eggs and dairy products. Another, for example, vegan, has neither meat, eggs, nor dairy products (such as milk, cheese, yogurt, and ice cream). Honey is also avoided. Informant 2 noted, “We have to accept that most of them are pure vegetarians. Ingredients and taste are different from us. Thais are 100% non-vegetarians, so it is not surprising that they look for their own food.”

However, there is always exceptions. Not all Indian tourists would request Indian food while on holiday, especially those who had travelled overseas often. The expression underlining this idea is that “My Indian friends [who studied with me in the UK] don’t have to have Indian food all the time, as long as it is vegetarian dishes” (Informant 1).

One key informant provided a slightly different opinion as Indian tourists were thought similar to other tourist markets. In addition, modern Indians who have studied outside their country are seeking other cuisine while they are on vacations—including local food. For instance, “My tailored made tourists asked me to take them to try Thai food” (Informant 11) and “... seeing Indian restaurants, whether they eat or not, is important for them. As long as they know we have [Indian restaurants], they are happy” (Informant 11).

As Indians prefer to have their own cuisine, many informants spoke of “Indian chefs.” For instance, “Indian food is the most important requirement for Indians. However, we don’t have enough in-house chefs who can cook authentic Indian cuisine” (Informant 10). Therefore, what

these interviewees suggested is that, perhaps, it is a good idea for the government to support locals to be Indian cuisine cooks. In Phuket, a number of international cuisines are provided, for example, Italian, Mexican, and Chinese. It can be seen that local Thais are able to cook such food, but not Indian. Therefore, the interview analysis suggests that some local Thai chefs should be trained for Indian cuisine:

Indian food is the key factor for Indian tourists. We, I mean the government should provide a course on how to be an Indian cuisine chef. What happens now is that a person who cooks Indian food is Indian, from India, perhaps. Why don't we give opportunities for Thais to become Indian chefs? A job is guaranteed as we will have Indian tourists for five to 10 years for sure (Informant 6).

The idea of having more in-house Indian chefs can resolve the problem of lacking an Indian breakfast at a hotel. "One problem I can see is that no Indian breakfasts are available at the hotel. That is why the hotel cannot afford to accommodate an Indian visitor" (Informant 11).

Maintaining their unique characteristics

This analysis identified unique characteristics of Indian tourists that they perform when with strangers. The key informants revealed their Indian tourists unique and natural characteristics. One distinct behaviour is that they have *flexible time*. Every interviewee shared the words "never on-time" and "always late." It was found that perhaps, this is the culture of India. "They are never on-time. You inform them that pick up is at 9 am, they will show up later than that. One worst case is I was to pick them up at 10 am, they came down [from the room] at 2 pm" (Informant 3). This idea supports that this tourist market would not adapt themselves to the host culture, rather the service provider is required to accept this behaviour. Therefore, understanding

this point would help all service providers manage their tourists. For example, “what I always do is that I would set a pick-up time earlier than scheduled. I also discussed and informed, re-informed, them many times” (Informant 4).

Another point in the interview transcripts that implied the separation strategy involves *negotiation*. It was found that Indians are good negotiators. “What comes together with their talking skills is they like bargaining” (Informant 8). Therefore, those who deal or serve Indian tourists will face high pressure. One informant explained that “I sent my employee to learn about stress and stress management. When you do businesses with Indians, one is unable to escape pressure” (Informant 10).

Some interviewees, hence, indicate understanding and training are important:

I think it is about us. We, as tour guides, need to understand them first. We have to know how to manage or deal with each particular group of tourists. You can’t treat Russians similar to Chinese. Same thing, you can’t serve Australians as you do Indians. Therefore, knowing each of them well is a must (Informant 4).

Despite Indians being hard negotiators, tourism service providers, including tour guides, are pleased to serve this tourist market because of their friendly and cooperative nature. The interviews implied the *friendly* characteristics of this market. For example, “if you know them, you will like them” (Informant 11). “They are easy to deal with” (Informant 9). In addition, it was found that friendship has occurred. For example:

I like them [Indian tourists]. They are loyal. But you need to give them better service first. If the first time they buy your tours, they like it. It is certain that next time you will see them again. I have a couple of families visiting Phuket every other year. So, I see

them, I service them every time they are here. One guy even became my friend
(Informant 4).

In order to deal with such distinctive characteristics, some recommendations from tourism stakeholders are evident. Greater understanding of Indian culture is suggested. The words “*training*” and “*culture*” were spoken of by a number of the research participants. As we know, despite both being Asian, Thai and Indian cultures are somewhat different. Indian tourists are an emerging tourist market and tourism entrepreneurs lack an understanding of the tourists’ culture. This leads to unsatisfied service being offered to tourists. For instance, “India is a huge country with a huge population. People from the north will behave different from those from the south. What they eat is also not the same. Therefore, we really need to know them well enough” (Informant 11). Informant 5 noted:

It is sure that we [Phuket] are capable of hosting the Indian market. One thing to be concerned about is cultural differences. Training is required for high service. This is something the government needs to look after. We need to truly understand Indians. They have a number of regions, different dialects, eat different food, perhaps. So, their behaviour will be varied.

The interview analysis suggests a few issues of concern that require training in order for Thais to understand Indian tourists better. The most popular mentioned matter is language. Most Indian tourists speak reasonable English, however, with *a unique accent*. Therefore, it is necessary for those who serve this specific market to become familiar with Indian accents. “One thing I always train my new staff is how to understand Indian English. The way they speak is very unique” (Informant 10). In addition, tourism service providers, both private and public organization staff, should improve their use of international languages. “Despite having a world class beach, the

police in Patong hardly speak English. They can provide useful information for tourists. I often see tourists help tourists. They are self-interpreters” (Informant 10).

In addition, the language of foreign tourists visiting your destination should be learned. For instance, “I think, perhaps, in order to please Indians, you should know their language a bit” (Informant 1). “If you know Hindi a little bit, it is your privilege” (Informant 11).

Spending time with a big family group

The final key evidence underlining the separation strategy used by the Indian tourist market is that many Indians travel with a large group of family members. Being in a society of collectivists, Indian tourist companions are often family members. Collectivism, according to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, describes a society in which tightly integrated relationships tie extended families and others into in-groups. These in-groups are laced with undoubted loyalty and support for each other when a conflict arises with another group. For instance, “I think they are like us [Thai]. We normally take a family trip every year, at least my family. We like getting together among family. We stay in this kind of culture” (Informant 2).

This insightful information also extends the previous literature (e.g., Cohen, 2017) regarding the major tourism markets in Phuket. While Russians are seen as individual mass tourists, Chinese are seen as organized mass travellers. As consistent with Chowdhary et al. (2020), it was found that most of the informants saw Indian tourists as *family-oriented tourists*. In contrast to other tourists visiting Phuket, Indians are likely to travel with their family. This group of tourists can be considered as one key segment. Most of the informants used the term “family” when talking about Indian tourist behaviour. Hence, it is highly possible that Indian tourists could create their own bubble while onsite. For example, “Indian tourists, at least my Indian customers, all of them

come here [Phuket] with family. They travel as a group. They eat together. They book hotels for more than one room at a time for a whole group” (Informant 4). Informant 2 said:

One common aspect of Indians is that, if they happen to visit somewhere, they are likely to recommend those places to their family. For instance, if a couple has a wedding reception in Phuket, they will come back for their anniversary. They would take their kids to visit their memorable place.

Evidence of being family-oriented tourists was further explored. It was found that one popular event Indian tourists engage in during trips to Phuket is weddings. The analysis illustrated that Indian couples are interested in organizing their wedding receptions in Phuket. This is one of the reasons for travelling as a family. In addition, perhaps, it is unnecessary to adopt the host culture when tourists travel for a specific purpose. For instance, informant 3 shared that “They love to have a wedding party in a Phuket...luxury hotel. For them, they bring all the family along.” A few research participants revealed that Indian tourists marry in Phuket because of its image. The fact is that Indian culture is deeply religious and believes in gods and holy things. “Do you know why Indians like to have wedding receptions in Phuket? They told me that Indians believe that Phuket is located at the mouth of a dragon. Therefore, this is a place to earn money, they will become richer” (Informant 3). A couple of informants also supported the idea of cultural and religious beliefs being important. In this case, some informants disclosed that “There is an Indian group who believes in coming to Phuket to worship the sun. They want to see the sun rise at Saphan Hin. They kind of want to have the ceremony of receiving the sun at the Marriott hotel” (Informant 5).

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to explore emerging tourist behaviour using the Indian tourist market in Phuket. Unique challenges and the needed arrangements for a destination to host this specific tourist market were suggested. This study is one among the first in tourism studies to explore intercultural on-site adaptation by international tourists. An acculturation model was employed and this exploration supported the applicability of the research concept. In the context of senior long-stay tourists, Anantamongkolkul et al. (2019) revealed four distinct levels of intercultural integration ranging from the elementary level to the highest level of cultural adaptation where long-stay tourists gain a sense of belonging to a host culture. However, for a short-time visitor, this current study argues that the key cultural strategy applied by Indian tourists is being satisfied with a travel bubble where they can have their home comforts, travel with family, and be authentic Indians while on vacation. The home comfort zone aligns with the research relating to tourism bubbles (e.g., Lee & Wilkins, 2017), whereby tourists enclose themselves in a familiar and comfortable environment and do not seek intercultural interaction. Therefore, based on an acculturation model (Berry, 1997), the current finding extends the tourism literature in that, while on short-stay vacations, the cultural adaptation strategy of separation is prominent for the Indian tourist market. This finding provides an argument that, while many extended-stay individuals—including residential tourists, international students, and long-stay tourists (e.g., Anantamongkolkul et al., 2019; De-Juan-Vigaray et al., 2021; Pedersen et al., 2011; Xiao & Hung, 2013)—support the idea of assimilation and integration as a cultural acculturation strategy, this is not the ideal approach for all travellers.

In addition, this is one of the first research undertakings seeking understanding of tourism behaviour from tourism stakeholders. The research findings were able to add to the body of

tourist behaviour literature. While most of the literature seeks travel behaviour from tourists themselves, this study addresses the research gaps created when other stakeholders are ignored. The current investigation highlights the key behaviour of a particular tourist market from the perspective of tourism service providers. The current investigation indicates that Indian tourists are likely to travel with family. Therefore, they are considered as family-oriented tourists. This is a key travel segment of Indian tourist visiting Thailand and Phuket. In addition, the previous studies support that Chinese and Australians enjoyed local food while on holidays in Phuket (Promsivapallop & Jarumaneerat, 2018; Promsivapallop & Kannaovakun, 2019). However, this research argues that Indian tourists prefer to have their own Indian comfort cuisine at a travel destination.

As well as the theoretical implications above, this research provides some practical implications for the tourism industry. The research findings benefit both private and public tourism organizations. The interview results support that Thai destination management planning requires specific actions to deal with a new emerging market. The current research suggests unique characteristics of Indian tourists which are somewhat different from Thailand's previous tourist markets. In addition, although the idea of community-based tourism has been highly promoted in Thailand recently, the concept of mass tourism is still of interest to tourism businesses, especially for key tourist markets. The private tourism sector can apply the research findings to prepare *a wow travel experience* for the Indian tourists who prefer to create their own travel bubble. For example, it is evident from the existing travel businesses that Indian tourists have their own individual characteristics. They are flexible and are good negotiators. In addition, they are friendly and talkative. These research findings can potentially deliver great benefits to public tourism organizations and local governments. The interview analysis provides guidelines for

destination competitiveness, especially in the context of Phuket as a destination. The government should consider offering a training course in intercultural communication to tourism staff. Such training would allow service providers to provide a comfortable and memorable tourist bubble. Furthermore, a deep understanding of tourists from different cultures is a must for offering quality service to these customers. In addition, tourism policy makers should be concerned with the personal language skill of those who contact international tourists. English is surely the most required language to communicate with tourists. However, the ability to speak a tourist's home language provides an opportunity to impress tourists.

In addition, both the public and the private sectors should work with Indian tourist segments. The research results suggest that, at least, one main segment of Indian tourists in Thailand and Phuket is family-oriented tourists. The current research recommends that the government and tourism policy makers for destination planning take into account being with family members and the preference for home comforts when developing unique arrangements for this tourist sector. For example, the government and tourism policy makers should develop basic infrastructure and a unique destination image that satisfies and meets tourists' needs. In this case, availability of public transport needs to be discussed. Although Indian tourists prefer to travel as a family group leading to arranging a local trip with tour guides, public transportation is still in need at some points. Moreover, good public transport indicates better tourist infrastructure. Furthermore, the government should ensure availability of onsite travel information. These aforementioned features bring better infrastructure and higher quality to a tourism destination leading to an improved destination image. The interview analyses also suggest that a large number of Indian wedding receptions are taking place in Thailand. Hence, this is an opportunity for the government to support luxury tourism and wedding tourism to the Indian market.

Indian tourists are likely to travel with a group of family and often look for their home cuisine. A new business comer should take this information into account when preparing tourism services for the Indian market. An airline company who wants a share of this market should offer what Indians love—including Indian meals on-board and service for family passengers. A hotel business can attract Indian tourists by offering room types that are suitable for family groups. Availability of Indian style breakfasts may provide an advantage over other accommodations. In terms of tourist attractions, a promotion for families would be an advantage.

This study is subject to some limitations. Despite data saturation, this research conducted the interview sessions with a relatively small number of tourism stakeholders due to there being a limited number of Indian tourism service providers in Phuket. Future research should include sessions with Indian tourists for further insightful information. In addition, this study is solely qualitative in nature. Therefore, a future quantitative investigation is needed to generalize research findings. In addition, the current research findings are based solely on the tourism suppliers. Therefore, the research results may differ from the perspective of tourists. Further research should seek opinions from tourists themselves. Furthermore, a comparison study of stakeholders' perceptions between different tourist markets would contribute to the body of tourism literature. Moreover, the scope of this study is limited to local tourism stakeholders in Phuket. There are a large number of tourism stakeholders across Thailand that future research can consider. This research was conducted before the COVID-19 outbreak, an investigation into the needs of particular tourism markets and their preferences post COVID-19 would contribute largely to the tourism industry.

Acknowledgments

This research was funded by Phuket Rajabhat University.

References

- Anantamongkolkul, C., Butcher, K., & Wang, Y. (2017). The four stages of on-site behavior for a long-stay relaxation holiday. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 23(3), pp. 217-232.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1356766716647437>
- Anantamongkolkul, C., Butcher, K., & Wang, Y. (2019). Long-stay tourists: Developing a theory of intercultural integration into the destination neighbourhood. *Tourism Management*, 74, 144-154. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2019.03.003>
- Aqueveque, C., & Bianchi, C. (2017). Tourism destination competitiveness of Chile: A stakeholder perspective. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 14(4), pp. 447-466.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2016.1272482>
- Atta. (2019). Indian Tourist Statistics in Thailand. Retrieved 1 May 2019 [Online] from <http://www.atta.or.th/?p=4019>.
- Azzopardi, E., & Nash, R. (2016). A framework for island destination competitiveness—perspectives from the island of Malta. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 19(3), 253-281.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2015.1025723>
- Babbie, E. R. (2020). *The practice of social research*. Cengage learning.
- Batle, J., Garau-Vadell, J. B., & Orfila-Sintes, F. (2020). Are locals ready to cross a new frontier in tourism? Factors of experiential P2P orientation in tourism. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 23(10), 1277-1290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2019.1604639>

- Berno, T., & Ward, C. (2005). Innocence abroad :a pocket guide to psychological research on tourism. *The American Psychologist*, (6)60, .600-593 <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.60.6.593>
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology*, (1)46, -5.34 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x>
- Bimonte, S., & Faralla, V. (2016). Does residents' perceived life satisfaction vary with tourist season? A two-step survey in a Mediterranean destination. *Tourism Management*, 55, pp.199-208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.02.011>
- Chan, W., Zhang, C. X., Hon, A., & Mak, B. (2015). New business drivers of Hong Kong cultural museums: The tourism stakeholder perspective. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 20(6), pp.619-634. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2014.924542>
- Chowdhary, N., Kaurav, R. P. S., & Sharma, S. (2020). Segmenting the domestic rural tourists in India. *Tourism Review International*, 24(1), 23-36. <https://doi.org/10.3727/154427220X15791346544761>
- Cohen, E., (2017). Mass Tourism in Thailand: The Chinese and Russians. In D. Harrison & R. Sharpley (Eds.), *Mass tourism in a small world*, (pp.159-167). CABI. <https://10.1079/9781780648545.0159>
- De-Juan-Vigaray, M. D., Garau-Vadell, J. B., & Sesé, A. (2021). Acculturation, shopping acculturation, and shopping motives of International Residential Tourists. *Tourism management*, 83, 104229. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2020.104229>
- Department of Tourism. (2018). Thai Tourism Statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.tourism.go.th>

- Duarte Alonso, A., & Alexander, N. (2017). Craft Beer Tourism Development “Down Under”: Perspectives of Two Stakeholder Groups. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 14(4), pp.567-584. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2017.1303541>
- Dupeyras, A. & MacCallum, N. (2013). *Indicators for measuring competitiveness in tourism: A guidance document*. OECD Publishing. Pp. 1-65.
- Graci, S., & Van Vliet, L. (2020). Examining Stakeholder Perceptions Towards Sustainable Tourism in an Island Destination. The Case of Savusavu, Fiji. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 17(1), pp.62-81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2019.1657933>
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How Many Interviews Are Enough?: An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), pp.59-82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>
- Kim, K., & Jogaratnam, G. (2015). Participant perceptions of a sport event, destination competitiveness, and intended future behavior: the case of the thunder road Marathon in North Carolina. *Tourism Review International*, 19(3), 133-145. <https://doi.org/10.3727/154427215X14430967453634>
- Manyara, G., & Jones, E. (2007). Community-based tourism enterprises development in Kenya: An exploration of their potential as avenues of poverty reduction. *Journal of sustainable tourism*, 15(6), 628-644. <https://doi.org/10.2167/jost723.0>
- Neto, A. Q., Dimmock, K., Lohmann, G., & Scott, N. (2020). Destination competitiveness: how does travel experience influence choice?. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 23(13), 1673-1687. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2019.1641070>

- Pedersen, E .R., Neighbors, C., Larimer, M .E., & Lee, C .M .(2011) .Measuring sojourner adjustment among American students studying abroad .*International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, (6)35, .889-881 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2011.06.003>
- Pereira, L. N., Santos, M. C., & Ferreira, L. N. (2020). Tourism stakeholders' perceptions on global trends in coastal areas of the Mediterranean region. *International Journal of Tourism Policy*, 10(1), pp.23-46. <https://doi/abs/10.1504/IJTP.2020.107196>
- Promsivapallop, P., & Jarumaneerat, T. (2018). A Cross-National Comparative Analysis of Destination Satisfaction and Loyalty Between Chinese and Australian Independent Tourists: A Study of Phuket. *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review*, 17(3), pp.30-43.
- Promsivapallop, P., & Kannaovakun, P. (2017). A comparative assessment of destination image, travel risk perceptions and travel intention by young travellers across three ASEAN countries: a study of German students. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 22(6), pp.634-650. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2017.1308391>
- Promsivapallop, P., & Kannaovakun, P. (2019). Destination food image dimensions and their effects on food preference and consumption. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 11, pp.89-100. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2018.12.003>
- Rasmi, S., Ng, S., Lee, J .A., & Soutar, G .N .(2014) .Tourists' strategies :An acculturation approach .*Tourism Management*, 40, .320-311
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2013.07.006>
- Ritchie, J.B. & Crouch, G.I. (2003). *The competitive destination: A sustainable tourism perspective*. Cabi.
- Sroyetch, S., 2017. Backpacker tourism within Southeast Asia: Thailand's competitors from the Australian perspective. *Journal of Business Administration*, 40(156), pp.87-115.

- Tsai, J. L., Chentsova-Dutton, Y., & Wong, Y. (2002). Why and how we should study ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation. In G. C. Nagayama Hall & S. Okazaki (Eds.), *Asian American psychology: The science of lives in context* (pp. 41–65). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/10473-002>
- Verma, M., Verma, A., & Khurana, S. (2018). Influence of Travel Motivation and Demographic Factors on Tourist Participation in World's Largest Mass Religious Gathering-The Kumbh Mela. *Prabandhan: Indian Journal of Management*, 11(8), pp.7-19. <https://10.17010/pijom/2018/v11i8/130641>
- Xiao, H., & Hung, K. (2013). Why immigrants travel to their home places :social capital and acculturation perspective .*Tourism management*, 36, .313-304 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2012.12.010>

Document Type: Research Article

Publication date: April 1, 2022

This article was made available online on March 30, 2022 as a Fast Track article with title: "DESTINATION ARRANGEMENT FOR AN EMERGING TOURIST MARKET: AN APPLICATION OF AN ACCULTURATION MODEL".

[More about this publication?](#)

We recommend

Cultural Values and Service Quality: Host and Guest Perspectives

Thuy-Huong Truong et al., *Tourism Culture & Communication*, 2010

Representations of a Destination Brand in Online Tourism Information Sources: The Case of Slovenia

Velvet Nelson, *Tourism Culture & Communication*, 2014

Measuring Tourist Satisfaction with Nautical Destinations: The Effects of Image, Loyalty, and Past Destination Choice

Yen E. Lam-González et al., *Tourism in Marine Environments*, 2020

Measurement of the Impact of Music Festivals on Destination Image: The Case of a Womad Festival

Paulo Duarte et al., *Event Management*, 2018

The Temporal Relationship between Mass Tourism and Alternative Tourism in Southern Thailand

Nick Kontogeorgopoulos, *Tourism Review International*, 2009

Collaborative Strategies and Tourist Competitiveness in Medium Mountain

Destinations: Study on the Positioning of Tourist Actors in the Natural Park of Serra da Estrela

Gonçalo Fernandes et al., *Euro Jour of Tou, Hosp and Recr*, 2021

Exploring and Studying the Attractive Experience Attributes of Cultural Tourism Project — Beijing South Luogu Lane as Example

Ying Liu et al., *World Scientific Book*

Augmented Reality in Shopping Tourism: Boosting Tourism Development Through Innovation in Barcelona

Jonathan Gomez Punzon, *Euro Jour of Tou, Hosp and Recr*, 2021

London calling! Travelers seek 'trust' in holiday destinations

Phys.org, 2018

What most attracts us to a tourist destination? Attractions, culture and gastronomy

Phys.org, 2019

Powered by **TREND MD**