

*Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice*  
*Volume 7*

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## **The World Meets Asian Tourists**

### **EDITORS**

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## **The World Meets Asian Tourists**

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Emerald Group Publishing Limited  
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2017

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**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-78560-219-1

ISSN: 2042-1443 (Series)



ISOQAR certified  
Management System,  
awarded to Emerald  
for adherence to  
Environmental  
standard  
ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985  
ISO 14001



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## Preface

A seismic shift has occurred in the 21st century. It is not so much a shift of the continental plates which organize the world's surface, but a shift in the relationships among the people of those land masses. These relationships were previously forged by the view that the many citizens of Asian countries were hard working but relatively poor. In the countries beyond Asia, the products of this hard work were familiar with such manufacturing designations as "Made in Japan," "Made in Korea," and "Made in China" adorning many household and industrial items. In the middle of the 20th century, the notion that the citizens of these countries would become the tourists of the 21st century was barely conceivable. By the end of the millennium, it was apparent that this was an old fashioned view. The world had indeed begun to welcome Asian tourists.

Regrettably, the welcome given to the new Asian tourists was at best haphazard. The world meeting Asian tourists was not very well prepared for their arrival. Any examination of the 20th century curriculum of schools in the continents outbound Asian tourists started to visit—whether that be schools in Europe, North America, or Australia—will quickly reveal a missing agenda. Most citizens outside Asia had not learned about or studied Asian history, geography, politics, or culture. Meeting Asian tourists, both in earlier decades, and to some extent in contemporary times, was and may be enacted in a spirit of goodwill, but such welcomes are set against a background of ignorance and unfamiliarity with the customs, needs, and cultures of the visiting tourists.

The editors of this volume, one Australian Professor and one younger Chinese scholar, can relay one recent small encounter illustrating this unfamiliarity. At a conference in Australia, they acted as hosts to two Chinese colleagues who were on their first visit to a Western country. The party drove to a remote rural landscape on a very hot summer's day and stopped at a small roadside café for lunch. The Chinese guests asked for hot water to accompany their meal (the need for hot water to drink being a common

Chinese practice). Somewhat confused by the request, the young teenage waiter serving at the table looked at his Australian compatriot, glanced outside at the heat charred landscape, and said conspiratorially, “They want what? Isn’t it damn well hot enough already! Crazy Asians! Ok I will get some.”

For some time and in some different ways, the editors of this work have identified and seen a need to provide a focus in tourism research on Asian tourists traveling out of Asia. As a Chinese scholar educated in Australia, Mao-Ying Wu, has traveled to Europe, America, and around Australia and seen many Asian faces in the locations visited. She has wondered about their motivations, their experiences, and the effects of such tourist experiences on their lives. Philip Pearce has been fortunate to visit many Asian countries, and for some time he has tried to understand the problems and possibilities in cross-cultural and cross-continental encounters. These combined interests stimulated their desire to cooperate and source papers from a range of colleagues on the challenge of meeting Asian tourists. This work brings together original contributions exploring these themes. For the editors, and no doubt many of the authors of this volume, there is a lot more to do, more countries and forms of contact to be explored, but the sheer scale of out of Asia tourism suggest that the need to conduct these sorts of studies will be necessary and required in the evolution of tourism studies.

Both editors would like to thank Professor Jafar Jafari for supporting the project and being a friend as well as a diligent Series editor. Mao-Ying Wu would like to thank Australian Endeavour Award, which enabled her Australia academic trip. With the sponsorship, she made her first out-of Asia travel, which inspired more ongoing trips in and out of Asia. She is also grateful to Philip Pearce, her academic mentor, as well as his family and friends, who offered unconditional support. Philip Pearce expresses his appreciation to all the chapter authors and his internationally minded friends, near and far, who have combined to generate his ongoing interest in the meeting and mixing of people thorough tourism.

Philip Pearce  
*Townsville, Australia*  
Mao-Ying Wu  
*Hangzhou, China*  
March 2016

## Chapter 1

# INTRODUCTION

## Meeting Asian Tourists

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**Abstract:** This introductory chapter defines and notes the development of tourism out of Asia as a new force in global human communication. The complexities and some efficiencies in defining Asia are reviewed. The chapter considers dispersal patterns from a number of Asian countries and notes the chief destinations as provided by current statistical counts. Key issues arising from attempts to interpret these data are noted. The importance of out of Asia tourists is confirmed through the material presented. The visibility of Asian tourists is considered and the subtleties of recognizing intra-Asian differences are noted. Some select theoretical approaches focussing on societies in contact are introduced. These theories offer pathways to bring academic and managerial insights to this evolving phenomenon.

**Keywords:** Asia outbound; history; patterns; interaction; challenges

### INTRODUCTION

International tourism has many consequences. Through tourism, some become rich. Tourists themselves may enjoy special and privileged

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The World Meets Asian Tourists

Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice, Volume 7, 1–19

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ISSN: 2042-1443/doi:10.1108/S2042-14432016000007001

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experiences. In most places, tourism brings a confusing mix of local advantages and disadvantages. But, above all, tourism produces encounters among people from different continents on a scale that is unsurpassed in human history. Yes, civilizations have met in past times, but typically in battle and warfare (Huntington, 1998; Maoz, 2009). In terms of peaceful encounters among citizens, tourism has stimulated the widest and most extensive intercontinental contact ever seen (Ferguson, 2012). The growth of outbound tourism from Asia is a major part of this intercontinental contact. These large scale encounters emerged predominantly in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and have continued to flourish in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is this topic of outbound Asian tourism and how the rest of the world meets and manages these tourists which is at the forefront of the book. This chapter introduces and frames this interest.

The present work has some companion volumes. Some authors have considered how Westerners visit the rest of the world including Asia (Van Egmond, 2007). Asian domestic tourists who travel specifically within their own countries have been considered (Ghimire, 2001). Others have studied and pursued the topic of Asian tourists traveling within the wider Asian region (Winter, Teo, & Chang, 2009). Recently, Li (2016) edited a book about Chinese outbound tourism with a focus on tourism trends and travel patterns from this single Asian country. Although these various encounters and approaches are interesting, they are not the same as the direction taken in this book. Instead, it will be argued that for many Asian tourists, domestic and regional journeys are stepping stones in a pathway taking them outside of their own continent. In this book our main concern is with how people outside the region welcome, interact with, and manage the new groups of out of Asia tourists.

The focus on interacting with and managing Asian tourists requires several lines of introduction. One necessary pathway is to understand what authors and stakeholders in the tourism management space mean when the expression Asian tourists is employed. This set of points highlights some of the major and lesser Asian markets. Other tracks to be explored include specifying the various types of Asian tourists. Holiday tourists, or pleasure vacationers as they are labeled in some North American contexts, are the group of primary interest but the roles that the other segments (business travelers, international Asian students, those who visit friends and relatives) have played in shaping views of Asian people generally will be reviewed. A broad canvas of the routes and directions taken out of Asia by continental tourists will be considered, though the authors are aware that these data are dynamic and have been and will continue to change rapidly,

not just in numbers but also in patterns. Some major tourism linked conceptual schemes and approaches, notably those which help explain how groups in contact view one another, provide some integrative considerations to inform the interaction challenges inherent in these new mobilities. In essence, the aim of this chapter and the whole book is to discuss key touch points framing and understanding what is happening and what could happen when the world meets Asian tourists.

## ASIA AND ASIAN TOURISTS

Most continents are easy to define. Africa, Antarctica, and Australia are “island” continents. North and South America are easily categorized due to the shape of their landforms and the demarcation line provided by the Panama Canal. Distinguishing Europe from Asia is a little more complex. For those who travel from Turkey into Europe, there is a road sign on the outskirts of Istanbul which announces “You are now leaving Asia and entering Europe.” The Asian-European border here is the River Bosphorus, a part of modern day Istanbul. This imposing feature has literally been an important watershed in the history of the world, but few now reliably refer to eastern Turkey and the Middle East as Asia. Russia too, is arguably geographically linked to Asia but represents an anomaly in any easy global classification scheme. Clearly, simple geography is helpful but not a complete solution to the issue. It is important to turn to other administrative measures, as well as historical views and contemporary imagery to construct a useful approach when thinking about Asian tourists.

The standard cartographic representation of Asia can be juxtaposed with the statistical subdivisions of global tourism movements used by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The approach is one of a number of administrative links and classifications but is of particular interest because the statistics about global tourism arrivals and departures follow these UNWTO groupings. Western and central Asia are not considered in this work for multiple reasons. At this time, countries in these sub-regions require separate analysis due in different cases to current unrest, powerful travel restrictions, the small volumes of outbound tourists, and markedly different cultural histories.

The UNWTO subdivision as indicated in [Table 1](#) releases Turkey and the Middle East from the Asian family. It also excludes the countries which have emerged following the disintegration of the former USSR. These divisions and separations will be followed in this book, not only because

**Table 1. UNWTO Classification of Countries Designated as Asia**

North-East Asia	South-East Asia	South Asia
China	Brunei Darussalam	Afghanistan
Hong Kong (China)	Cambodia	Bangladesh
Japan	Indonesia	Bhutan
Korea, D P Rp	Lao P.D.R.	India
Korea, Republic of	Malaysia	Maldives
Macao (China)	Myanmar	Nepal
Mongolia	Philippines	Pakistan
Taiwan (PR China)	Singapore	Sri Lanka
	Thailand	
	Timor-Leste	
	Vietnam	

*Source:* UNWTO (2015a).

the UNWTO figures are organized in this way but also other scholarly accounts tend to adopt this view of Asia as a relatively well integrated designation (Blainey, 2004; Morris, 2011). The present interest in these Asian countries lies in the extent to which they are currently providing outbound tourists. This orientation provides a more concentrated list of special interest; in effect a strategic top 10 which provides tourists to the rest of the world. The selected members of the list which will be the focus of interest in this book are China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Taiwan (People's Republic of China), the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and India. Hong Kong and Macao, as the two special administrative regions of China, are of importance in this book because they offer a first window to the Western world for so many Chinese tourists.

The division of South East Asian, North East Asian, and South Asian countries into those of greater and lesser interest for this book is largely due to matters of scale, economic development, and their relative position in the statistical information provided by UNWTO (2015c). Countries such as the Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan, Mongolia, and Timor-Leste with small populations are already or may become key destinations but in terms of scale they are unlikely to ever be important source locations. Select citizens of Brunei Darussalam have the money to travel but again the sheer impact of a country with a population of less than one half of million is relatively minor. Several countries with larger populations are on the cusp

of becoming important in the outbound tourism statistics, bearing in mind that these numbers include domestic workers, students, and strong Visiting family and friends (VFR)-linked travel. Vietnam and Pakistan head the list of these emerging players. Poverty, political restrictions, and unrest limit the current role of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Lao Republic, Cambodia, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Before presenting fuller documentation justifying and elaborating on the selection of these key Asian locations, it is important to consider any unwanted intellectual baggage being incorporated into this select discussion. In particular, the designation of these Asian countries as being of special interest needs to be set in the context of a reflexive and critical theory account of the research and researchers' interests (Tribe, 2008, 2009). Therefore, it is important to consider the extent to which the very terms Asia and Asian tourists are Western-centric and possibly offensive. Bowring (1987) suggests the term "Asia" was invented by Europeans. It was indeed the European explorers who provided the terms now used to view the globe (Ferguson, 2012). Consequently, the concept Asia did not originally exist among its people. Even now, the Chinese use a character for Asia which simply denotes the sound "A." Terms used in China during its history, such as the middle kingdom, denoted a different view of the organization of the planet and its peripheries (Morris, 2011). Instead, the concept of Asia has been propagated by European geographers, politicians, and textbook authors. Thus, the term Asia is an external nomenclature, one imposed by those outside the region. Nevertheless, and importantly, Asia and Asians do not appear to be terms which are deeply offensive (Sheridan, 1999). There are no advocacy movements suggesting that the expressions should be discarded. The terms are perhaps so inclusive that until one deliberately attaches pejorative adjectives to them, few are troubled by their rather neutral connotations.

The more detailed documentation of the influence of the strategic 10 Asian countries and their importance in shaping outbound tourism beyond that continent are considered through examining six regions of the world in Table 2. Hong Kong data are added to the strategic 10 to make special points about Asian outbound travel. The data were extracted from the most recent compilation of world tourism statistics at the time of writing (UNWTO, 2015c). The information missing in the tables was not available or not defined for the relevant country. Some locations simply do not report or have not made their data available at this level. A country of some interest to this discussion, the United Arab Emirates, is a special case and will be considered further presently. In Table 2, the Asian source

**Table 2. Asian Tourists to Selected Key Countries (Year 2013)**

Destinations Source Countries	Mediterranean		Western Europe			Northern Europe and Russia	
	Italy	Egypt	The United Kingdom	Germany	Switzerland	Russia	Finland
China	289,682	55,453	196,000	870,748	704,945	1,071,515	79,379
India	199,253	67,401	375,000	189,534	212,960	95,542	16,083
Indonesia	17,919	25,885	26,000	N/A	42,154	21,088	3,450
Japan	454,465	31,181	221,000	711,529	286,681	102,408	106,769
Philippines	27,922	25,297	22,000	N/A	8,334	149,213	1,151
Thailand	22,843	10,528	75,000	N/A	77,341	23,919	8,926
South Korea	68,403	22,558	202,000	223,782	133,184	94,922	15,855
Malaysia	19,742	32,809	171,000	N/A	35,413	16,127	2,018
Taiwan	15,175	7,242	37,000	114,864	61,433	15,767	8,182
Hong Kong	31,944	N/A	163,000	N/A	64,833	20,099	10,291

Source: UNWTO (2015c).

Note: Due to the availability of data, some of the key destinations (e.g., France, Sweden, Spain, Austria, and Greece) for Asian tourists are not listed in the current table.

countries are ordered in terms of their total population as available in 2015 (Population Reference Bureau, 2015). The relevant statistics for this ranking in terms of millions of inhabitants are China 1,364, India 1,296, Indonesia 251, Japan 127, Philippines, 100.1, Thailand 66.4, South Korea 50.4, Malaysia 30.1, and Singapore 5.5. By ordering the source Asian countries according to population, it is immediately apparent whether or not the pattern of outbound figures follows or departs from this population based ranking of the countries.

Another kind of highly relevant information about Asian tourists and their role in non-Asian destinations lies in considering their proportion compared to those from other places. Table 3 considers the percentage of Asian tourists from the three regions in Asia under consideration as a percentage of all tourists to the host country.

### *Examining the Data*

There are some key points in the preceding Tables which form a useful context for the aims of this book. It is clear from all the data assembled that

**Table 2.** (Continued)

Oceania		Africa		South America			North America	
Australia	New Zealand	South Africa	Mauritius	Brazil	Chile	Peru	The United States	Canada
708,770	228,928	151,053	41,913	60,410	11,289	12,884	1,474,408	352,597
168,880	30,976	112,100	57,255	22,719	N/A	N/A	859,156	147,099
141,610	13,712	6,254	1,852	N/A	723	1,891	88,652	18,487
324,320	74,560	41,099	1,768	87,225	14,704	67,639	3,698,073	224,858
66,760	10,432	17,011	1,821	N/A	838	2,597	200,521	65,373
75,300	20,704	9,103	331	N/A	649	1,316	88,163	17,663
197,520	50,992	21,756	2,778	44,339	10,796	14,000	1,251,432	144,583
278,140	28,976	10,544	3,174	N/A	N/A	1,556	76,247	11,937
107,680	21,776	11,700	N/A	N/A	1,626	3,243	290,000	62,038
183,460	28,080	N/A	1,449	N/A	N/A	1,455	122,134	129,068

China, Japan, South Korea, and, where the information is available, India, are the key markets driving the Asian outbound wave. The data from these individual countries are also reflected in the regional data provided in [Table 3](#). The North East Asian region consistently provides the highest figures for relative market share among the three Asian sub-regions being considered. In many destinations, China dominates the tables of figures although the highest number in the whole set is occupied by the 3.69 million Japanese tourists venturing to the United States. The importance of these dominant source countries is reflected in the chapters in this book where more specific studies about meeting and managing Chinese, Japanese, and Korean tourists are a feature of the work. Nevertheless, Indian tourists are emerging as important for some regions, notably Africa (and Saudi Arabia), and dominate the South Asia outbound figures. There are special linkages in terms of employment as well proximity which make these travels to the workplaces of the Middle East and Africa noteworthy for the sub-continent market and diaspora.

There are also some solid figures representing a middle tier of Asian outbound tourists with Malaysia, Taiwan, and Thailand providing cohorts of

**Table 3. Total Inbound Tourism and Proportions of Asians in Key Markets**

Host Country and Total Tourists (Millions)	Asian Regions-Percentage of Total			Asian Tourists (Total)
	North East Asia	South Asia	South East Asia	
<i>Countries boarding the Mediterranean</i>				
Spain (60.6)	3.28	0.17	1.55	5.00%
Italy (47.7)	1.81	0.62	0.26	2.69%
Israel (2.96)	2.60	1.47	2.29	6.36%
Egypt (9.46)	1.16	0.92	1.04	3.12%
<i>Northern Europe and Russian Federation</i>				
Norway (4.96)	5.76	—	4.62	10.38%
Sweden (18.81)	4.08	1.72	1.79	7.59%
Finland (7.63)	4.02	0.33	1.72	6.07%
Russia (30.79)	5.10	0.45	1.02	5.57%
<i>Western Europe</i>				
United Kingdom (32.8)	2.50	1.33	1.34	5.17%
France (84.72)	2.84	—	1.19	4.03%
Germany (28.12)	6.55	0.60	2.41	9.56%
Switzerland (8.96)	13.95	2.37	3.34	19.61%
<i>Africa and Saudi Arabia</i>				
South Africa (9.53)	2.37	1.52	0.65	4.44%
Mauritius (0.99)	4.99	6.01	1.00	12.00%
Saudi Arabia(13.38)	0.39	24.62	2.50	25.51%
<i>Oceania</i>				
Australia (6.38)	23.97	3.50	15.08	42.55%
New Zealand (2.71)	14.95	1.28	4.49	20.72%
<i>South America</i>				
Chile (3.57)	1.09	0.09	0.03	1.21%
Brazil (5.81)	3.30	0.39	0.92	4.61%
Peru (3.16)	3.14	0.14	0.31	3.59%
<i>North America</i>				
Canada (16.59)	5.51	1.16	0.95	7.62%
The United States (69.76)	10.62	1.41	0.98	13.01%

Source: UNWTO (2015b, 2015c).

tourists to Europe. These source countries are featured in specific studies of Asian outbound tourists in this book as their cultural and historical connections generate some distinctive needs and operational challenges. Included among these challenges is the simple process that in many contexts they are mistaken for Chinese tourists. This is a non-trivial theme which will be considered further in a later section of the present chapter.

Another highlight of the set of Tables lies in understanding that two of the smaller source countries, Hong Kong and Singapore, consistently provide relatively large numbers of tourists compared to some of the more populous countries. These relatively high rates of outbound travel by Singaporeans, and those from Hong Kong, are not confined to Oceania or the United Kingdom, but penetrate across many destinations, notably the United States, Canada, Russia, Finland, and most of Western Europe.

There are several kinds of information not provided in these snapshot tables. The actual increase in the arrival figures across recent years as well as the percentage growth for any market both matter to countries and sub regions. Dynamic data of these kinds assist destination planning concerns. Still, many reports commenting on tourism activity tend to be overly concerned with percentage growth, missing at least three points of pivotal concern. First, it is the actual number of tourists arriving who matter. Small source countries are unlikely to generate large increases in percentage growth but, as already highlighted for Singapore and Hong Kong, they may provide steady numbers for predictable planning. Second, countries with high growth percentages may be doing so from a low base so their relative importance to a region may still not be considerable. Additionally, focusing exclusively on issues of growth frequently overlooks what kinds of tourists are arriving and fails to consider how experienced they are as tourists, whether or not they are repeaters, what sorts of holiday they seek, and what amounts of money they are likely to spend.

It is to some extent the province of tourism forecasters and econometricians to provide dynamic and forward looking data. Inevitably they must build their models with assumptions about the broader economic climate and the continuing appeal of specific locations (PATA, 2015). This kind of work is not the province of this book, but there is a clear recognition that outbound forecasts are regularly seen as keys to global tourism well-being and very likely to be driven by China, India, and the continuing roles of Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, and Taiwan (PATA, 2015). Indonesia is also seen as having a considerable future in the longer term as a provider of tourists but is often not predicted to be a major player for at least another decade.

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Some select figures for the 15-year time period of forecasts for 2030 buttress the importance of this book and add to the snapshot of data already described. The UNWTO document “Tourism towards 2030 Global Overview” predicts 541 million Asian outbound tourists by 2050, a figure which represents a major growth compared to 204 million in 2010 (UNWTO, 2011). Nevertheless, in terms of actual outbound participation, there is still much room for even longer term growth with the 2030 figures built on 12/100 persons traveling in 2030. By way of contrast, the involvement in international travel for Europeans is predicted to be 89/100 at that time. Inevitably, some years into the future the numbers will be updated. Perhaps some will figures have changed dramatically but the core purpose of building this initial framework will remain unchanged. The data identify multiple countries outside of Asia where there are solid numbers of outbound Asian tourists. Further, the forecasters from various sources agree that this presence is likely to increase rather than stabilize or decline.

Several academic commentaries on these kinds of data help inform this review. Hall (2009) provides an extensive catalogue of organizations linked to the analysis of information and concerned with Asian tourism. Some of these organization offer reports and data different from those of UNWTO reported in this chapter. The variability in the figures can often be accounted for by attending to distinctions between estimates and actual arrivals, between tourists with different trip purposes and arrival numbers versus bed nights. The preceding figures attended to either the total inbound arrivals to the locations of interest or proportions of total arrivals from the Asian source countries.

None of these data address the effects of repeat or indeed multiple destination travels. For example, Zoltan and McKercher (2015) remind analysts that that there are many touring patterns. Several of these involve multi-country tours on the one holiday. Chinese and Japanese tourists on their first trip to Europe are likely to be going not just to France but quite possibly also to Germany, Switzerland, and elsewhere. Some of the patterns in the data are also heavily influenced by what Thirumaran (2009) has labeled affinity tourism; that is travel to places where through religion, ethnic links, or colonial ties there are well defined connections between the citizens and culture of a specific pair of countries. Hong Kong tourists to the United Kingdom and Indian tourist to Mauritius are examples of these links.

One way to express the complexities in these data is to view the explanation of the arrival statistics as overdetermined. That is, in seeking explanation of the flows, a suite of factors operate in conjunction with one another, varying for any pairing of source and destination countries.

In essence, this is a wicked problem. The term refers to topics and issues where four major reasons create interpretation difficulties: incomplete or contradictory knowledge; the large number of people and opinions involved; the economic importance of the issue; and the interconnected nature of the problem with other problems (Rittel & Webber, 1984). One approach to a wicked problem lies in modestly recognizing that solving a part of it is an achievement. In this book, the flow of out of Asia tourists in all its diversity and complexity is in many ways like a wicked problem. Nevertheless, through a set of chapters and small attacks on the whole, some promise of new insights rather than a total model or formula for the task at hand is a modest but worthwhile effort.

The data are also inherently noisy because for the interest in holiday tourists there are confounding groups of people arriving at international borders. The figures record the flow of seasonal workers, those engaged in cross border shopping and those undertaking focused VFR tourism. Further, the conflicts and tensions in some countries and the attempt of many refugees and abused communities to relocate themselves challenges the orderly collection of arrivals data and figures. It is not the intent of this book to scrutinize all these intercontinental travel figures in further detail; instead the value of reporting these data lies in correcting views built on personal experiences with tourist groups in particular places and on specific occasions.

As an example of these processes, one of the editors of this book has visited Rotorua, the center of the thermal sites and volcanic activity in New Zealand's North Island. On the days of visiting that city in summer 2013, it appeared that Indian tourists were everywhere—in the hotels, luxuriating in the spas, at the shops, walking around the attractions and participating in the adventure activities. In another part of the world, when both editors book visited the Swarovski tourist center near Innsbruck, again Indian tourists seemed to be everywhere. It is easy to overgeneralize from immediate personal experiences and think that Indian tourists are abundant, even dominant, in New Zealand and Austria (Kahneman, 2011). These views are corrected by the broader data which reveal that there were almost 10 times as many Chinese and more than twice as many Japanese who spent time in New Zealand that year compared to their Indian counterparts. Further, in Austria, tourists from India constitute a tiny market share of 0.17%. Of course one specific implication deriving from the personal experiences lies in recognizing that specific sites may have very concentrated tourist numbers; quite literally nearly all those who are from that nationality may go to a small number of key sites. One of the chapters

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explores this kind of site specific impact by focusing on Chinese tourists to the cathedrals of Florence and Milan. In another chapter, the special appeal of anime to Japanese tourists may see a large number of people of that nationality at a site where imagination and fantasy elements developed in their contemporary media draw popular culture enthusiasts to a specific location.

### *The Visibility of Asian Tourists*

There is a rich vein of tourism humor which mocks the dress and appearance of some tourist groups (Cohen, 2011). The more aggressive forms of wit are explained by superiority theory where one group seeks to establish its status, appearance and codes of conduct as more sophisticated and discerning than the other (Pearce & Pabel, 2015). More engaging forms of host self-deprecatory humor, which are better appreciated by many tourists, eschew these superiority driven jokes and remarks. Still, irrespective of the humor employed, the jokes are often built on quickly being able to identify a group of tourists in terms of their nationality or origins. Beer drinking, sports loving Australians are one stereotype, but so too are socks and sandal wearing, pale skinned Englishmen and loud, abrasive Americans. In the Asian context, camera toting groups of older, often over-dressed Japanese group tourists are a further classification, but so too are smartly dressed, young Chinese couples sometimes sporting expensive matching outfits (Tran, 2011).

The classification of people during encounters is inevitably a part of human exchange and the importance of understanding the other has had a firm place in anthropology, sociology, and psychology studies in tourism (Pizam, 1999; Reisinger & Moufakkir, 2013; Van den Berghe, 1994). There is often a strong commercial imperative among tourism personnel, such as taxi drivers, tour guides, and shop owners prompting these hosts to identify the national identity of the tourists and gauge their spending power.

Issues concerned with the classification of Asian tourists border on concerns about stereotyping, racism, and prejudice. Some time ago, Dann (1993) suggested that the concept of nationality was obsolete and a more fine-grained approach to understanding arriving tourist groups was needed. The basis of this argument was built on the heterogeneity of people within countries, the mobility of tourists transferring among countries as a part of their lives, and perhaps above all, a fear of superficial generalizations and mistreatment when people are assigned and then viewed in routine ways

due to the one label. Respecting individual differences is an important and valued approach to any interaction. Nevertheless, there is a homogeneity among subgroupings of people from some parts of Asia which promote the ready use of standard classifications. The point can be illustrated by the experience of one of the editors when providing a first guest lecture in Xi'an, China. When asked to describe a particularly enthusiastic student, who was not present at the event, to a Chinese colleague the following account was offered: "the young lady was slim, petite, with long black hair, a round face and glasses." It took a minute before the Chinese colleague stopped laughing. The story, though, has a positive ending; the young lady is the author of one of the chapters in this book.

Morris (2011) has pointed out that the limited in-migration to many Asian countries over at least the last 1,000 years has meant a narrower range of physical characteristics among the citizens than is typically viewed in the relatively newly settled continents, such as North and South America and Australia. In Europe too, the diversity of people's physical appearance is often marked. Still, Dann's original points remain valid in the Asian context. There is a significant Chinese diaspora and an influential Indian out-migration affecting several countries in the region. Therefore, it is very likely that a Chinese face in Europe may in fact belong to a Singaporean, or a Malaysian citizen, or yet again, due to different historical circumstances, the person may be from Taiwan or Hong Kong.

It is particularly noteworthy that many Westerners, including those who work in tourism locations, do not easily decipher the country codes and characteristics of those arriving from Asia. This may be a bad start to a social encounter. Chinese tourists, for example, usually do not like being thought of as Japanese, nor do Koreans. The residual effects of conflicts and at times ongoing hostilities remain influential among these groups. Hong Kong tourists typically see themselves as more worldly and interconnected to the currents of global thought than their mainland Chinese counterparts (Loi & Pearce, 2015). Such sentiments are, of course, not confined to those from Asian countries. For those operators, citizens and managers faced with the challenge of co-producing and managing Asian outbound tourist experiences, care, and attentiveness are needed to identify the nationality base of those on holiday.

One way to conceptualize the distinctions and similarities among people is offered by Gould (2004). He suggests that in general using dichotomies to describe human affairs and characteristics invariably results in exaggerating differences rather than identifying commonalities. In this view, the present book should not be about the world meeting Asian tourists, since

the dichotomy is too simple; a better simile to express the variety of within and among continental differences is to view the encounters as recognizing the different stems of a richly vegetated tree where the varied but interconnected branches have their own place in the sun. That approach would, however, make for a rather longer book title. Nevertheless, the point of recognizing variation is well made. It is easy, as Galani-Moutafi (1999) once suggested, to commit the sin of homogenization when discussing tourists, and an awareness of this issue permeates the present book.

### *Theoretical Perspectives*

The consideration of cultures in contact and more specifically the topic of interpersonal encounters with Asian tourists can be advanced by accessing a range of theories and conceptual schemes. Each of the approaches has a range of convenience; that is, the theoretical lenses deal with select aspects of overall interest with different degrees of precision and applicability. A succinct account of the main approaches of interest follows.

(1) Comparative history

A number of detailed contemporary scholarly works use historical and archival sources to understand the long traditions of cultures in contact and the rise and fall of civilizations. This kind of work offers the broadest historical and contextual commentary on the current interest of Western cultures and the developed world meeting tourists from Asia by placing these interactions in the trajectory of past centuries of conflict and trade. Key authors writing about culture in contact in this detailed historical tradition include Diamond (2005a), Morris (2011), Huntington (1998), Maoz (2009) and Ferguson (2012).

(2) Critical pragmatism

Harrill, Li, and Xiao (2016) advocate a specific theoretical lens of critical pragmatism. The approach links the insights of Habermas and his theory of open communication action and the darker insights of Foucault where power and control are central elements. Harrill et al. consider that by adopting a critical approach to data about how Chinese/Asian tourists see the world, it is possible to appreciate their power as individuals to exert pressure for change.

(3) Social representations theory

Social representations theory proposes that groups of people in a society hold common higher order explanations about key topics in

their world. These explanations or mini-theories are built on a set of interlocking attitudes and are shared among members in a group through the media, conversation and in various artistic forms. The representations may change over time and there are three types of organizing mini-theories in a community about any topic; the hegemonic or dominant view, a contested alternative view referred to as polemical and the emancipated case where multiple representations happily co-exist. The work derives from the writing of Moscovici (1984, 1988) and has been used in tourism studies for some time to explain views of key tourism topics such as impacts and conceptions of destinations. It is useful for understanding the views a community holds of other groups and how they explain the conduct of that group both nationally and internationally.

(4) Adapted mobilities paradigm

Cohen and Cohen (2015b) provide an example of the mobilities paradigm approach tailored for tourism. The mobilities approach, broadly conceived stresses the diversity and potential insights to be gained from considering tourism in the context of a range of movement styles and types. In their revision of the broad approach, Cohen and Cohen stress the need to understand representations, activities and motivation, and types of travel.

(5) Social situation analysis

The approach described using this label recognizes a set of eight interlocking forces which are in operation during a social or cross-cultural encounter. The forces are the goals of the personnel, the environmental setting, the roles and rules each party bring to the interaction, language, the cognitive understanding of each participant, the repertoire of skills and behaviors available to the parties, and the sequences of behaviors they employ. The work was summarized by Argyle, Furnham, and Graham (1981) and has been used to understand tourist guide encounters and tourists interacting with others in informal settings.

(6) Culture shock-culture confusion

This is more of a common term used in the field rather than a full theory or conceptual scheme. At core, its founder Oberg (1960) described culture shock as the difficulties of adjusting to another culture; these difficulties involve both physical challenges and issues of meaning and interpretation. In a refinement of the approach for tourists Hottola (2004) suggested that unlike any involvement in long term cultural relationships, tourists could find the differences interesting and were prone

to confusion rather than the full debilitating effects of being dysfunctional when encountering unfamiliar others. The concept has widespread popular currency and if married with other approaches—such as social situation analysis—can be linked to many studies of cultural interchange in both tourist and non-tourist contexts.

(7) Mindfulness-mindlessness

The work of Langer (1989, 2009) on the social psychology construct of mindfulness stresses openness to learning and attentiveness to situations. Mindlessness involves carrying out behavior in a routine well-scripted manner which may be useful in many situations but maladaptive if truly new experiences are encountered. The ideas have been used to understand tourist attention, learning, and responses to interpretation, and are linked to the attitudinal constructs of deep and shallow processing of material. The work also has links to the more meditative construct of mindfulness but is less concerned with achieving desired deep mental states of awareness and is more oriented toward how people treat information and others.

(8) Travel career pattern

The travel career pattern approach to tourist motivation makes the case that tourists' motives change with travel experience. It depicts these as consisting of a common core, typically involving escape, relationships, and relaxation, surrounded by two further layers, one of moderate importance including an interest in personal fulfilment, host peoples and environments, and one of lesser importance including motive items such as autonomy, nostalgia, and romance. With greater experience, such as multiple international holidays, tourists tend to emphasize a pattern of middle layer motives more but still retain strong needs for the core motive. Together with other approaches to tourist motivation recent interest in the motives of outbound Asian and Chinese tourists represent potentially useful studies for this book. Statements describing the travel career pattern can be found in Pearce and Lee (2005) and Pearce (2011).

The use of these approaches in this book reflects the diverse ways encounters can be conceptualized and investigated. There are some important supplementary ideas beyond those already highlighted which have also been applied to the processes and outcomes of hosts and tourists interacting. There is a spectrum of work concerned with identity and identity management, resting in part on the ability of people to classify one another with very little information (Tajfel, 1981). Further, there is considerable

work in the sphere of cross-cultural psychology where the efforts of researchers are directed toward understanding the commonality and variability in the way people think and the values they hold (Nisbett, 2003; Schwartz, 2007). This work is noted here for its partial relevance to the current interests, though it can be observed that these researchers rarely consider tourists in contact with their hosts as they develop these interests.

It might be surprising to some readers that one set of approaches (the work on cultural values and cross national differences in values) as discussed in the much cited work of Hofstede, Trompenaars, and colleagues (Hofstede, 1984; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997) do not feature in this book. Two explanations for bypassing these approaches can be noted. First, none of the authors explicitly used these sets of ideas to inform their studies, often preferring more fine-grained context specific appraisals of values and interests. Second, the work in its original forms was not directed toward tourists in contact with others and a sound argument exists that those who venture out of their country may be a special subset of their community, not necessarily adhering to core and common values in their quest to explore the world. Similarly, those hosts who meet the outbound tourists and manage and serve them may be professionally and personally atypical of their culture. For these reasons and perhaps also because of the rapid economic and social changes being witnessed across Asia since these assessments, the approaches are not featured in this book.

The authors of the following chapters do, at times, use most of the theoretical lenses reported previously when considering Asian outbound travel. It is not a competition as to which is the best approach, but rather each lens offers one way of accessing some of the interesting and at times mysterious information characterizing the wicked problem. Much of the following work seeks to understand the desired tourists' experiences and the demands facing managers to provide these experiences. One discussion of interest in several of the following chapters pertains to the need and desirability of providing the resources and services to which Asian outbound tourists might be accustomed. Examples of this kind of provisioning include familiar foods, drinks, language access, and marks of respect and civility. The contrasting views on this topic oscillate between viewing this challenge as inevitable to meet expressed needs versus a direction to be resisted to avoid changing the character of the host setting. Those with a strong commitment to the latter view highlight the need to respect the interests of other groups of non-Asian tourists. This topic will be revisited in the final chapter of this book where it will be

linked to the pervasive tourism study topic of strategic issues in marketing and development.

## CONCLUSION

The current mobility of Asian tourists out of their own continent has been recorded in some detail in the body of this chapter. It is possible, however, to overemphasize this phenomenon since it still must be recognized that much international tourism is generated from Europe and North America. Nevertheless, due to their current experiences and their potential to travel more widely in the near future, the numbers of Asian tourists are very likely to increase in many of the world's destinations. This mobility seems assured due to the massive change and investment which has taken place across Asia in terms of rising wages, personal affluence, new airports (notably in Incheon, Shanghai, Beijing, and Bangkok), and the power of high speed trains to provide easy links to these departure points. Additionally, there are now numerous international air carriers and budget airlines which have extended the reach of Asian outbound tourists. The diaspora of Asian professionals working in out of Asia contexts, supplemented by students studying at the world's institutions of higher learning, build a contact base for many Asian tourists. The central interest of this book is with those who travel for a holiday or vacation, but it is also clear that hybrid forms of travel where business trips, visiting friends and relatives, and educational goals create diverse and variable matrices of trip purposes. It is also increasingly clear that independent travel is growing at comparable rates to group and package tour activity. One consequence of this dual expansion of modes of travel lies in recognizing that some in the new waves of Asian tourists have experience of previous destinations (Arlt, 2013). The image of senior Japanese tourists traveling in groups as the iconic representation of Asian tourists is no longer central to the contemporary tourism scene.

The chapters in this book pursue a set of themes describing how Asian tourists are perceived, treated, and evaluated in the global marketplace. To achieve these goals, they adopt a variety of approaches. Some are directed at understanding demand and the shaping of it through organizational and social pressures. From this information, several kinds of planning and strategy issues emerge. Other work seeks to see the implications for managers from the studies of tourists' onsite behavior and learning experiences. A third category of work directly considers

how managers think about and have taken initiatives to work with and plan for Asian outbound tourists. Many of the researchers contributing to this book grew up in Asian countries and have encountered some of the issues they discuss both personally and professionally. For other authors, extensive travel within the diverse parts of Asia of interest to this work has provided some preparation for reviewing the issues managers face. It is perhaps important to note that 40% of the world's population lives in Asia. That alone seems like a statistic which should motivate research investigating how the world meets those who travel outside of the Asian continent.