

Tourist Encounters with Other Tourists

Thesis submitted by

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I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for any other degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this thesis is the combination of two lightly examined areas, tourist-tourist encounters and nationality differences in tourist behaviour. The overall aim is to examine how tourists see other tourists and identify the differences in encounter preferences among tourist subgroups and further to analyse the factors influencing those differences.

This thesis began with the investigation of elements related to tourist-tourist encounters through an examination of the relevant existing literature in Chapter 1. The focus was first placed on the studies of cultural contact and nationality differences. Concepts such as individualistic and collectivistic cultures, and in-group and out-group evaluation were emphasized as well as the process of person-to-person contact. A review of studies on visitor encounter reactions was also undertaken and key theories and concepts were outlined. This review suggested that both internal and external factors might influence people's encounter reaction. A number of questions were raised concerning whether concepts in cultural contact and the findings of visitor encounter research in leisure studies could be applied to the tourism settings.

Chapter 2 was also devoted to literature review, but the focus was shifted to the methodological issues. Studies of encounter reactions in leisure studies and then tourism research in general were reviewed. The framing of questions and a visual approach to measuring the encounter reaction were considered in detail. Also, the value of employing a multi-method approach in tourism studies was emphasized. At the end of the Chapter 2, the objectives and structure of the thesis, which were developed from the literature review, were stated.

In an attempt to achieve the thesis objectives, several studies were carried out. Chapter 3 presented a study of tourist-tourist encounters as described in online travelogues by Japanese and Americans. The focus of this study was on two topics: tourist-tourist encounters and nationality differences in tourist behaviour. Analysis of 838 encounter episodes found that there were distinct differences in encounter reaction between these two nationalities. The study also identified the common themes of the encounter experience episodes and summarised typical models of responding to other tourists in the descriptive travelogues.

Chapter 4 presented a study conducted online to investigate the stereotypical ideas of Japanese and American tourists. Based on a 162-person sample, the study compared the auto and hetero image of Japanese and Americans as tourist and the preferences for seeing them. Major study findings revealed that there were differences between the own nationality image (auto image) and the image reported by other nationalities (hetero image): Japanese tended to perceive Japanese tourists rather more negatively than non-Japanese and American tended to perceive American tourists rather more positively than non-Americans.

Chapter 5 was devoted to an initial study using photographic simulation to examine encounter preferences. Seventy-nine Japanese participants responded to this web-based survey. It was found that the Japanese prefer at least a small number (and not total absence) of people and also prefer to see Caucasian-looking people at both reef and rainforest settings. This study also served as the basis for developing and conducting the larger scale study presented in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6 contained the results of two studies – research using an on-site questionnaire employing the visual simulation approach with 409 participants, the results of which were further analysed in a follow-up study using focus groups. The

results of these studies provided some valuable insights into the tourist-tourist encounter phenomenon. Importantly, it was found that Japanese and Westerners have different patterns of encounter preferences depending on the number and appearance of the other tourists: Japanese tended to prefer small or larger number of people, while Westerners were likely to prefer absence of other people; Japanese showed strong preference in seeing Caucasian-looking people rather than Asian-looking people whereas Westerners did not indicate any particular preferences regarding people's appearance. The results contradicted the existing research in sociology and leisure studies, and can be explained by a combination of tourist psychology, and differences in culture and home environment of the observing tourists.

Some insights obtained in this thesis include understanding the variation of how tourists view other tourists, and the pattern of tourist-tourist encounter preferences. The approach to the subject matter, using photographic images as visual simulations, proved a workable methodological style for this kind of work. Further investigation of tourist-tourist relationship, particularly interrelationships involving interactions were suggested, but some of the immediate value of the present work lies in endorsing the acceptability and visitor preferences for the mixing of international tourists in tourist settings.

A version of the quantitative analysis part of the study reported in Chapter 3 of this thesis has been published in the *Journal of Tourism Studies* (2001; volume 12(2): 22-31). Theme-based analysis of encounter episodes reported in Chapter 3 was published in the proceedings of the 2001 Annual Conference for the Japanese Institute of Tourism Research. Also, highlights of the results presented in Section 6.2 were published in the proceedings of the First Asian Pacific Forum for Graduate Students Research in Tourism, held in Macao in 2002.

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