

Encounter Experiences among Tourists at Attraction Sites – An Application of Social Contact Theory

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ABSTRACT

This study uses the social contact theory to understand the attitudes of tourists towards other tourists, their encounter experiences, conflicts, and coping strategies used to overcome encounter conflict, and then investigates whether differences in these areas between American/Canadian and Chinese tourists are moderated by the recreational setting (indoor/outdoor). The study results show that Chinese tourists have more positive encounters with tourists who share their national background than with American/Canadian tourists, who for their own part experience more cultural conflict with other tourists in outdoor settings than do Chinese tourists. We conclude that the recreational setting moderates the relationship between American/Canadian and Chinese tourists, their level of encounter with other tourists, the type of conflict they experience, and the coping strategy used to ameliorate conflict. With respect to the latter, study participants at outdoors destinations, particularly American/Canadian tourists, prefer using an active adaptation strategy to overcome cultural and behavioral conflict, whereas those at indoor destinations prefer using an emotional strategy.

Keywords: Contact theory; Tourist-to-Tourist encounter; Encounter-conflict; Adaptation strategy

INTRODUCTION

According to MacCannell, tourism can be viewed as a stage upon which human interactions take place. The rationale is evident that as a social phenomenon and a global business, tourism involves various types of person-to-person encounter at differing levels of cross-cultural exposure [1]. A study conducted by Dann and Phillips identifies three types of interaction at tourist sites: interaction between tourists and industry personnel, between tourists and hosts, and among tourists themselves [2]. The quality of these different social interactions contributes significantly to a tourist's travel experience and to the success of the tourism destination. Previous studies have been directed primarily towards the interaction between tourists and hosts and the conflicts they may experience [3-6] and between tourists and industry personnel [7,8]. However, few studies have attempted to provide an understanding of interactions among tourists themselves [9].

The importance of examining tourist-to-tourist interaction stems from the fact that tourism involves heterogeneity. Tourists are not a homogenous group of people; instead, they arrive from different countries and have different cultural backgrounds, preferences, traveling motives, and behaviors [10]. Yagi and Pearce suggest that tourists with different cultural backgrounds have different

encounter preferences [11]. It follows that tourists may experience aspects of culture shock and conflict in their encounters with other tourists [12]. Since people from different cultures have different norms regulating their range of acceptable behavior in a given context, conflicts might arise among tourists visiting the same sites or traveling together [13,14]. Reisinger, explains encounter-conflict among tourists from the cultural difference perspective. Some studies find that cultural diversity enhances the attractiveness of tourism sites, because tourists are viewed as part of the "scenery." According to social contact theory, the social interaction among people at these sites can reduce negative social phenomena under certain conditions.

The role of culture in moderating social interactions, either positively or negatively, is widely accepted. According to Reisinger, people belonging to a high-power-distance society (e.g., Japan) often need to know in advance the professional position of the person they are about to meet in order to determine the most appropriate way of interacting with that person. On the other hand, people from a low-power-distance society tend to think and act in the opposite way on this matter. By extension, one might conclude that tourists adapt different strategies to minimize uncomfortable feelings or conflict following an unpleasant encounter with other tourists. Most studies in the outdoor recreational field have concluded that recreationists

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adopt unique strategies to overcome conflicts with others [15,16]. The quality of a tourist's on-site experience is an important factor in repeated tourism. Insofar as a tourist's satisfaction is influenced by his or her interactions with other tourists at attraction sites, these interactions affect the quality of the on-site experience [11]. However, popular and promotional images of tourist destinations frequently omit the tourists themselves. What is more surprising is that there are limited studies of tourist-to-tourist interaction and few theories or guiding concepts in this area [11].

In the past, social contact theory is always used to explain the interaction between residents and tourists [17]. The Contact Theory suggests that interaction under proper conditions can actually reduce negative social phenomena [18]. However, the interaction should happen under proper conditions and then the interaction can reduce the negative experience. Therefore, many researches used Contact Theory to explain the reduction of negative sociocultural phenomena between residents and tourists of different culture background [17]. But the interactions will not just happen between residents and tourists. It also happens among tourists. Unfortunately, most studies have attempted to understand interactions between tourists and local people or between tourists and the environment but do not focus on interactions among tourists [9,19]. That explained the focus of this study is to examine encounter experiences among tourists of different national backgrounds (American/Canadian and Chinese) at different tourism sites (indoor/outdoor). The research goals are to understand these encounters and the conflicts that arise; to identify adaptation strategies used to ameliorate conflict; and to investigate whether differences in the level of interaction encountered (encounter level), the type of conflict experienced (behavioral versus cultural), and the adaptation strategy chosen, are moderated by the type of recreation site in which these encounters take place.

LITERATURE REVIEW

At tourism destinations, majority of contact with other tourists are cross-culture social interaction, which could be defined as the face-to-face contacts between people from different cultural backgrounds [20]. Fan, Zhang, Jenkins and Tavitiyaman claimed that contact theory has been recognized as one of best approaches to elucidate intergroup relations [21]. The suggestions from the study conducted by Wright, Aron, McLaughlinVolpe and Ropp said that if the contact between group members can be properly managed, that could lead to better interaction results [22]. That explained the reason that this study decided to use Social Contact Theory to investigate the relationship among attitudes of tourists towards other tourists, their encounter experiences, conflict and coping strategy.

Attitudes towards tourist-to-tourist encounters

Traveling abroad provides opportunities for individuals to interact with people of different cultural backgrounds. That makes tourists are surrounded by the social environment when traveling at a tourism destination [21]. However, tourists may experience certain levels of culture shock and majority of them will not adapt to those unpleasant situations because they may just stay at that destination for a short period of time. Most studies have attempted to understand interactions between tourists and local people or between tourists and the environment; they do not focus on interactions among tourists [9,19]. Yagi collects 830 articles from

120 Japanese and American online travel gurus and uses content analysis to understand direct and indirect encounters among tourists and their attitudes towards both other tourists and local industry personnel. Overall, Yagi shows that the attitudes of the Japanese and Americans differ significantly from each other [23].

Several previous studies have examined the cultural differences between the Japanese and Americans [24-27]. Significant differences have been found between how Americans and the Japanese manage passing encounters. According to Matsumoto, the Japanese, who belong to a collectivistic culture, tend not to show expressive reactions to other people [28]. In a study of pedestrian interactions in Japan and the United States, Patterson et al. found that although Japanese pedestrians glance at others only slightly less frequently than do American pedestrians, there are much larger differences between the groups with respect to smiles, nods and greetings [29]. They also showed that the 'look and smile' condition receives greater responses than the 'look-only' condition, which supports the findings of another study indicating that participants smile in response to another person's smile [30].

Yagi and Pearce find different encounter preferences between Japanese and American/Canadian study participants with respect to both appearance and the number of people encountered. The Japanese prefer mixing with American/Canadian people, at least in the rainforest setting studied, whereas Americans/Canadians do not have marked appearance-related preferences. With respect to the preferred number of people in the setting, Americans/Canadians are inclined to favor few or no other people, whereas the Japanese prefer some people and are tolerant of larger numbers. The current research, which focuses on the differences between American/Canadian and Chinese tourists, considers the possible influence of recreational setting on the above study findings, and extrapolates from this inference to propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: American/Canadian and Chinese tourists have different preferences (attitudes) towards encounter experiences with tourists of different nationalities at different recreational settings.

Encounter-conflicts

Although social contact theory suggested cross culture interaction could be an effective way to reduce prejudice between group members under certain conditions, such as equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, support of authorities as well as personal interaction [18]. Similar idea was also proposed by Nash, which is the relationship between tourists and their hosts requires certain understandings that must be agreed and acted upon if it is to be maintained [31]. The same idea could be also applying to the situation among tourists. Both Nash and Robinson (1998) have identified the possibility of cultural conflicts between groups of tourists and conclude that stereotypical views of a nationality can affect on-site interaction [32]. Conversely, Urry and De Botton argue that it is the presence of other visitors that 'makes' tourist sites; this means that the very presence of other tourists can enhance site appreciation and worthiness [33,34]. The subject of encounter-conflict has been considered in the outdoor recreational field for almost four decades, where it is used to explain the interaction among recreationists [35-37]. Cultural differences can also affect the outcomes of cross-cultural interactions in the service industry Sizoo et al. These differences may create perceptions of mistrust and an "us versus them" mentality [38]. It is suggested that similar cultural backgrounds are conducive to attractive

service interactions [39,40], whereas different cultural backgrounds promote interactions marked by feelings of strangeness, anxiety, fear and conflict, often with negative consequences [41].

Cross-cultural interactions among tourists can lead to misunderstandings or encounter-conflicts. Some researchers have focused on interpersonal conflict, whereas others have examined social value conflict [42-44]. Interpersonal conflict occurs when the presence or behavior of an individual or group interferes with the goals of another individual or group [42]. This interference or conflict might manifest as direct competition over resources Devall & Harvey or as physical incompatibilities between groups [45]. Interpersonal conflict normally occurs between different activity groups and in outdoor recreational settings rather than indoor recreation sites.

Another type of conflict is named as "social value conflict" and typically occurs between people or groups of people who have dissimilar norms/values related to an activity [46]. Social value conflict normally occurs when there is no direct contact between the parties involved [44]. For example, when someone's unintentional behavior violates the expectations of another person, a violation that occurs because the two people have different communicative norms, that violation might be perceived either favorably or unfavorably. If the encounter experience is in accordance with someone's expectations or norms, the perception is almost universally considered as a positive encounter experience.

In the outdoor recreational field, eco-tourists typically do not accept behaviors such as defloration or littering in national parks [36,44]. Also, rafters have been shown to dislike seeing motorboats at nature areas even though there is no direct encounter between them and the people driving the motorboats [47]. Anderson and Brown find that visitors sometimes have to change their habits by selecting different entry points or different sites, because other people display behavior deemed inappropriate; this includes behavior related to usage level, litter, noise, and environmental impact [48]. These are all forms of social value conflict, not interpersonal conflict. The following hypothesis addresses these different types of conflict with respect to recreational setting:

Hypothesis 2: Tourists experience different types of encounter-conflict in different recreational settings.

When people travel abroad and visit an unfamiliar destination they cannot expect to avoid interactions/encounters with tourists of different nationalities. However, even when traveling within one's home country, tourists might expect to encounter people from differing countries at popular destination sites, due to the prevalence of international travel. Studies have shown that people with different cultural backgrounds may have different social norms, values, and definitions of appropriate or acceptable behavior [49]. In the context of tourism, the presence of other tourists or behavior that is unfamiliar, such as making noise in a museum or littering in a natural park, might cause unpleasant feelings even if these intrusions do not interfere with a tourist's goals [50,51].

Pizam and Fleischer have discovered that subjects with different cultural backgrounds prefer different types of tourist activities. Subjects from individualist cultures (e.g., the U.S.A.) prefer more dynamic and active tourist activities than those coming from collectivist cultures (e.g., Japan) [52]. With different expectations and preferences, tourists might experience aspects of culture shock and conflict related to other tourists Nash, who do not

share their attitudes, beliefs, values, and preferred activities [32]. Unfortunately, most studies investigate this cultural conflict in the context of the tourist-host relationship [53,54]. The following hypothesis addresses this conflict as it pertains to the tourist-to-tourist relationship:

Hypothesis 3: Tourists with different nationality or cultural backgrounds experience different types of encounter-conflict.

Encounter-conflict coping strategies

According to the social contact theory, the intergroup contact or interaction could cause positive changes in attitude towards the members of the 'other' group when the contact occurs under favorable conditions. The favorable condition could be perceived equality in status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and support for contact [55]. In another word, the contact or interaction could cause negative change in attitude and create some conflicts if the conditions are unfavorable. So, at recreation research field, encounter conflicts occur at both outdoor and indoor recreation sites because recreationists might share same space but engage in different recreation activities. With regard to outdoor sites, previous research has found that visitor satisfaction may remain relatively high even when a park's use levels increase. Manning and Valliere formulate a possible explanation that involves strategies for coping in response to crowding or conflict at destination sites [56]. For example, recreationists may choose to visit certain destinations less often or to stop going to popular destinations altogether. Coping is a psychological concept and different recreationists have different ways of coping with encounter-conflicts. In general, however, coping is defined as any behavior that reduces stress and enables a person to manage a situation without excessive stress [57]. It can also be defined as a process used by an individual to manage a problem in his or her environment [58]. In 1999 Manning, identifies three primary coping mechanisms: displacement, rationalization and product shift. With respect to cross-cultural conflict, Amani categorizes eight types of conflict resolution: competition, neglect, emotional expression, third-party help, compromise, avoidance, obligation/accommodation, and collaboration and integration. This classification is not incompatible with the analysis of Manning, and some overlap might be found between different categories; avoidance, for example, might be seen as a form of displacement and compromise a type of rationalization.

Displacement is considered a primary behavioral coping mechanism that involves spatial or temporal changes in use patterns in response to conflict. As usage levels of certain destinations increase, visitors sometimes abandon them, thus altering their patterns of recreational activity [58]. Previous studies have found that changes in recreational activity manifest themselves in different ways. These include limits to the number of attraction sites visited, limits to the time spent at each tourism site, and alterations in the frequency of visits to a tourism site, which may affect the days the site is in operation. Any one of these changes can result in an ultimate or temporal displacement of conflict. However, displacement is not always a suitable coping strategy, especially when tourists travel overseas. The majority of overseas tourists plan their itinerary in advance and cannot easily change it. In these situations, rationalization and product shift are cognitive coping mechanisms that may alter tourists' perceptions of their recreational experiences and opportunities. Many people who rationalize an experience report high levels of satisfaction, regardless of the conflict. With these observations in mind, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4: To overcome encounter-conflicts, international tourists prefer rationalization coping strategies to displacement or product shift coping strategies.

Tourists often have different perceptions of what constitutes an acceptable encounter in crowded situations [13]. Kyle et al. and Manning, 1999 note that individual differences in encounter-conflicts and encounter norms are affected by different factors [59]. One of those factors pertains to the individual characteristics of tourists, including their travel purposes, previous traveling experience, cultural identity and nationality. Manning, 2003 has found significant differences in the encounter norms of multicultural tourists to North America [60]. Similarly, Nash and Robinson have found that tourists with different national backgrounds sometimes encounter conflict at tourist destinations due to their cultural differences. Evidently, any social interaction is invariably influenced by a variety of factors pertaining to the social rules adopted by the participants [61]. These rules are culturally determined and while the interaction among tourists might be framed by what is referred to as an encompassing “tourist culture,” it is equally determined by their respective national cultures. Concerning the eight types of cross-cultural conflict resolution proposed by Amani, Lather, Jain and Shukla have found that competition is more favored by cultures influenced by American identity, whereas members of Asian countries show an opposite pattern to Americans. In India, the most preferred style of resolving conflict is accommodation followed by avoidance. Koreans prefer using compromise and avoidance, as do the Chinese and Japanese, whereas Malaysians prefer comprise and integration. With respect to the coping strategies adopted to overcome these encounter-conflicts, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 5: American/Canadian and Chinese tourists prefer different coping strategies to overcome encounter-conflicts at different recreational settings.

Numerous studies have suggested that as usage levels of particular destination sites increase, some recreationists become dissatisfied and alter their patterns of recreational activity to avoid crowding [62-64]. In this manner, they are “displaced” by recreationists that are more tolerant of higher usage levels. Displacement does not have to involve a shift from one recreation area to another. It can also involve shifts within a recreation area or shifts from one usage period to another, also known as temporal displacement. There are more opportunities for tourists to shift from one area to another at outdoor recreation sites than at indoor sites, where shifting to other areas might pose challenges. In these sites, temporal displacement might be the preferred coping strategy. For example, the Chiang Kai-Shek memorial hall is an open-space destination that is crowded only at certain times. Tourists still can visit CKS during unpopular time periods. However, the National Palace Museum, a top tourist destination, is always full of people eager to see the spectacular exhibitions and displays. The NPM is always crowded and there are lengthy waits; therefore, displacement, including temporal displacement, is not a suitable coping strategy in this environment.

Another possible coping strategy, mentioned previously, is rationalization. Because recreational activities are voluntarily selected and sometimes involve a substantial investment of time, money, and effort, some people may choose to rationalize their experience and report a high level of satisfaction regardless of the actual conditions they encounter. Rationalization has been shown to be a common coping strategy in outdoor settings where

interpersonal conflict, as it has been noted, also tends to be higher [65,66]. Based on these observations, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 6: Differences in interactions, encounter-conflicts and adaptation strategies between American/Canadian and Chinese tourists are moderated by the type of recreational setting (indoor/outdoor).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study participants

This is a cross-sectional study that used a closed-end questionnaire to collect data at two recreational settings, indoor and outdoor. The two data-collection sites were the National Palace Museum (NPM, indoor) and National Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall (NDSYSMH, outdoor). The research team collected 611 questionnaires from the two sites (312 indoors and 299 outdoors) from September 2016 to March 2017. According to chi-square analysis, the study participants at the two sites were of significantly different ages, and had significantly different national backgrounds and educational backgrounds. According to the 2016 Survey Report on Visitors Expenditure and Trends in Taiwan conducted by the Taiwan Tourism Bureau, inbound tourists are categorized by their place of origin including continent and nationality. Among the Asian market, Chinese tourism ranks first. Among the American market, Americans and Canadians rank first. Therefore, the study collected data only from Chinese tourists and American/Canadian tourists.

Female study participants (55.8%) outnumbered male participants (44.2%). Approximately 46.1% of the participants were between 21 and 30 years old, and another 23.5% were under 21 years old. On average, study participants at NPM were older than the participants at NDSYSMH. Unsurprisingly, this study surveyed more Chinese tourists (64.9%) than American/Canadian tourists (35.1%), reflecting the preponderance of Asians among Taiwan’s inbound tourism market. Approximately 64% of both groups had a college-level educational background (Table 1). Overall, study participants had abundant foreign travel experience. Ninety percent reported travel abroad at least one to three times per year. With this level of overseas travel experience, they had many opportunities to interact with other tourists at tourism attraction sites. Moreover, most of the study participants (67%) reported a preference for independent travel as opposed to group tours, increasing their opportunities to encounter local people, but also other tourists. Forty-two percent of the respondents indicated that they have foreign relatives and regular interactions with foreigners in their daily lives.

Study instrument

This study’s questionnaire was based on previous work. However, a few modifications were required in view of the special characteristics of the tourism destination (Taiwan). The questions were translated into transitional Chinese and English. A four-page questionnaire was designed that included the participants’ frequency of encounter with other tourists, encounter experiences, conflicts, preferred adaptation strategy in encounter-conflicts, socio-economic information (e.g., gender, educational background, occupation and income level), and traveling habits.

Encounter experience: Study participants reported on the frequency of their encounters with three types of tourists at the different attraction sites. The first type were tourists of the same nationality as the study participants; the second type were tourists

Table 1: The socioeconomic backgrounds of the study participants.

	Variable	Indoor		Outdoor		Total		χ^2
		#	%	#	%	#	%	
Gender	Male	141	45.5	128	43	269	44.2	0.39
	Female	169	54.5	170	57	339	55.8	
	Total	310	100	298	608	608	100	
Age	Under 20	41	13.2	101	34.4	142	23.5	47.62***
	21~30	163	52.4	116	39.5	279	46.1	
	31~40	76	24.4	37	12.6	113	18.7	
	41~50	17	5.5	24	8.2	41	6.8	
	Over 51	14	4.5	16	5.4	30	5	
	Total	311	100	294	100	605	100	
Nationality	American/Canadian	132	42.7	81	27.3	213	35.1	32.28***
	Chinese	177	57.3	216	72.7	393	64.9	
	Total	309	100	297	100	606	100	
Education	Junior high	3	1	4	1.4	7	1.2	21.71***
	Senior high	25	8.1	60	20.7	85	14.2	
	College	207	66.8	177	61	384	64	
	Graduate	75	24.2	49	16.9	124	20.7	
	Total	310	100	290	100	600	100	
Travel abroad	0	14	4.6	52	17.7	66	11.1	56.64***
	1~3	201	66.3	214	73	415	69.6	
	4~10	87	29.1	27	9.2	115	19.3	
	Total	303	100	293	100	596	100	
Travel preference	Group	99	31.9	101	35.2	200	33.5	0.71
	Self	211	68.1	186	64.8	397	66.5	
	Total	310	100	287	100	597	100	
Foreign relatives	No	181	59.5	165	55.7	346	57.7	0.89
	Yes	123	40.5	131	44.3	254	42.3	
	Total	304	100	296	100	600	100	

***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

of a different nationality, but categorized as Chinese based on their appearance; and the third type were tourists of a different nationality categorized as American/Canadian based on their appearance. The encounter frequency was measured on a 7-point scale defined as "how often the participants had encounters/interactions with other tourists at attraction sites." The scale ranged from *Not at all* (1) to *Always* (7). The larger the number, the more often the participants had encounters with other tourists. Study participants were also asked about their attitudes towards the three types of tourists following certain encounters/interactions.

Encounter-conflicts: The encounter-conflicts experienced by the study participants support the research that people from different cultures may not have the same attitudes, beliefs, values and expectations in different encounter settings [32]. The majority of instruments used to measure conflict have been designed for use in outdoor recreation sites [16,36,44]. This study proposed ten questions on a 7-point Likert scale to evaluate the participants' responses to different encounter-conflict situations with other tourists. One question was designed as follows: "I had conflicts with other tourists because they looked strangely at my clothes." Other items along the same line of questioning included "my skills, language, and living habits." Another question was designed as follows: "Other tourists shouted loudly or engaged in improper

behavior (e.g., littering, spitting, smoking)." The scale ranged from *Not at all* (1) to *Very much* (7). The larger the number, the more serious the study participant considered the encounter-conflict.

Adaptation/coping strategy: In this study, adaptation or coping strategy is conceptually defined as the reaction used by a study participant to minimize the negative influence of encounter-conflict with other tourists. According to previous studies, there are two types of adaptation strategies: emotional and behavioral [67,68]. This study measured the emotional coping strategy of tourists with five items presented as statements, two of which were the following: "I endure uncomfortable encounters with other tourists" and "I tell myself to enjoy the experience if I cannot make the situation better." The behavioral coping strategy of the study participants was also measured by five items presented as statements, one of which was the following: "I change my travel plans to avoid an uncomfortable situation." The ten coping strategies were measured using Guttman-type scales, which required that they be ranked in some order so that the response pattern of a study participant could be captured by a single index. This means that an individual who agreed with a particular item also agreed with items of lower rank-order. According to the pilot study result, the CR value for the Guttman coping strategy instrument with ten items was 0.887. This indicates a highly reliable measurement.

RESULTS

Encounters/interactions with other tourists

This research studied the frequency of the study participants' encounters with other tourists at the same attraction sites and the quality of those encounters. Encounter frequency was defined as how often tourists experienced encounters/interactions with other tourists at attraction sites. The scale ranged from *Not at all* (1) to *Always* (7). The larger the number, the more often the participants had encounters with other tourists. According to the T test, there is a significant difference between American/Canadian and Chinese tourists at indoor and outdoor sites. Obviously, American/Canadian tourists had more encounters with other tourists of a different cultural background than did Chinese tourists. Overall, tourists had a higher chance of encountering other tourists at indoor sites than at outdoor sites Table 2.

The study hypothesis # 1 also analyzed the participants' attitudes towards encounters with three different types of tourists: (1) tourists of the same nationality; (2) Chinese tourists; and (3) American/Canadian tourists. The participants' attitudes were categorized as positive, neutral or negative. In all samples, the percentages of responses indicating a neutral attitude towards the three types of tourists were very similar at approximately 60%. The percentage of responses indicating a positive attitude towards other tourists of the same nationality was the highest at 36%, whereas the percentage indicating a positive attitude towards Chinese tourists was the lowest at 28%. Furthermore, the study used six cross tabs to examine the association between tourists with different national

backgrounds and attitudes towards three different types of tourists at different attraction sites. In Table 3, three of the six cross tab analyses showed a significant association.

For the samples at the indoor attraction site, two of three cross tab analyses showed significant results. Tourists with different national backgrounds had significantly different attitudes towards encounters with other tourists who were either of the same nationality or American/Canadian. At outdoor attractions, one of three cross-tab analyses showed a significant result. Tourists with different national backgrounds had significantly different attitudes towards encounters with tourists of the same nationality. Chinese tourists had a more positive attitude towards other tourists of the same nationality than towards American/Canadian tourists. The same result was also found at indoor attraction sites. At both attraction sites, approximately 70% of tourists had a neutral attitude towards encounters with other tourists. The cross-tab analysis of attitudes towards encounters with American/Canadian tourists showed very different results between the indoor and outdoor samples. For samples at indoor sites, Chinese tourists showed more negative attitudes towards American/Canadian tourists, and also fewer positive attitudes towards American/Canadian tourists than the latter showed towards each other. However, whether positive, negative or neutral, attitudes were very similar between Chinese and American/Canadian tourists at outdoor attraction sites.

Encounter-conflict with the level of encounter and with other tourists

The study participants rated 10 items, shown in Table 4, to express

Table 2: The frequency of encounter experiences with other tourists at attraction sites.

Encounter	Total sample			Indoor			Outdoor		
	A/C	C	T	A/C	C	T	A/C	C	T
	4.77	3.54	7.44***	4.94	3.69	6.38***	4.34	3.42	3.11**

***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

Table 3: The cross-tab analysis of encounter attitudes by tourists with different national backgrounds at two attraction sites.

Three types of tourists	Attitudes towards encounter			Cross-tab analysis result	
	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Indoor	Outdoor
Same nationality	3%	61%	36%	6.843*	9.701**
Chinese tourists	7%	64%	28%	2.967	1.316
American/Canadian tourists	7%	58%	34%	8.231*	5.559

**p<0.01, *p<0.05.

Table 4: The factor analysis of encounter-conflict at attraction sites.

I had conflict with other tourists "BECAUSE"	Cultural aspect	Behavioral aspect
Other tourists looked strangely at my clothes.	0.87	
Other tourists looked strangely at my skin color.	0.885	
Other tourists reacted strangely to my language.	0.823	
Other tourists looked strangely at my living habits.	0.867	
Other tourists touched me accidentally.	0.605	
I sensed that other tourists disliked me.	0.726	
I heard other tourists shouting loudly.		0.778
Other tourists tried to sell me things		0.733
I saw other tourists damage scenic spots.		0.868
I saw other tourists engage in improper behavior such as littering, spitting, smoking, bargaining, etc.		0.844
Reliability (α)	0.9	0.85
Eigenvalue	4.86	1.97
Percentage of explained variance	40.23	28.02

the extent to which they encountered conflict with other tourists. The participants' responses to the 10 items were combined and subjected to a principal component analysis with two factor solutions specified. The KMO value was 0.873(>0.6), the Bartlett's Chi-Square value was 3489.65, and the p value was less than .05. Two domains were identified for factor analysis: the *cultural aspect of encounter-conflict* and the *behavioral aspect of encounter conflict*. All of the factors had eigenvalues greater than one and explained 68.25% of the total variance. Moreover, the correlation between the two factors was 0.10, showing that they were relatively independent. Factor I was named the "cultural aspect of encounter-conflict." This first factor consisted of six types of encounter-conflict with other tourists caused by cultural differences between the two parties. The cultural differences pertained to clothing, skin color, language, living habits, etc. Factor II was named the "behavioral aspect of encounter conflict" and consisted of four types of encounter-conflict caused by actual behaviors. These were behaviors that might result in an uncomfortable noise/smell or involve impolite or rude behaviors to others (Table 4).

The study also examined study participants' level of encounter with other tourists on a 7-point scale. The scale ranged from *Not at all* (1) to *Always* (7). The larger the number, the more often the participants encountered other tourists. The average score for the level of encounter was approximately 4 out of 7. Next, two regression models were used to examine the extent to which the level of encounter affected the encounter experience. The F-value pertaining to cultural conflicts during an encounter was 9.071, which decreased to 1.261 in the model examining behavioral conflict. This means that the more encounters study participants had with other tourists, the higher the possibility was that they experienced cultural conflicts with these tourists.

Next, the study used the T-test to examine differences in cultural and behavioral aspects of conflict between American/Canadian and Chinese tourists at the two types of attraction sites (Table 5). American/Canadian and Chinese tourists both experienced more behavioral conflict than cultural conflict at the two attraction sites (study hypothesis #2). This means that tourists were most sensitive to behaviors they considered inappropriate, such as loud talking, smoking, touching or pushing in line, etc. Normally, the definition of good or proper behavior is determined by the standards shared by members of a social group or country, whereas personal norms are unique to individuals and reflect an individual's own expectations. In a cross-cultural situation, different people might have different expectations about what constitutes proper behavior at indoor and outdoor attraction sites.

Regarding cultural conflicts, no significant difference was exhibited between American/Canadian and Chinese tourists at indoor attraction sites; however, a significant difference was found between tourists of different cultural backgrounds at outdoor attraction sites. At these sites, American/Canadian tourists experienced more cultural conflict than did Chinese tourists. This explained the result of third study hypothesis.

Adaption/Coping strategy for encounter-conflicts

Coping strategy was measured using the Guttman scale with ten statements with which study participants could express their agreement or disagreement by using a "check or not check" mark. Again, ten coping-strategy items were arranged in a particular order according to the result of pilot tests, so that an individual who agreed with a particular item also agreed with lower-ranked items. The lower the rank order, the higher was the opportunity to use a soft or emotional coping strategy. The higher the rank order, the higher was the opportunity to use a more active or behavioral coping strategy.

According to the cross-tab result, cultural background does not have a significant impact on coping strategy preferences when a tourist encounters conflict with other tourists (study hypothesis #5). However, different attraction sites do elicit different coping strategies among all tourists ($\chi^2=119.13$, P value<0.000). If participants encounter conflict with other tourists at an indoor attraction site, they convince themselves to continue enjoying the tour even if they cannot control or ameliorate the conflict. This is one type of rationalization strategy. If the conflict occurs at an outdoor attraction site, the coping strategy is similar but not identical in all instances. While tourists tend to simply accept the unpleasant situation and convince themselves to embrace it with a pleasant attitude, a small percentage of people (17%) choose to consider the uncomfortable situation as an opportunity to enhance their self-image. These tourists are willing to accept and show respect to others in outdoor recreation sites. Overall, this study showed that international tourists prefer to use rationalization coping strategies to overcome conflict, not displacement or product-shift coping strategies (study hypothesis #4) (Table 6).

The moderating effect of recreational setting

Two-way ANOVA was used to examine study hypothesis #6. The dependent variables were the level of encounter with other tourists, cultural conflict, behavioral conflict, and adaptation strategy. The independent variable was the nationality of the study participants (Chinese or American/Canadian). The moderating variables were the types of recreational setting (indoor/outdoor). As shown in Table 7, the two-way ANOVA test reveals significant interaction between recreational setting and a tourist's national background with respect to the level of encounter with other tourists (F value=5.569, $p=0.019$) and the perception of cultural conflict (F value=10.060, $p=0.002$). Figure 1 shows that the recreational setting moderates the relationship between a tourist's national background and his or her level of encounter with other tourists. While, among Chinese participants, no significant difference was observed between levels of encounter with other tourists at indoor and outdoor recreation sites, among American/Canadian participants significant differences were found. American/Canadian study participants had a higher level of encounter with other tourists when they spent time at an indoor recreation site as opposed to outdoor recreation site.

Table 5: Conflict among tourists of different national backgrounds at different attraction sites.

	Total sample			Indoors			Outdoor		
	A/C	C	T	A/C	C	T	A/C	C	T
Cultural	2.24	2.16	0.43	1.86	2.32	-1.78	3.25	2.02	3.56***
Behavioral	4.04	4.2	-0.76	3.9	4.04	-0.5	4.4	4.33	0.18
T value	-10.35*	-16.40*		-16.65*	-20.81*		-18.75*	-18.9*	

*** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$.

Table 6: Conflict coping strategy at different attraction sites*.

Guttman Scale	Indoors		Outdoors	
	#	%	#	%
I silently endure an uncomfortable situation.	47	15.1	34	11.4
I tell myself that it is not unusual to encounter uncomfortable situations.	26	8.4	14	4.7
I tell myself to enjoy the experience if I cannot make the situation better.	82	26.4	55	18.4
I tell myself that the uncomfortable situation isn't really that bad.	25	8	27	9
I consider an uncomfortable situation as an opportunity to enhance my self-image.	52	16.7	57	19.1
I change my travel plans to avoid uncomfortable situations.	27	8.7	15	5
I reduce the number of my visits to avoid uncomfortable situations.	15	4.8	24	8
I express my feelings or anger to whoever causes an uncomfortable situation.	11	3.5	19	6.4
I complain to the manager.	17	5.5	41	13.7
I tell myself never visit the site again.	9	2.9	13	4.3
Total	311	100	299	100

*The chi-square value is 119.13.

Table 7: Two-way ANOVA test on level of encounter, encounter-conflict, and adaptation strategy as moderated by recreational setting and national background.

Recreation site	Nationality background	Level of Encounter	Encounter Conflict		Adaptation strategy
			Culture	Behavior	
Indoors	Chinese	10.39	13.8912	16.1419	4.28
	American/Canadian	13.62	11.5963	16.2857	4.09
Outdoors	Chinese	9.99	12.1307	17.3314	5.07
	American/Canadian	11.64	15.9661	18.5556	5.17
Recreation site	F value	12.409	1.823	6.311	19.487
	Sig.	0	0.178	0.012	0
Nationality background	F value	52.726	0.635	0.987	0.053
	Sig.	0	0.426	0.32	0.818
Interaction effect	F value	5.569	10.06	0.615	0.489
	Sig.	0.019	0.002	0.433	0.485

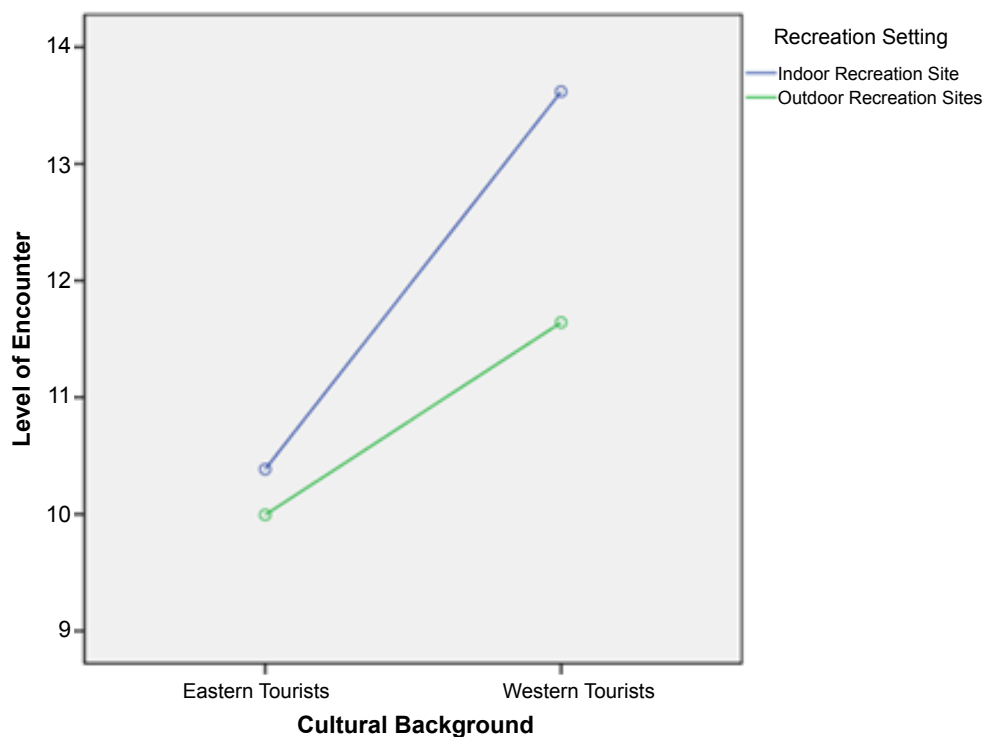


Figure 1: Interaction plot on level of encounter.

Figure 2 shows that the recreational setting also moderates the relationship between a tourist's national background and his or her level of cultural conflict. Chinese study participant's experienced higher levels of cultural conflict at indoor recreation sites than at outdoor recreation sites. However, American/Canadian study participants experienced higher levels of cultural conflict at outdoor recreation sites than at indoor recreation sites. A two-way ANOVA test reveals no significant interaction between study participants of different national backgrounds with respect to perceptions of behavioral conflict and adaptation strategy. Because of this test result, a one-way ANOVA test was used for testing the interaction of national background and recreational setting on perceptions of behavioral conflict and choice of adaptation strategy. The result is illustrated in Tables 5 and 6.

Evaluation of coping/adaptation strategies used by study participants with different national backgrounds

Coping strategies were investigated using a regression approach. Two regression models were presented because of the results of the two-way ANOVA test, which showed a moderating effect of national background on adaptation strategy. The dependent variable was the type of coping/adaptation strategy used. The higher the rank order, the higher was the opportunity to use

a more active or behavioral coping strategy. The independent variables were the level of encounter, experience of cultural conflict, behavioral conflict and recreational setting (measured as a dummy variable). The result, listed in Table 8, shows that only recreational setting significantly affected the coping strategy of the Chinese participants. If study participants encountered conflict at outdoor recreation sites, the possibility of using a more active coping strategy was higher. Among the American/Canadian study participants, three independent variables, but not level of encounter, had a significant effect on the choice of coping strategy. Based on these results, the study concludes that the choice of coping strategy is not determined by the level of encounter, either directly or indirectly, but by other variables.

DISCUSSION

The increasing number of inbound tourists in Taiwan causes crowding at tourism sites and conflict among tourists. The number and diversity of these tourists to Taiwan's tourist sites has raised concern about the potential effects on the quality of travel experiences in Taiwan. To address this concern, this study focused on two tourist sites in Taiwan: the National Palace Museum (NPM), the major tourist destination of Taipei, which receives more than ten million tourists a year and typically involves high

Table 8. Regression result on coping strategy.

	Chinese*			American/Canadian**		
	β	t	Sig.	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	4.133	8.39	0	2.129	3.563	0
Encounter	-0.034	-0.968	0.334	0.036	0.956	0.34
Cultural conflict	0.02	1.467	0.143	0.038	2.699	0.007
Behavioral conflict	0.015	0.801	0.424	0.064	3.136	0.002
Recreational setting	0.838	2.899	0.004	0.817	2.579	0.01

*The R-square is 0.042 and model's F-value is 3.45.

**The R-square is 0.131 and model's F-value is 10.19.

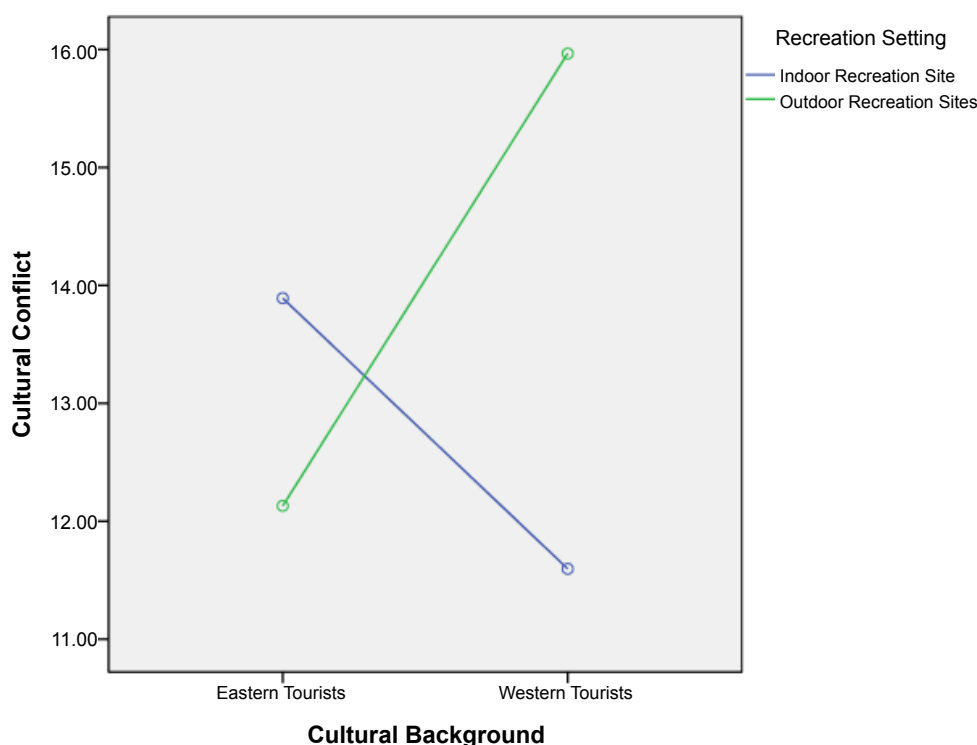


Figure 2: Interaction plot on cultural aspect conflict.

levels of expenditure, time and effort for tourists to arrange; and the National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall (NDSYSMH), an outdoor tourist destination.

The study explored the tourist-to-tourist encounter phenomenon. This area of inquiry has received little attention in the past, despite the fact that an understanding of these interactions has possible implications for practical management. The overall aim of the study was to examine how tourists view other tourists, the types of conflict they experience, and the coping strategies they use to avoid dissatisfaction. The study had a further aim of analyzing the moderating effect of national background and recreational setting on the encounter experience of tourists. This section discusses the study's major findings, the academic value of these findings, and their practical implications.

Encounter/interaction with other tourists

The study found that both Chinese and American/Canadian tourists prefer to encounter tourists of their own nationality at outdoor attraction sites, and that Chinese tourists express a negative reaction towards American/Canadian tourists at indoor sites. This result could be explained by the stereotypical ideas associated with tourists. For example, previous studies have shown that Japanese tourists tend to isolate themselves, rather than mingle with other nationalities. Others studies have reported that many of their survey participants made negative comments towards either Japanese or American tourists. However, most studies have shown that encounters with other tourists are perceived as neutral to mildly pleasant experiences that are especially appreciated because of the opportunity to receive travel information. An exception to this overall positivity was Japanese respondents' relatively negative opinions of their own image as tourists.

The interaction between individuals of different national backgrounds can also be analyzed from a service encounter perspective [69]. Tourism as a service involves the interaction of tourists from various national backgrounds and with local residents. This intermingling can lead to service encounter failures and dissatisfaction with overseas travel. Thyne and Lawson suggested that failed encounter experiences might be explained by social distance theory [70]. Social distance is an expression of sympathetic understanding and management of individual differences [71]. In this study, the results of the two-way ANOVA show that American/Canadian tourists had a higher level of encounter with other tourists at indoor recreation sites than at outdoor sites. For Chinese tourists, the level of encounter with other tourists was quite low and similar for both attraction sites.

Encounter-conflict with other tourists

This study also found that the higher the level of encounter, the more cultural conflict (as opposed to behavioral conflict) tourists experienced. Both American/Canadian and Chinese tourists experienced more behavioral conflict than cultural conflict at the two attraction sites. Yagi's study confirms that tourists who have more time to be exposed to other tourists, including those from different countries, find their encounters more enjoyable, and that encountering a large number of other tourists with whom they have little contact, either direct or indirect, is perceived as negative. In other words, crowding is an issue in the tourism industry. In Taiwan, it is very normal to see crowds of tourists from different countries at the same popular tourist destination. Crowding is often considered intrinsically negative, linked to the violation of

a social norm.

This study found that at outdoor attraction sites, American/Canadian tourists experienced more cultural conflict than did Chinese tourists. This finding is very similar to the result for outdoor recreation areas in previous research. In outdoor recreation areas, conflict occurs between different activity groups, such as non-motorized and motorized watercraft or skiers and snowboarders. These recreationists share a leisure environment for their different activities, which can lead to interpersonal or social value conflict [72]. Crowding is a less serious issue in the context of outdoor recreation, which might explain why there is less behavioral conflict than cultural conflict at outdoor sites. In this study, the Chinese study participants experienced a higher level of cultural conflict at indoor recreation sites than at outdoor sites, whereas American/Canadian tourists experienced a higher level of cultural conflict at outdoor recreation sites than at indoor sites.

Coping strategy towards the encounter-conflict

This study found that at higher levels of encounter-conflict, study participants (especially American/Canadian) were more likely to use active or behavioral coping methods. This supports the finding of Miller and Mccool, who argue that respondents with lower levels of stress are more likely to engage in certain cognitive adjustments to cope with unpleasant situations. Respondents reporting higher levels of stress are more likely to engage in either direct action aimed at changing environmental conditions or displacement from the recreational setting [73].

The study also found that international tourists prefer to use rationalization strategies to overcome their encounter-conflicts, rather than displacement or product-shift strategies. They simply accept an unpleasant situation and convince themselves to embrace the situation with a pleasant attitude. This result reinforces the findings of previous research. Heberlein and Shelby's study finds that a Colorado River boater who has selected a specific trip and invested time and money into that recreational experience might weigh these issues against any perceived dissatisfaction and rationalize a satisfactory experience. Other coping strategies such as spatial displacement or product shift are common in outdoor recreational activities; those strategies include changing destinations or substituting another type of outdoor recreational activity. These strategies might be explained by the high cost in time and money of traveling abroad and the fixed nature of the travel itinerary, which is arranged with other tourists. Under these circumstances, tourists might not be able to use spatial movement to cope with the encounter-conflict. Previous studies have documented that the product shift coping strategy is rarely used due to the inherent difficulty of measuring such a cognitive change. Rationalization is used when recreationists have invested highly in their self-selected outdoor recreational activity [65,66]. Since traveling abroad involves a high expenditure of time and money and the travel itinerary is fixed and arranged with other tourists, those who travel abroad might not be able to use spatial movement to counteract encounter-conflict. Adopting other strategies to decrease the negative feelings caused by encounter-conflict may be more effective.

Another explanation of the coping strategy chosen is the degree to which the conflict causes stress. Research has shown that higher stress levels are more strongly related to absolute displacement behavior, whereas lower stress levels provide an occasion for cognitive adjustment [73]. Moderate stress levels are more closely

associated with substitution behaviors. For the purposes of this study, these findings suggest that the study participants may have encountered more conflict than reported; however, the conflict was tolerated rather than seen as serious cause for action.

This research investigated tourist-to-tourist encounters at different recreation sites, the conflicts that occur at these sites, and the extent to which the culture or national background of the participants affects the encounter experience. The findings show that both the encounter level of tourists (i.e., frequency of encounter) and the type of conflict they experience (behavioral or cultural) is moderated by national background and recreational setting (indoor/outdoor). In addition, when traveling abroad, tourists tend to use rationalization as a coping strategy to ameliorate conflict. These findings will benefit the literature on encounter-conflict and coping strategies in international tourism studies.

Implications for tourism management are the following: managers of tourist attractions and destinations must seriously consider how to manage tourist density and tourist mix to ensure visitor satisfaction, especially at indoor attraction sites. As international tourism becomes increasingly popular in Taiwan, managers of tourist attractions, hotels, and transportation systems must be aware of the different types of conflict tourists may encounter and the adaptation strategies commonly used among tourists in different settings, since these can affect visitor satisfaction.

In order to improve tourist satisfaction, destination planners should not only communicate to tourists the need to behave properly, but also strive to maintain a compatible tourist mix for the given destination. Tourist compatibility appears to be positively related to cultural homogeneity, which includes similar preferences, sought benefits, attitudes, past experiences and physical characteristics. Destination planners should also specify the expected code of behavior before finalizing the vacation. This can be determined by contact with the tourism destination management office. For example, policies regulating smoking, dress, and other tourist behaviors may go a considerable distance to ameliorate or eliminate dissatisfaction [74]. The staff working at tourism sites should be trained to provide a “warm up” act to get the tourist ready and in the right frame of mind as a tourist [75]. Providers should educate customers as to the behavior expected of them and the kinds of behavior not allowed when visiting their service landscapes [76,77]. In sum, if marketing and operations managers combine their energies in an effort to implement these tactics to leverage tourist compatibility, encounters with other tourists may increase a tourist’s travel satisfaction, rather than decrease it through conflict [78-81].

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, tourist-to-tourist encounters appear to be an important part of the travel experience for many tourists insofar as they influence travel-satisfaction levels. In time, the development of research on this type of encounter in the tourist industry might benefit the management of tourist businesses and sites as they grapple with issues of tourist crowding and the need to meet the expectations of multinational markets. In particular, providing opportunities for tourist interaction as well as tourist independence might prove a valuable strategy for managing conflict. Another management strategy that may reduce the worst effects of tourist-to-tourist conflict includes establishing better queue management to overcome the perception of crowding at destination sites and to promote better access to resources. In addition, more site-specific

analyses of tourists’ reactions to other tourists of their own and other nationalities might provide a basis for management decisions regarding mixing and separating tourist markets.

LIMITATIONS

There are two limitations to interpreting and generalizing this study’s findings. First, because of its research budget, the study collected data only in Taipei, not in Taiwan as a whole. Although Taipei is the destination site of the majority of Chinese tourists to Taiwan, future research might consider collecting data from other well-known tourist attractions such as Sun Moon Lake or Kenting National Park. Those destinations are popular and always crowded. The second research limitation is the use of random sampling for data collection. Random sampling was chosen because of the survey’s languages: English and Chinese. Tourists who did not understand English or Chinese were excluded from this study even though they may have expressed a desire to participate. These study limitations do not negate the cumulative effort of the research undertaken, but instead represent an acknowledgement of the directions in which this work could be improved.

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