Study of Cultural differences of tourist behavior: German, Chinese and Indian

This paper will study on tourist’s behavior base on their culture. The author proposes to study the influence of cultural characteristic on Thailand inbound international tourist behavior in order to understand the cultural differences among international visitors and culture value by focusing on three different countries, include with German, China and India which all countries have a significantly different on cultural, traditional, figure, language etc.

Problem Statement
The differences in cultural backgrounds of inbound tourists affect the behavior of consumption decisions, selecting products and services. Due to the different needs from the tourists, Germans, Chinese and Indians, it would be challenging for tourism professionals to fulfill the needs of customers from such different and diverse backgrounds. Tourists have their reasons and mind set of choosing services which is based on their culture and environment.

Therefore, in order to respond and provide the right service not only to meet the customer’s needs but to delight, it is very important to have cultural knowledge of the target markets. Tourism professionals must know and understand the major value orientations of their customers, and be aware of, and sensitive to, cultural differences between international tourist markets as well as respect the influence of national cultures on human behaviors.

1. Culture
When speaking about culture, different views upon the notion might exist. In general, culture helps people to develop an identity (Harris et al., 1991). By giving sense to their actions, culture enables the people to find a group or other individuals who have the same values and beliefs. The inhabitants share a system of meaning which enables them to perceive and judge in the same way about a certain action.

The researcher will only focus on national culture since the aim is to identify the cultural differences among the studied countries. When analyzing the different national cultural
concepts, Hofstede stresses that national culture is often not a matter of a passport and the distinction can be rather complicated due to different ethical, regional and linguistic groups (Hofstede, 1997). The researcher agrees that it is hard to identify the typical stereotype of a culture. However, we will use the term “national cultural differences” although we are aware that more distinctions within that culture could be made (Becker & Hengstmann, 2006).

1.1 Culture definition:

Hundred of definitions of culture have been developed under the different conditions under which different scholars have worked. These scholars have all different views about what constitutes the concept and meaning of culture. (Reisinger, 2009).

Damen, L. (1987) who study about Culture Learning: The Fifth Dimension on the Language Classroom defined that Culture is to learn and share human patterns or models for living; day- to-day living patterns. These patterns and models pervade all aspects of human social interaction. Meanwhile, Lederach, J.P. (1995) who studies on Conflict transformation across cultures said that Culture is the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them.

Refer to Linton, R. (1945) from research about The Cultural Background of Personality define that Culture is a configuration of learned behaviors and results of behavior whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society, as well as, Parson, T. (1949) who write the essay in Sociological Theory give the definitions of culture as the consists in those patterns relative to behavior and the products of human action which may be inherited, that is, passed on from generation to generation independently of the biological genes.

These different definitions reflect different theoretical bases for understanding the concept of culture and criteria for evaluating human activity. This is also shows the difficulties to set one
central definition. As a result, the researcher found more detailed explanations of culture from the book called “International Tourism Culture and Behavior” which explain “Culture” from a narrower perspective points to different aspects of the concept and reflects its essential feature. Accordingly culture refers to:

1) **Human Environment:** culture has been created by humans, it is a part of a human-made environment that holds human group together.

2) **Way of life:** culture is a way of life of group of people or an entire society; it shows how to live and what standards and criteria to use to decide what to do in life and how to do things.

3) **Behavior:** Culture influence human behavior and shows how people should behave. It determines the patterns of behavior associated with particular group of people, and the conditions and circumstances under which various behaviors occur. Culture also helps to interpret, understand, and predict others’ behavior. People’s behavior depends upon the culture in which they have been raised. Culture is the foundation of human behavior.

4) **Dress and appearance:** Culture dictates how people should dress . It determines what clothing people wear for a business or casual meeting, as well as at home. To be socially accepted people dress appropriately for the occasion. Cultural customs and traditions determine the dress code and color, the length of hair, the jewelry to be worn, and the amount of makeup to be used. Some cultures accept jeans worn by youth and the elders (e.g. in the United States), others favor traditional dress, (e.g. Japanese kimono or the sarong in Southeast Asia). Cultures determine a sense of aesthetics.

5) **Food and eating habits:** Culture determines how food is prepared, cooked, presented, and consumed. For example, in some cultures people eat beef (e.g. in the United States), while in others beef is forbidden (e.g. India). In some cultures people use folks and knifes to eat (e.g. Europeans), while in others, people use chopsticks (e.g. Chinese), or their hands (e.g. Indians). Culture determines table manners. For
example, one can distinguish between Europeans and Americans by observing how they hold folks and knives at the dinner table.

6) **Values and norms**: Culture dictates the priorities people should attach the certain values; it indicates what should be the most important and least important values. In some cultures individuals are concerned with work, personal achievements, and material things (e.g. the United States), whereas in others culture people are expected to share, obey, and be concerned about others (e.g. Asia). Culture helps to reaffirm values, cope with difficulties, and find solutions to problems. Culture includes systems of values, and values create culture.

7) **Way of thinking and doing things**: Culture is the socially acquired way of thinking, feeling, and doing things. Culture is the means through which human being communicate their thoughts and values and fulfill their need.

8) **Work and leisure habits**: Culture determines attitude towards work, work habits and practices, accomplishments, assessments, promotions, incentives, responsibilities, work ethic, worthiness of activity, royalty to employer, commitment to quality of work and service, and ways of making decisions. In some cultures people “live to work” (e.g. the United States), in others, people “work to live” (e.g. Australia, France). Culture also determines attitudes towards leisure, travel habits, frequency and seasonality of travel, preferred modes of travel and accommodation, source of information used, spending patterns, length of stay, and destination selection.

2. **Hofstede’s Dimension**

Geert Hofstede(1980) conducted the most comprehensive study of how values are influenced by culture. He analyzed a large database of employees’ values scores collected by IBM between 1967 and 1973 and covering more than 70 countries.
1. German, China and India evaluation by Hofstede’s Five Value Dimensions

![Graph comparing Hofstede dimensions between Germany, China, and India]

**Figure 1: Hofstede dimensions compared between Germany, China and India**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Power distance</th>
<th>Uncertainty avoidance</th>
<th>Individualism</th>
<th>Masculinity</th>
<th>Long-term oriented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>35/100</td>
<td>65/100</td>
<td>67/100</td>
<td>66/100</td>
<td>31/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>80/100</td>
<td>30/100</td>
<td>20/100</td>
<td>66/100</td>
<td>118/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>77/100</td>
<td>40/100</td>
<td>48/100</td>
<td>56/100</td>
<td>61/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1:** Evaluation of three sample countries on Hofstede’s Five Value Dimensions.

Geert Hofstede analysis for China has Long-term Orientation (LTO) the highest-ranking factor (118), which is true for all Asian cultures. This Dimension indicates a society's time perspective and an attitude of persevering; that is, overcoming obstacles with time, if not with will and strength.

The Chinese rank lower than any other country in the Individualism (IDV) ranking, at 20 compared to German (67) and Indian (48). This may be attributed, in part, to the high level of emphasis on a Collectivist society by the Communist rule, as compared to one of
Individualism. The low Individualism ranking is manifest in a close and committed member 'group', be that a family, extended family, or extended relationships. Loyalty in a collectivist culture is paramount. The society fosters strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group.

Of note is China's significantly higher Power Distance ranking of 80 as well as, India has Power Distance (PDI) with a ranking of 77 compared to German got only 35. This is indicative of a high level of inequality of power and wealth within the society. This condition is not necessarily forced upon the population, but rather accepted by the society as their cultural heritage.

German, Chinese and India have high score on Masculinity at 66, 66, and 56. It indicates that there are huge gap between values of men and women. It also generate a more competitive and assertive female population as well.

China's lowest ranking Dimension is Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) at 30, compared to Germany (65) and India (40). On the lower end of this ranking, the culture may be more open to unstructured ideas and situations. The population may have fewer rules and regulations with which to attempt control of every unknown and unexpected event or situation, as is the case in high Uncertainty Avoidance countries which is German in this case.

The Research Method
This study will make use of the descriptive correlation method and empirical data collection of research as it was aimed in the evaluation of the tourist behaviors by study on culture differences. Data collection will consist of gathering document form booking requested of German, Indian and Chinese. The research will incorporate interview with tour operators, Hotel provider and Shop keepers to identify areas of concern and beliefs or attitudes regarding the efficacy of the difference of each group of nationalities. Data generated from these research efforts will be compared to the studies of Hofstede’s Dimensions that have been researched about culture differences, the results of which are presented in the literature.
1. **Primary Data**

Primary data would be collect in order to support the secondary data and make the research more reliability. The objective of collection primary data is to identify culture different affected German, Indian and Chinese traveler behaviors. Interviews and questionnaires would be use as a tool to collect primary data.

2. **Secondary data**

The secondary data will use as a tool to gather information related articles on the tourists’ behavior, study of culture differences in tourists will be used as our secondary data. Main resources are gathering from Hofstede’s website as well as journals, articles and research in Emerald and Science Direct database. Collecting the secondary data is easy and quick as well as can save cost.

**Research finding and Analysis**

The researcher have been collected secondary data from various sources of documents and found that the difference behavior among international tourist is attributable to cultural influences. There are some studies which has been identifies cultural differences in tourist behavior and suggested that national cultures of tourists influence their behaviors, selection of tourism destinations, products and services, and decision – making.

For the result of collecting data, we can characterize and identify differences among tourists from different culture group as following details.

1. **Personal characteristic**

   1.1 Gender roles: In some culture, the traditional values indicate the need for women to stay at home and take care of children. In these cultures woman depend on men as
bread-winners: A woman’s responsibility is to take of a family and home; as a result, woman are more constrained in their travel than men (Jackson & Henderson, 1995).

1.2 Lifestyle and activities: In the feminine cultures, people feel more connected to their homes and places of residency than in masculine cultures. Members of feminine cultures like to travel around home and spend less money on accommodations, whereas members of the masculine cultures like to travel more distance destinations, stay in hotels, and spend more on accommodations. Travel as part of a group and use packaged tour because it is an easy and quick way to arrange travel (Kim & Prideaux, 1998). Europeans prefer longer holidays. German tourists use resorts that include facilities such as beaches, golf, and tennis. Mainland Chinese visitors travel in groups more. Mainland Chinese visitors also engage in shorter trips (approximately four nights). In addition, the Mainland Chinese visitors spend less on vacations. Tourists from low UAI cultures, such as Germany, differ in information-search patterns, trip-planning time horizons, travel-party characteristics, and trip characteristics (Money & Crotts, 2003).

1.3 Personality: For Indian and China, where people depend on one another, their behavior depends on the social context. A person is a part of social networks and behavior depends on that person and is determine by that person’s personality.

2. Psychological characteristic

2.1 Motivations and needs

Those from masculine cultures are usually more motivated by material success, position and social status, exotic vacations, and luxury resorts. Those from individualistic cultures are motivated by hedonism, convenience, the pursuit of pleasure, thrill, enjoyment, stimulation, having fun, and self-satisfaction. Those from collective cultures are motivated by socializing and group activities, in particular, nature-based activities. Those from high-power-distance cultures are motivated by social status and image. Those from feminine cultures are motivated by family vacation and time spent with friends.
2.2 Perception and image

National culture influences local residents’ perceptions of international tourists (Pizam & Sussmann, 1995). For example, Chinese and Indian are perceived as traveling in groups, taking short holidays to avoid preparation from the family, and expecting facilities and services for larger groups. For the guest treatment, according to the Chinese, hosts should escort their guests everywhere and provide them with a very tight itinerary; this, they believe, in courteous and high-quality service. Western tourists perceive such hospitality as uncomfortable, intrusive, or lacking of trust. Germans are perceived as the most interested in people, novelty, desire to be near nature and to visit national parks and national monuments. They plan their trips rapidly and meticulously and prefer long trips. Chinese are the least active and reserved in new social situations and also buy more souvenirs than German to commemorate their visit to a particular destination and fulfill social obligations by letting the loved ones left at home know they have not been forgotten. In addition, Chinese and Indians travel in groups and bargain more than Germans. Indians are the least interested in people and the least adventurous in food. They are skeptical and distrustful. Chinese are the most adventurous in food preferences.

2.3 Attitude

People’s attitudes are influenced by their cultural values. Attitudes have affective. In western cultures, attitudes help to gain knowledge, organize one’s environment and provide frame of reference. “Proper” attitudes help people to achieve success, maximize rewards, enhance life enjoyment, and minimize the costs and hardships. In collectivistic cultures, where situational factors influence behavior, attitudes help to fulfill social-identity functions and obligations. People are more constrained by situations in their behavior, more under pressure to behave in a socially accepted manner and take into account attitudes of others. In individualistic cultures, people are less constrained by social situations and are under less social pressure when developing attitudes. They take into account personal attitudes when making decisions (DeMooij, 2004).
Germany sees their success in the processions of material goods. Those from higher-uncertainty-avoidance cultures define their success and happiness more in terms of stability and social security than material processions. Those from feminine cultures emphasize more than quality of life (e.g. family gatherings, spending time with family) (DeMooij, 2004).

Culturally different people have different attitudes toward nationals of specific countries. Germany is regarded as a country of precision and rules, and Germans are perceived as detailed, reliable, and disciplined.

3. National culture influences tourist’s decision process

3.1 Need recognition

People across cultures may do or buy the same things or travel to the same destination for different reasons. The Mainland Chinese and the Germans travel to Thailand for different reasons such as Mainland Chinese visit Thailand more for business/meeting purposes; German visitors come for vacation/leisure purposes.

People in Confucian collectivistic cultures must meet social expectations of others in order to preserve their face and the face of others. They may lose face if their behavior does not meet the minimal socially acceptable standard.

Also, collectivistic consumers make purchases to become similar with members of their in-groups, while individualistic consumers make purchases to differentiate themselves from others. While Western individuals make purchases to satisfy personal needs and emphasize their own personality and distinctiveness, the collectivists follow the principles of modesty, self-effacement, and moderation: They do not want to stand out in the group. Chinese consumers are usually not demanding and tend to have few desires. Due to the importance of thrift, their awareness of their needs is restrained and the needs themselves are limited. Chinese consumers are more often in actual state of buying rather than desire state of buying, which is in contrast to the individualistic consumers who are often in desire state of buying.
3.2 Information search and choice of information sources

In high-power-distance cultures and uncertainty-avoidance-cultures, most consumers seek information from personal sources. Business travelers from highly collectivistic China rely heavily on tour companies, corporate travel offices, travel guides, and advice from friends and relatives. Business travelers from individualistic German prefer obtaining their information directly from the airlines and state/city travel offices. Chinese and Indians rely on word-of-mouth advice from family and friends. German consumers from low-context cultures prefer commercials with high levels of information. Individualistic consumers can be attracted to advertisements that emphasize individualistic benefits and are persuasive, whereas collectivistic consumers, such as the Chinese, can be attracted to advertisement that focus on family or in-group benefits. Because of the value of family and group orientation, Chinese consumers heavily rely on word-of-mouth (WOM) communication. Chinese also rely more on past experiences of one’s own and others than German.

In collectivistic cultures, they receive information from internal sources, such as social networks, family.

In collectivistic and high-context cultures, individuals actively gather information and make decisions. The context of making decision is more important than verbal massages to convince the customer to buy.

In individualistic and low-uncertainty cultures, adaption of new ideas and products, and traveling to new places and meeting new people happens faster than in collectivistic and high-uncertainty cultures. Criteria and product evaluation

In general, it was found that tourist from individualistic cultures demand and more efficient, prompt, and error-free service than those from collectivistic cultures, where orientation toward people and sincerity shown by service employee is the most important concern.

3.3 Purchase decision

In collectivistic societies people control their emotions and often suppress expressions of negative feelings, displeasure or dissatisfaction because it would
negatively reflect on their in-group. They always try to express politeness. Expression of anger and frustration is more easily tolerated in individualistic than in collectivistic cultures. In low-uncertainty-avoidance cultures people have less control over the expressions of emotions, whereas in high-uncertainty-avoidance cultures people display emotions and often show embarrassment and guilt.

**German tourist**

After interview shop keeper in Koh Samui who has experience selling goods for tourist more than 20 years, he said that German people as well as refer to European people they love reading as we can see wherever they go, they must has a book with them. It indicates that when they want to do something including with traveling they must find the information by searching and read all of information about the place that they want to visit. They will do by themselves and if they make a reservation by the agency they require as much information and documents. This is because German has quite high Uncertainty avoidance than the other two countries. They need to know all information before they visit that place.

Regarding with Individualism, German people usually come with a couple for honey moon or leisure. They like private, quiet place and natural. Activities that they like such as sign seeing the old places which has long history such as temples, palace, Buddha for example. They perceive that the old place which has long and importance history are valuable and must visit and keeps picture.

With the low Power Distance, German will openly to try new things, new food, and easy to adapt themselves to new circumstance. After interview hotelor who used to service to German tourist they said that German tourist, most of them are very friendly and easy going. Masculinity, for German some of tourist especially young adult they prefer adventure travel such as rafting, trekking and so on. Relationship is not so important for German people. They
prefer people to talk directly and they can accept the refuse if provider give the reason why cannot provide service or did some mistake.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

To increase the understanding of differences of tourist from Germany, China and Indian by study the culture difference. Finding and analyzing of secondary data and well-known theory which used to analyze the differed of each country were studied and presented. Hofstede’s 5 dimension theory was the main used include with Power Distance Index (PDI), Individualism (IDV), Masculinity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), and Long-Term Orientation (LTO).

The knowledge gained from the theoretical framework contributed to fulfilling the research objective, and the scope of this study. Concepts of tourist culture differences were reoccurring through the entire analysis.

Hofstede’s theory of cultural differentiation can be of great use when analyzing a country’s culture. However, there are a few things have to keep in mind. First, the dimensions have been chosen for comparing countries, and the measuring instrument was meant for use at country or geographical level only. The dimensions cannot be used for comparing the values of individuals. Thus, the identified dimensions should be used only as a guide to understanding the difference in cultures between countries, not a law set in stone.

It is found that cultural differences between China and India have become significantly less obvious, as their people as a new generation are now seen as more ‘global’ and westernized. For instance, Masculinity dimension could not be used to analyze the culture difference for Chinese and Indian tourist, as they are travelers who spend less and short period of stay as well as not too long distance travel if compare with German tourist.
However, there are still cultural differences that should be considered when marketing. Hofstedes’ Five Dimensions theory is vary used to analyze the study of culture difference as the researcher found in literature review part. The theory is used in order to understand the big picture of culture differences as well as to avoid culture tensions and frustration and successful to deal with international tourists.

**Recommendation**

To be a successful for international tourist industry, marketers and managers have to learn and understand tourist culture difference. In this research indicates the basic understanding of the culture differences of tourists from Germany, China and India and show that the difference needs among them are from the national culture.

In order to gain more understanding for all employees who have to deal directly with customers, as a manager they should have the cross culture training for the employees by using the Hofstede’s theory. Basic understanding for German, Chinese and Indian tourist can help to avoid the culture shock and dissatisfy between host and tourist by adapt and/or adjust the product offering to customers.

However, because of using Hofstede’s theory can give the general idea about culture difference. To understand and find more deeper information for tourist behaviors, the researcher recommend to research more about culture by religion, subculture, type of culture in tourism or even the factor that effect customer to choose Thailand as a destination for example. This can help to support the deeper understanding on difference of tourist behaviors and their needs.
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