Relationship between Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions and Tourism Product Satisfaction

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Abstract—This paper aims to explore the satisfaction levels of tourism product components on the island of Samui by studying the cultural dimension relationships of Hofsted's classic theory. Both the six Hofsted cultural dimensions and tourism production satisfaction measures have been of interest worldwide. Therefore, the challenge of this study is to re-confirm previous research results in the ever-changing current contexts of the modern globalized business era. Self-rated questionnaires were employed to collect data from six nationalities of tourists in Samui, totaling 386 samples. The reliability of this research methodology was 0.967. Correlation was applied to analyze the relationships. The results indicate that Masculinity is significantly related to tourism destination satisfaction for every factor, while the other five cultural dimensions are related to some factors of tourism satisfaction. Surprisingly, tourist satisfaction toward the bar/restaurant factor is significantly correlated with all six cultural dimensions.

Keywords—Cultural dimensions, tourism products, Samui, Thailand.

I. INTRODUCTION

HOFSTEDE'S theory on cultural dimensions has been applied worldwide in various fields, in both academia and industry, for many years. Hofstede conducted groundbreaking research focusing on the culture of 14,000 IBM employees worldwide. He originally concluded that there were four dimensions of culture. These are Power Distance, Masculinity/Femininity, Individualism/Collectivism, and Uncertainty Avoidance [5]. Hofstede's main hypothesis was that culture impacts human attitudes and behaviors. This assumption has been studied and tested on a wide range of phenomenon. Human resource management has also applied Hofsted's theory to explain behaviors and attitudes of employees and employers. The theory has also been used to examine how cultural dimensions influence customer behaviors in the business discipline of marketing in every industry, including the tourism industry.

Studying the impact of cultural dimensions on the tourism industry has been prevalent. There have been studies on tourist behavior [2], [3], [8], [12], Tourist satisfaction [9], evaluating tourism services [6] and tourist perception [12]. However, cross-cultural studies on tourism destination satisfaction has been less prevalent [10]. There is a comparative study of destination tourism satisfaction focusing on eight factors, but

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there were only two nationalities (British and German) and it contained no testing with consideration of Hofsted's cultural dimensions [9]. Therefore, in this globalized era where culture has become more closely intertwined, it is currently unknown if cultural dimensions are still related to tourism destination satisfaction.

Samui Island is a famous tourism destination in Suratthani province, located in the Southern part of Thailand. Tourism generates a great deal of income for Samui and tourists of various nationalities visit every year. Furthermore, tourism destination satisfaction is very important for tourists in taking travel decisions, revisiting, and making recommendations. This paper also aims to investigate the satisfaction level of tourists visiting Samui Island in order to propose solutions to further improve tourism service, and therefore tourist satisfaction levels, on Samui Island.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To study the satisfaction levels of tourists towards tourism products components in Samui Island.
2. To investigate relationships between Hofstede's cultural dimensions and tourist satisfaction with tourism product components.

III. LITERATURE REVIEWS

A. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

In Hofstede's primary research, there were four cultural dimensions consisting of Power Distance (PDI), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), Individualism-Collectivism (IDV) and Masculinity-Femininity (MAS). Long Term Orientation versus Short Term Normative Orientation (LTO) and Indulgence versus Restraint (IND) were added later through subsequent research. PDI is the interaction and relationship level in a hierarchical society. PDI scores reflect the degree of the equal distribution of power of people in different positions. A high PDI score indicates that the society has an unequal distribution of power in different social hierarchic strata, as is found in Asia. Hofstede found that people in Western countries tend to have lower levels of hierarchy in their societies when compared to those of people in Eastern countries [5]. Uncertainty, Avoidance measures peoples' feelings on perceived threats and risks created by an ambiguous situation (UAI). The degree to which each person is attached to family, relatives, friends and/or groups is how individualism and collectivism is defined and measured (IDV). Western people score more individualistic and Eastern people more collectivist. Tourists who score at a high level on

the IDV index tend to be individualistic, i.e. not strongly attached to their society or to a group. Lastly, the dimension of Masculinity and Femininity (MAS) is considered in this context as being equivalent to gender (male and female) power dynamics in that society. In the case of people from Western societies, they are likely to have more equal gender rights. Contrary to this, Eastern people give more power to males than females. In countries with a high level of MAS, people will focus on competition, achievement and success, while with low MAS, people will be concerned with quality of life.

Long Term Orientation (LTO) and Indulgence versus Restraint (IND) are the two additional dimensions mentioned above [4]. High scoring LTO focus more on the future and therefore they try to achieve their goals through perseverance, tolerance and hard work. Low scores in LTO indicate a greater focus on the past and the present. They rely on themselves rather than a group or society, respect tradition, prefer short term feedback cycles, and value reciprocation of greetings, favors and gifts. Lastly, Indulgence versus Restraint (IND) is the newest dimension and as a consequence there are fewer papers on this dimension. IND is interpreted as the degree to which people try to control their desires and impulses. High IND scores indicate an indulgent country, whereas low scores indicate cultures that value restraint [14].

Although there have been many criticisms in applying Hofsted's theory, the validity of its use was reconfirmed in recent research [16]. Additionally, it is less concerning in two current dimensions: Long term orientation and Indulgence with tourism product satisfaction.

B. Tourism Product Components

Tourism product components have been described and defined differently in previous research papers. Since, the 4P's of products were launched by Kotler, it is questioned that what are suitable components for tourism products? The 5A's for tourism product components - Attractions, Accommodation, Accessibilities, Amenities and Activities - are proposed [11]. This model is still vague and lacks inclusion of important issues such as safety and security and also service quality. In addition, amenities are still vague, because there are many service businesses in the tourism industry (for example, restaurants, bars, souvenir shops, or even spas) that may not be suitable to be evaluated in the amenity dimension. Furthermore, it is difficult to precisely determine the correct dimension for each business. Additionally, there are four major tourism components: natural resources, built environment, operational environment, operating sector and organizations [7]. This paper gives priority to attractions, then the attraction components are separated into two dimensions – man-made and natural. Moreover, tourism organizations are also separated. Similarly, Kozak [9, p. 394] divided the tourism components into eight detailed factors: accommodation, transportation, hygiene and cleanliness, hospitality and customer care, facilities and activities, price level, communication and destination airport services. Reference [8] reviewed an evaluation of tourist satisfaction consisting of destination, travel mode, transportation,

accommodation, food and activities. Finally, the tourist satisfaction measure in [15] consists of accessibility, accommodation, restaurants, price and value, safety and security, local hospitality, entertainment, information accessibility and local organizations. From examination of previous research papers, it can be concluded that there are some repetitions in the tourism component measures. Main tourism organizations will be consolidated. Therefore, seven components will be applied in this paper consisting of attractions, accommodation, accessibilities, bars and restaurants, souvenir shops, tour operations and service quality.

C. Relationship between Cultural Dimensions and Tourism Product Satisfaction

The correlation between cultural dimensions and tourism has been variously studied. Reference [13] found that tourist behavior was significantly related to the UAI dimension. Individuals with a high UAI tend to get travel information from people such as friends, relatives, tour agents, etc., while those who score a low UAI are more likely to gain information from print media or the Internet. The findings of [9] also revealed different satisfaction levels between two nationalities of tourists, however, the five cultural dimensions of Hofsted were not applied to this research. According to a review of [8] that cultural dimensions are related to tourist behaviors: before travelling, during travelling and after travelling, collectivity orientation, risk tendencies and social interaction drive travel behaviors. However, as this paper was confined to literature review, the hypothesis has yet to be confirmed. The study by [10] revealed that IDV and MAS dimensions are related to tourist satisfaction. However, the research also found that PDI and UAI are not related to tourist satisfaction toward sporting events. This can be explained by the fact that the research focused on mega-sporting events, in which the tourists who attend this type of event may be different from the general tourist population or that other factors influenced the satisfaction level, rather than that of culture.

Then, the research hypotheses verified the following:

HP1. Power distance influences negatively tourism product satisfaction components.

HP2. Individualism is positively related to tourism product satisfaction components.

HP3. Masculinity is negatively related to tourism product satisfaction components.

HP4. Uncertainty avoidance is positively related to tourism product satisfaction components.

HP5. Long Term Oriented is negatively related to tourism product satisfaction components.

HP6. Indulgence is positively related to tourism product satisfaction components.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper used the quantitative research approach. The research population was foreign tourists visiting Samui Island. The sample size was 386. Self-rated questionnaires were applied and developed by reviewing previous related papers,

three research experts and 30 samples for the pilot tests. Five levels of the Likert Scale: 5- highest and 1-lowest were used to measure the satisfaction levels of seven tourism product factors: Attractions, Accessibility, Accommodations, Activities, Bars and Restaurants, Souvenirs, Tour Operators, and Service Quality. These items were obtained from previously published, related papers [7], [9], [11], [15] and developed via the three experts and the pilot test. The reliabilities- Cronbach Alpha of seven tourism satisfaction variables were 0.835, 0.884, 0.878, 0.863, 0.850, 0.901 and, 0.918, respectively. The total reliability of the research tool was 0.967. While, the cultural scores of each dimension and each country were gained from the Hofstede Centre [14], according to Table I. Data were analyzed via SPSS program by using Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson Correlations [1].

TABLE I
CULTURAL DIMENSION INDEX [14]

	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO	IND
United Kingdom	35	89	66	35	51	69
Korea	60	18	39	85	100	29
Australia	36	90	61	51	21	71
Germany	35	67	66	65	83	40
China	80	20	66	30	87	24
France	68	71	43	86	63	48

V. RESULTS

A. Respondent's Profile

Sample size was 386, consisting of six nationalities. The research respondents from the Asian countries of Korea and China composed nearly half, at 41.2 %, and those from other continents were 58.8 %, (see Table II).

TABLE II
RESPONDENT'S PROFILE

	Frequency	Percent
United Kingdom (UK)	44	11.4
Korea (KR)	80	20.7
Australia (AUS)	68	17.6
Germany (GER)	36	9.3
China (CN)	79	20.5
France (FR)	79	20.5
Total	386	100.0

B. Satisfaction Levels of Tourism Product Components

According to Table III, overall satisfaction was high. Obviously, attraction (ATT) registered the highest score while souvenir (SOUR) and Tour operators (TOUR) got the lowest level. This should be taken into account during further development. Korean tourists indicated the highest satisfaction level for tourism destination, while the lowest level was from the Germans. Lastly, it seemed that the most of tourists highly satisfied tourism destination in every aspects-Samui Island.

Tourists in Samui who came from the UK tended to rate a higher score of tourism satisfaction in all aspects over their German counterparts. This is in accordance with the research result which studied German and Britain tourists visiting Turkey and Mallorca [9]. However, the highest satisfaction in Samui of German and Britain tourists are Attractiveness and Bar & Restaurant in contrast with tourists in Turkey, which are Accommodation and Service, respectively [9]. Additionally, British and German Tourists in Mallorca rated the highest scores for accommodation and airport service, respectively [9].

TABLE III
SATISFACTION LEVELS OF TOURISM PRODUCT BY NATIONALITIES

	FR	GER	UK	KR	AUS	CN	TOTAL
ATT	3.94	3.66	3.97	4.04	4.06	3.67	3.91
	0.52	0.58	0.75	0.73	0.45	0.66	0.64
ACCOM	3.99	3.60	3.98	4.23	4.11	3.66	3.96
	0.58	0.62	0.75	0.66	0.59	0.60	0.66
ACCESS	3.93	3.37	3.76	3.85	3.98	3.73	3.81
	0.53	0.60	0.75	0.86	0.61	0.61	0.69
BAR	3.96	3.57	4.02	4.03	4.11	3.67	3.91
	0.58	0.59	0.75	0.72	0.50	0.54	0.64
SOUR	3.95	3.43	3.65	3.94	3.90	3.66	3.80
	0.55	0.58	0.88	0.76	0.49	0.61	0.67
TOUR	3.87	3.43	3.79	4.08	3.91	3.70	3.84
	0.57	0.50	0.88	0.72	0.42	0.57	0.64
SERVICE	3.98	3.51	3.89	4.12	4.07	3.76	3.90
	1.13	0.60	0.72	0.73	0.47	0.62	0.66
TOTAL	3.95	3.51	3.87	4.04	4.02	3.69	3.88
	0.48	0.45	0.67	0.62	0.41	0.51	0.55

C. Correlation of Destination Satisfaction and Cultural Dimensions

TABLE IV
CORRELATIONS OF SATISFACTION LEVEL AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO	IND	Nation
ATT	-.104*	.086	-.141**	.119*	-.104*	.136**	-.126*
ACCOM	-.094	.040	-.233**	.191**	-.067	.111*	-.175**
ACCESS	.027	.047	-.113*	.061	-.109*	.087	.003
BAR	-.113*	.118*	-.145**	.111*	-149**	.178**	-.135**
SOUR	.042	.005	-.202**	.158**	-.048	.039	.006
TOUR	.019	-.046	-.212**	.145**	-.002	.018	-.103*
SERVICE	-.036	-.010	-.157**	.096	-.054	.065	.005
TOTAL	-.036	-.010	-.157**	.096	-.054	.065	-.113*

Remarks: * = significant at 0.05, ** = significant at 0.01

From Table IV, the study found that nationalities of tourists significantly related to tourism satisfaction in almost all components – most notably in Accessibilities and Service Quality. The correlation results are in accordance with that of the research that studied Germans and British tourists in Mallorca [9]. However, correlation of total satisfaction and cultural dimensions was only found in Masculinity. Noticeably, Masculinity related with all components of tourism satisfaction, while other factors did not. Surprisingly, the individualism index only related with the bar and restaurant component. This is similar to the satisfaction levels indicated by participants of an event in Naples that was also related with Masculinity and Individualism [10]. Also somewhat intriguing was that Masculinity significantly negatively related with all components of tourism products, while other cultural aspects related with some. Additionally, Bar and Restaurant significantly related with all cultural dimensions. In contrast, there was a positive relationship between MAS and event satisfaction in Naples [10].

HP1.PDI negatively correlated with Attractions and

Bar/restaurants. This can be viewed as tourists with high power distance from Eastern countries, such as Korea and China, tend to be less satisfied in the two components. In contrast, high satisfaction will be found in tourists with less high power distance – as those found coming from Western countries such as the UK, AUS, France, etc., The results are in accordance with Hofstede [14].

HP2. Individualism (IDV) is found to be positively related to only one satisfaction component - Bar and Restaurant. This can be explained by the tendency of tourists who are highly individual - who are usually Western – and are more likely to experience high satisfaction levels in bar and restaurants in tourism destinations.

HP3. Masculinity (MAS) significantly and negatively related to tourism satisfaction. It seems that a high level of masculinity tends to create less destination satisfaction in tourists. It can be explained that high MAS tourists have greater motivation to achieve and be successful which leads to having high expectations and therefore experiencing dissatisfaction when these expectations are not met [14].

HP4. UAI had a positive relation with most of tourism product components, most notably with Accessibility and Total Satisfaction. Unsurprisingly, the high uncertainty avoidant tourists tend to have high satisfaction with tour agents in tourism destinations. High score UAI tourists normally do something to reduce risks and are likely to travel using the service of tour agents. This is consistent with a previous paper which found that tourists originating from high UAI countries are more likely to obtain information from tour operators and tend to travel with tour guides [13].

HP5. Long term oriented (LTO) is negatively related to three factors of tourism product satisfaction: Attraction, Accessibility and Bar & Restaurant. An explanation is that tourists who are high LTO tend to be dissatisfied with tourism products in destinations as they tend to take a more pragmatic approach and are focused on the future, rather than the present moment. This may lead them to set an expectation of a high standard of service.

HP6. Indulgence (IND) revealed a positive correlation with three factors of tourism product satisfaction consisting of Attractiveness, Accommodation and Bar & Restaurants. Normally, tourists with high IND score give importance on leisure time and spend money as they wish. As a consequence, they tend to happy with tourism destinations.

VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Academically, culture is still a main issue influencing tourist's satisfaction, however it appears that culture is becoming more homogeneous, diluted or less distinctive. Only one of Hofsted's cultural dimensions related with all six aspects of culture: Masculinity. Surprisingly, Bar and Restaurant related with all aspects of culture. It seems that food and beverage experiences can still clearly reflect the different impact of culture on satisfaction. Whereby globalization bridges culture gaps around the world, however food and beverage may be less affected. People are still familiar with the unique culinary aspects of their hometown. Differences experienced whilst travelling can lead to high or low destination satisfaction dependent upon the cultural identity of the traveler.

The implication for tourism planners in Samui, apart from the recommendations above, are some tourism product aspects consisting of souvenirs and for tour operators which should be taken into account for development to increase satisfaction levels of different national tourists.

There are some limitations of this study to be taken into consideration by both academics and tourism planners. Firstly, there were only two respondents of Asian nationalities, Chinese and Korean, for this study. This is not statistically representative of Asian people. Therefore, the results of this study should be applied with caution. Secondarily, the number of tourists from each country was unequal, as some countries were represented in small numbers.

Lastly are the recommendations for further research. Other tourism destinations may be studied to make a comparison and confirm the relationship between cultural dimensions and tourism destination satisfaction. Other research analysis such as Structural Equation Model, etc., should be applied to reassess the relationship as well.

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