

UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE AND TOURIST BEHAVIOR: A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This study is aimed to identify behavior pattern differences of Australian and Japanese tourists who visit Lombok Island and to explain the cultural correlation of Hofstede's Uncertainty Avoidance on both tourists' behavior pattern. This study was conducted on 200 Australian and Japanese visiting tourists. The sampling process was done by means of convenience sampling and the data was analyzed using t-test on two independent samples. The result of this study shows the difference between Australian and Japanese tourists' behavior pattern in terms of selecting tourist destinations, using travel agents service, and social contact. This study proves the correlation between tourist behavior pattern and culture so it can be used as a consideration for tourism service provider to decide their future marketing strategy.

Keywords : Tourist Behavior Pattern, Destination Oriented, Travel Service, Social Contact, Uncertainty Avoidance

1. Introduction

International tourism has become a fast-growing and highly-potential industry in today's economy. To successfully develop tourism business, the professionals of this industry need to understand the cultural differences among international tourists themselves and between the tourists and people of their tourist destinations. Cultural differences influence tourist behavior in many aspects and significantly influence tourism policy, planning, development, management, and marketing. (Reisinger and Turner, 2003). In the last few years, there are an increasing number of researchers who study the correlation between culture and tourist behavior. Those studies are aimed to comprehend how culture explains and influences vacation behavior patterns. (Pizam and Jeong, 1996; Pizam and Sussman, 1995; Money and Crotts, 2003).

When somebody occupies a particular status, he/she will play a particular role. Cohen (1972) stated that tourist role is the stable and clearly identifiable pattern of tourist behavior. Similarly, when someone is in a tour, he/she plays the role as a tourist. This role causes them to have a particular pattern of tourist behavior. Certainly, different tourist role in each tourist leads to a different behavior pattern.

Giddens, quoted in Pearce (2005), stated that tourist role can be learned from how they behave in a tour and how they select any activities to do. According to Cohen (1972), there are two necessities that create tourist role, which are the need for Familiarity and Novelty. Fundamentally, wherever a tourist goes in a tour, their decision is still based on the two needs. Their behavior is the result of the ratio differences between the need for Familiarity and the need for Novelty. Therefore, differences in tourist behavior pattern are classified based on their need for Familiarity and Novelty.

In the world of tourism, research on consumer behavior has been conducted to discover several aspects of tourist and to explain why they do what they are doing (Pearce, 2005). Recent studies on national culture differences which are related to tourist behavior are based on Hofstede's cultural dimension (Leo *et al.*, 2005; Crotts and Erdmann, 2000; Woodside and Ahn, 2008; Woodside

et al., 2011). Hofstede theory (1980) about cultural differentiation has been used in many cross-cultural researches, mainly to compare countries' culture (Reisinger, 2009). According to Social Science Citation Index, Hofstede's writing has been used in 2,700 journals as a reference (Yoo, Donthu & Lenartowicz, 2011). According to Reisinger (2009), who quoted Mead (1998), in spite of some weaknesses in using Hofstede's dimension, this dimension allows researchers to compare some national cultures which are accepted worldwide as a main differentiator of each group's culture. It can be applied, not just because of the work values, but also because of general values and accepted as a universal cross-culture (Reisinger, 2009).

Hofstede (1983) stated that some cultural dimensions, in certain circumstances, are more influential than the others. In particular, Hofstede shows that the difference in uncertainty avoidance is potentially the most significant cultural dimension in international circumstances in relation to established risk and behavior tolerance. Risk has been a main concern for international tourists or travelers, as stated by Yavas (1990) and quoted by Money and Crotts (2003).

Lombok is an island that becomes a main gate for tourists who visit West Nusa Tenggara (NTB / *Nusa Tenggara Barat*) Province. As a tourist destination, NTB has potential eco-tourism and mass tourism destinations which are located in several places and they become developing tourist destinations (www.newsletter-pariwisataIndonesia.com). Currently, NTB tourist destinations are competitive against other domestic and international tourist destinations (Visit, 2012). Asia Pacific and Australian market are geographically potential target market for tourism in Lombok. Based on Statistic and Tourism Data of NTB Province in 2012, the most numerous tourists who visit Lombok are from Australia and Japan. From the cultural aspect, both countries have cultural background differences, particularly on uncertainty avoidance dimension. According to Hofstede (2001), Australia scores 51 in uncertainty avoidance and considered as pragmatic, while Japan scores 92 and considered as high.

The arrival of tourists from several culturally-different countries becomes an interesting phenomenon to be analyzed, particularly if it is related to tourist behavior. Understanding how they behave and what the influential factors are become a necessary study which need to be conducted by tourism stakeholders. Pearce (2005) and Reisinger (2009) stated that it is important to understand tourist behavior, how to improve positive contribution for the tourism business leaders and tourist destinations, as well as understanding other influential factors in order to boost tourist satisfaction and comfort. Based on this information, the management of social, cultural, and environmental aspects will improve tourists' experience in the tourist destinations and, as a result, create positive impact to the tourists, tourism business leaders, and environment.

Therefore, this study is aimed to identify the behavior pattern differences between Australian and Japanese tourists, as well as to explain further about the relationship of uncertainty avoidance on tourist behavior. It is expected that this study will provide information to tourism business leaders and decision makers in considering their future marketing strategies.

2. Theoretical Review

2.1. Culture and Hofstede's Culture

According to Taylor (1871) in Reisinger (2009); Reisinger and Turner (2003), culture is a complex unity which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral, customs, ability, and other habits which are obtained by human as a part of a community. Cultural values are concepts which are collectively differentiate certain group of people from the other group (Pizam and Jeong, 1996). Culture of a country is highly influential in shaping people's perceptions, dispositions, and behaviors due to some factors which are strongly lead to the country's integration, including the same language, history, as well as legal and political systems (Triandis, 1989). Therefore, somebody's mindset, attitude, and behavior are closely related with cultures that influence them so far. In cross-cultural studies, culture

is usually understood as a stable and dominant character of a society which is owned by most of the individuals in the community and lasts constantly for a long time (Reisinger, 2009).

Culture is significantly influential in consumer behavior (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007) and a fundamental determining factor of somebody's behaviors and wishes (Kotler, 2003). Cultural differences among tourists lead to difference in attitude, opinion, emotion (Reisinger, 2009), cultural value, social behavior rules, perception, and social interaction. Those differences, furthermore, influence their lifestyle, how they work and relax, and their consumption behavior pattern. (Richardson, 1988 in Meng, 2010).

Hofstede (1991) defines culture as a human mind, sense, and actions. Culture is the software of human mind, something that drives human, and human would be a meaningless creature without it. Culture includes visible and invisible behavior that forms human behavior. Hofstede's cultural frame is a national cultural frame which is commonly used in psychological, sociological, marketing, or management studies (Sondergaard, 1994; Steenkamp, 2001; in Soares, 2007). Hofstede's cultural dimensions itself consist of:

- (1) Power Distance Index – This dimension reflects how far the less-power people in certain culture accept injustice and inequality in power sharing as a normal situation.
- (2) Individualism versus Collectivism – It reflects how far an individual in a cultural group places his personal interest over the interest of his/her immediate family and other social groups, or whether people of a country play their role as an individual or a member of community.
- (3) Uncertainty Avoidance Dimension – This dimension reflects the degree to which the people of certain cultural group feel with uncertain, unpredictable, and unclear situation.
- (4) Masculinity and Femininity Dimension – It is a dominant value in a society which represent a preference for assertiveness and material rewards.
- (5) Long-term Orientation – It represent the degree to which a culture has a perspective in historical short-term orientation or pragmatic long-term orientation.

The largest cultural differentiation occurs between Asian and Western culture (Reisinger and Turner, 2003). According to Hofstede, many Asian countries own a collective culture, while Western countries are more individualistic. People of Asian countries also have a higher level of uncertainty refusal. Money and Crotts (2003) stated that there is a correlation between the cultural dimensions of uncertainty refusal and vacation behavior. High level of uncertainty avoidance leads tourists to avoid risky and uncertain circumstances by making some detailed planning and collecting detailed information in relation to their vacation (Pizam & Jeong, 1996)

2.2. Tourist Behavior

When people play their role as a tourist, they have a particular pattern of tourist behavior which includes action, emotion, and attitudes. According to Cohen (1972), tourist behavior is based on their need for familiarity and novelty. The need for familiarity is reflected when they need a familiar condition on vacation, in which the cultural background is similar to their home country. While the need for novelty is their need to find something new and unique in their tourist destination. Their need for novelty makes them easy to adapt to the unfamiliar environment (Money and Crotts, 2003). The difference between tourist familiarity and novelty needs will determine their behavior pattern. Tourist behavior pattern itself consists of the following dimensions:

1. Destination-oriented dimension – This dimension explains the degree to which the selection of tourist destination is based on the need for new and unique tour experience in terms of culture, society, language, or tourism stability in a destination.
2. Travel service dimension – This dimension explains the degree to which the tourist plans and requires travel agent services when they are going to travel.

- Social contact dimension – It explains the degree to which the tourist makes social contact with local people.

The need for familiarity and novelty, as shown in the literary studies, will form tourist behavior pattern. Tourist with high level of uncertainty avoidance tends to avoid risks, uncertainty, and unclear situation, and the other way around. Based on Hofstede’s cultural score, Australia has average uncertainty avoidance level (pragmatic) and Japan has low uncertainty avoidance level. From this assumption, this study concludes a hypothesis that *there is a difference in behavior pattern between Australian and Japanese tourists.*

3. Methods

This study is a descriptive study because it is aimed to understand Australian and Japanese tourist behavior pattern and correlation between the behavior patterns and the uncertainty avoidance dimension which is based on Hofstede’s cultural score. The populations of this research are Australian and Japanese tourists who came to the Lombok Island, and there were 100 people of each group of tourists. By considering the characteristic of tourist who stay in short-term period and in particular time, sampling process of this study is conducted by means of Convenience Sampling.

Data collection was conducted through questionnaire which is given directly to the tourists. The researchers visited 2 most popular tourist destinations in Lombok, which are Senggigi Beach and Kuta Beach. The questionnaire contains indicator statements which are used to express the variable respondents’ answers. Then those answers are analyzed and measured in 5-points Likert scale (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), where (1) means strongly disagree and (5) means strongly agree. In order to test the behavior differences among the two countries, the researchers applied t-test analysis to two independent samples.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Findings

The following table is shown to provide an overview of the respondents’ sex, age, and education level.

Table 1. Respondents’ Demographic Profile

Respondent Characteristics	Category	Australian (%)	Japanese (%)
Sex	Male	65.0	42.0
	Female	35.0	58.0
Age Group	18 – 25 years old	16.0	15.0
	26 – 35 years old	32.0	36.0
	36 – 45 years old	21.0	38.0
	46 – 55 years old	14.0	11.0
	56 – 65 years old	17.0	-
Educational Level	Senior High School	39.0	34.0
	Diploma	16.0	10.0
	S1 Graduate	36.0	45.0
	S2 Graduate	9.0	11.0

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2013

The respondent description shows the difference in dominant sex in both tourist groups. Australian tourists are dominated by male, while Japanese tourists are dominated by female. In terms of age and education level, both groups show that the productive-aged tourists (26 - 45 years old) and tourists whose the education levels are higher than Senior High School are the dominant travelers.

According to tourist behavior pattern indicators, the respondents' answer shows that Japanese tourists tend to give priority to established or popular tourist destinations, to use travel agent services, and to plan their vacation in detail. On the other side, they made less interaction with local people and other tourists.

Meanwhile, Australian respondents have lower average score on tourist destination popularity, tend not to use travel agent services and detailed planning, but they are willing to interact with local people and other tourists.

Table 2. Description of Respondents' Answer to Tourist Behavior Pattern Dimension

No.	Dimension		Australian Tourists	Japanese Tourists
			(Mean)	(Mean)
1	Destination-oriented	Established tourist destination	3.2	3.6
		Popular tourist destination	2.4	3.4
		<i>Mean</i>	2.8	3.5
2	Travel service	Travel agent service	2.2	3.5
		Travel planning	3.2	3.8
		<i>Mean</i>	2.7	3.7
3	Social contact	Interaction with local people	3.5	2.7
		Interaction with other tourists	3.2	2.4
		<i>Mean</i>	3.4	2.6

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2013

Behavior pattern differences between the two groups of tourist are then tested using t-test of two independent samples. This test is aimed to know the real difference and the quantitative prove of the two tourist groups' behavior pattern, as shown in the following Table 3.

Table 3. Test Result of Australian and Japanese Tourists Behavior Pattern

Tourist	Mean	Result of t-test		
		t calculation	t table	p-value
Australia	8.325	7.752	1.97	0.0000
Japan	12.455			

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2013

The score of t-test on the tourist behavior pattern in 7.752 with the p-value of 0,000. Test statistic (t calculation) is higher than critical value (t table) and the p-value is smaller than alpha 0,05. This score is statistically shows a real difference between Japanese and Australian tourists behavior pattern. Therefore, the researchers confirmed the hypothesis that *there is a difference in behavior pattern between Australian and Japanese tourists*.

4.2. Discussion

As mentioned above, this study is aimed to identify the behavior pattern differences between Australian and Japanese tourists. The statistic test shows that there is a significant difference in their behavior pattern, in which both groups of tourist has different background in uncertainty avoidance level.

Uncertainty avoidance is a condition where people are afraid of uncertainty or unfamiliar situation and to which level their effort to avoid the uncertainty (Hofstede, 2011). Based on Hofstede's cultural score, Australian tourists have a pragmatic level of uncertainty avoidance, while Japanese tourists show a higher score. Tourists of a cultural group who has lower level of uncertainty avoidance tend to have higher tolerance threshold toward risk and uncertainty. Therefore, they will conduct risk reduction behavior in a lower level. In contrast, tourists of a cultural group who has higher level of uncertainty avoidance tend to have lower tolerance threshold toward risk and uncertainty. As a consequence, they will conduct risk reduction behavior in a higher level (Manrai, 2011).

Lower uncertainty avoidance score of Australian tourists makes them dare to take risk, tolerant toward new things, interested in innovations, ideas, or something unique. Their selection of non-popular and non-established tourist destination (destination-oriented) shows their need for something unique, new experiences, and challenges that create sensation to prevent boredom. Similarly, when they use travel agent service, Australian tourists tend not to use it so they will be free and are not bound to tight schedule and rule. Moreover, the pragmatic score and their lower level of uncertainty avoidance make them more open and not hesitate to start conversations with and to get closer to foreigners. According to Pizam and Sussman (1995), American tourists who have low level of uncertainty avoidance are more adaptive to new situation and, therefore, they do not hesitate to start conversations with other tourists of the same or other countries.

Meanwhile, the Japanese tourists, with high score of uncertainty avoidance, think conversely. They are afraid to take risks and to do something new. Tourists with high level of uncertainty avoidance tend to give priority to hard working, tend to feel suspicious of foreign people, and strong need for written rule. (Reisinger, 2003). When they choose a particular tourism behavior pattern, they tend to protect themselves and to avoid unfamiliar things. Japanese tourists tend to choose famous and established tourist destinations. In their point of view, the famous and established tourist destinations might be safer and have better facilities, infrastructure, and condition, so that they will find the same condition as their country. Therefore, risk of uncertainty and uncomfortable situation they might encounter during their vacation due to the different condition from the condition of their country can be reduced. They also prefer to use travel agent service. The travel agent will arrange their activities, accommodation, and transportation, so that the possible risk can be minimized. But their anxiety and suspicion against foreign people makes them introvert and they make less interaction with local people or tourists from other countries.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

Australian and Japanese tourists' behavior pattern during their visit to Lombok Island shows some differences. Similar to the previous studies, difference in cultural background is believed to cause the difference. As a consequence, it becomes an important issue for tourism business sector and local government to understand more about tourists' cultural background as a determining factor of tourist behavior in choosing tourist destinations, using travel agent service, and in the interaction during their vacation in Lombok Island and to create a meaningful experience, tourist satisfaction, and to apply effective marketing strategy.

Limitation of this study is in the observational variable. Culture is used as the only explanatory variable in this study and, therefore, it is possible that there are some response biases in respondent's answers. Adding other variables, such as age, education level, occupation, motivation, first visit and return visits as observational variables will directly affect tourists' behavior. Moreover, sample limitation of this study needs to be considered in further study. If this study was conducted in the larger scale of international tourists, it will significantly contribute toward more comprehensive cross-cultural tourist behavior studies.

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