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A Cross Cultural Study of Tourist Attributions: A Comparative Study of Australian and Indian Tourists

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Abstract: Tourism is a global phenomenon. Around the world, the vast majority of nations are involved (to varying degrees) in providing resources for both in-bound international visitors and domestic tourist opportunities for their own citizens. However, researchers from Western Cultures have largely dominated understanding this phenomenon, generating knowledge and developing theories. Further, the dominant methodology used by these researchers has been the quantitative paradigm. As a consequence, tourism has been conceptualised as universal and has been defined from a (mainly) western perspective. Thus, cross-nation studies have mainly focused on replicating Western-conceptualised research (Berry, 1989) and have assumed tests developed and validated within one culture will have the same meaning to new participants in a second or different culture (Smith and Bond, 1993). However, a critical analysis of many cross-cultural studies indicates that the responses from the same measures / instruments across different cultures is rarely equivalent (Smith and Bond, 1993). Berry (1989) indicated that researchers should not make the assumption of equivalence, and that the first step in cross-cultural research should be to evaluate the generality of (Western conceptualized) theories and their associated tests / assessments. The research reported in this paper evaluates the applicability of the attribution theory to explain the social cognitions of tourists from Australia and India.

Keywords: Causal Attribution, cross culture, cultural influence, attribution bias, collectivism, individualism

Introduction:

Most social science research is completed in Western societies (North America, Western Europe and Australia), with most cross-cultural studies attempting to validate Western derived theories in non-Western cultures (Smith and Bond, 1993). Two biases limit such research: the strong "individualism" of Western social research (with the consistent failure to include socio-cultural contexts); and, a continued focus on describing and analysing the status quo (Misra, 1981;

Sinha, 1986). Such an orientation makes such research less plausible to non-Western groups which have a strong focus on "collectivism" and a research agenda for social action / change (Moghaddam, 1990). Indeed, as number of researchers (including Indian social scientists) indicate a growing trend toward indigenization of social research in India (Sinha, 1992) and that valid research concepts need not develop in isolation, but should be validated within the context of each culture (Sinha, 1989). This research has taken the Western-based concept of (tourist) attribution and developed a methodology that will attempt to validate the concept in one part of the Indian culture. This methodology includes the use of indigenous researchers to analyse and interpret the raw (outcome) data.

While many studies have found systematic cross-cultural differences when evaluating social science theories, there have been no conceptual cross-cultural studies in tourism, nor has there been comment / caution that Western research in the tourism area may not be applicable to all non-Western countries. The current study is based on research originating in Australia. Jackson, White and Schmierer (1993) used qualitative methodology to develop an understanding of the tourist experience from an Australian perspective and Jackson, White and Schmierer (1996) completed quantitative analysis of the same data to evaluate attribution theory and the implications associated with attribution bias in the tourism industry.

Heider's (1958) attribution theory was originally developed to explain how non-scientific or niave people explain everyday events and how these explanations (or attributions) influence their emotional reactions and future behaviors (Frieze, Bar-Tal and Carroll, 1979). In Weiner, Frieze, Kukla, Reed, Rest and Rosenbaum (1972) the proposed formulations and assignment of attributions were conceptualised into four categories (ability, effort, task factors, and luck) across two dimensions (locus of control and degree of stability). Although the major goal is to render the world understandable, predictable and controllable, Western research has shown that some attributions made by niave (Western) persons are not accurate (Weary, Stanely and Harvey, 1979). For people from Western cultures, these attribution "errors" include overestimation of the importance of internal factors relative to external factors (Ross, 1977); individuals emphasizing internal attributions for their success and external attributions for their failures (Miller and Ross, 1975); and, individuals attributing external factors to their own negative experiences, but internal factors to other people with similar negative experiences (Jones & Nisbett, 1972). The only study to conceptualize tourist experiences within the framework of attribution theory has been Jackson et al (1996). They studied a large sample of Australian tourists and confirmed the fundamental attribution bias. That is, these Western tourists used internal (dispositional) attributions to explain positive tourist experiences and external situation attributes for their negative tourist experiences. Thus, Australian tourists are more likely to attribute the cause of positive experiences to themselves (self-

enhancement) and more likely to use external attributions to explain negative tourist experiences (a self-protective strategy). These external factors include: other tourists, host, and various parts of the tourist industry. This research will determine the similarities and differences in attributions between Australian and Indian tourists.

In terms of methodology, Weary et al (1989) indicated three major methods of assessing causal attributions: independent ratings, percentage of causality, and open-ended measures. While independent ratings are considered the most reliable and valid (Elig & Frieze, 1979), the method limits subjects to researcher-defined causal choices. Such a strategy forces subjects to make specific attributions when they, in fact, feel that the cause is unclear or ambiguous (Snyder & Wicklund, 1991). Open-ended responses, however, allow respondents the freedom to generate causes in their own words (high validity), but then make researchers responsible for developing highly reliable coding schemes (Jackson et al, 1996). Social science research reviewed by Smith and Bond (1993) indicated that in free response situations, Heider's four categories are readily identifiable (Kashima & Triandis, 1986; Munro, 1979; Boski, 1983; Fry & Ghosh, 1980). Smith and Bond (1993) concluded that there were no cross-cultural differences in the frequency with which ability, effort and luck constructs were used to explain performance, but they were clearly used in a different way. Fry and Ghosh (1980) found Canadian children demonstrated the usual pattern of self-serving bias (ability and effort for success; task difficulty and bad luck for failures) whereas same age children originating from India saw luck / fate as more important in success and lack of ability as more important in their attributions for failure. Finally, the use of indigenous researchers appears to be critical. Wetherall (1982) found cultural differences depending upon the cultural background of the social researcher. Western researchers are more likely to achieve cultural differences compared to research, which employs indigenous researchers. The current study will use indigenous researchers to explore the travel experiences and conceptions from tourists originating in India and Australia. The data will be collected using the qualitative paradigm and will be analysed using researchers from the cultures of the tourists.

India and Australia: Social political influences

Indian and Australian tourism policy has much in common. Both nations have long-established and fully developed tourist programmes (Richter & Richter, 1985). Both nations have central / federal as well as state level government tourist organisations. In India, the federal tourist authority concentrates on the promotion and facilities for foreign tourists, federal and state tourist organisations encourage domestic tourism, and the states also have programmes focusing on local recreation. In Australia, the three tiers of government are all involved in tourism but have overlapping roles. Both federal and state levels are involved in

encouraging international visitors and state and local authorities focus on domestic tourism and recreation. The national aim of domestic tourism in India involves important political and cultural goals, such as national integration and the creation of national pride (by encouraging visitation to ancient temples and shrines. Traditionally domestic tourism in India has developed along two lines: religious pilgrimages to numerous Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim and Sikh holy places; and, the retreat to the hills during the hot season. In Australia, the industrial labour history of compulsory annual leave (from work) with extra holiday pay has lead to a tradition of (summer) holidays for rest, recreation and entertainment. Government policies have built on this tradition and developed infrastructure that maintains a high rate of domestic tourism and attracts large numbers of international tourists. As government policy should be reflected in the lived experiences of their citizens, this study would predict Australian tourists should focus on rest, relaxation and entertainment, while tourists from India should have a religious, educational and nationalistic focus.

India and Australia: Cultural comparisons

Using Hofstede's (1980, 1991) classifications of 50 cultures, Australia and India markedly vary on two of the four culture value dimensions: Individualism - collectivism and power-distance. Australia ranks second highest (behind USA) on individualism. Such a second ranking indicates Australians value individual initiative and achievement and perceive an independent relationship between family / friends / society and themselves. In contrast, cultures that score low on individualism (and thus high on collectivism) perceive an interdependent relationship (with family / friends) role and value in-group harmony. As a cultural group, people from India score midway on the individual – collectivism dimension (Smith & Bond, 1993; Hofstede, 1981; 1990). Smith and Bond (1993) and Sinha (1992) provide differing explanations for this finding. Smith and Bond (1993) note that cultural measures are created using the average scores of a sample of the total population. Thus, cultures such as India, that are multi-ethnic, have 17 different official languages, have five different major religions and have marked urban versus rural differences, may have such heterogeneity on the dimension that the concept applied to this culture becomes meaningless. If this is so, then research should focus not on the broad Indian population, but specific ethnic groups (eg, Tamils) within India. Research within the India sub-continent has shown that people vary across ethnic groups, rural versus urban regions, upper versus lower castes, religious groups, and across historical / political time (Annat, 1977; Saraswathi & Dutta, 1990). On the other hand, Sinha (1992) indicated that people from India will behave collectively or individualistically depending upon context. Sinha (1992) reported that people from India are more tolerant of contradictions. Therefore, expression of cultural values representing points on the individualism – collectivism dimension will depend upon context and not on dispositional characteristics. Therefore, context free measures of cultural values

such as Hofstede's (1980) assessment may not be cultural relevant. To be culturally relevant, future research needs to be context dependent. In the current study, tourists are asked to describe their best and worst tourist experiences (and thus provide their own context). Any attributions (of causation) made under these circumstances should be culturally relevant. In terms of power-distance, Australians score relatively low and Indians score high. Hypothetically, this can be explained in terms of degree of social mobility in each culture. Australians typically perceive that they have high social mobility and believe that individual ability and effort (internal attributions) will allow them to achieve a higher social status. Further, Australians demonstrate minimal acceptance of the unequal distribution of power in their society (eg, socialise with bosses, etc). In contrast, Indian society is far more rigid with lower social and geographical mobility. Members of Indian society are born into a caste system that prescribes certain responsibilities and privileges (Silverberg, 1968; Smith & Bond, 1993). Indians accept this as natural, embrace the prescribed role, accept the unequal distribution of power within the caste system and believe that fate (as determined by family of birth) controls much of their lives (external attribution). Following on from this analysis, Australians should use more internal attributions when explaining their lives and people from India should use more external attributions when explaining life event outcomes. Miller (1984, 1987) confirmed this. Miller's research provided people from India with the opportunity to give free qualitative-type responses to real-life scenarios. The research found people from India make more contextualised attributions (emphasizing a person's role and responsibilities) compared to people from Western cultures that tend to focus on dispositional person factors (Miller, 1984; 1986; 1987; Miller, Bersoff, & Harwood, 1990; Miller & Bersoff, 1992).

To maximise the expression of cultural meaning, this research provides opportunities for respondents of both cultures to provide qualitative-based open-ended responses about their most positive and negative tourist experiences. This allows all three groups to respond within their own cultural perspective and allow both Western and non-Western indigenous researchers to conceptualise their attributions in terms of locus of control and stability. This methodology can be demonstrated to be superior when exploring attribution bias. When using research that is context-free, both Western respondents and people from India showed attribution bias (compared to success, respondents are more likely to use external attributions to explain failures) (Smith & Bond, 1993). However, when a specific task / situation was identified, this context allowed Indian respondents to attribute luck / fate (external attributions) to their successes and lack of ability (an internal attribution) as the most attributed factor in their failures (Fry & Ghosh, 1980). Therefore, attribution bias was not present in people from India in research that was contextualized (Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Smith & Bond, 1993). The research reported here will allow all respondents to make

attributions within a contextualized framework and will evaluate the presence of attribution bias.

The role of language in tourist conceptualisations

The relationship between language and culture has become a major issue since Sapir (1970) and Whorf (1956) addressed their hypothesis that language determines, or at least influences, the way people look at their world. Kashima and Kashima (1998) examined the relationship between culture and language by directly testing the correlation between global characteristics of cultures (see Hofstede's culture value dimensions) and rules of language use in these cultures. Hofstede (1980, 1991) identified four dimensions: individualism-collectivism, power-distance, uncertainty-avoidance, and, masculinity-femininity. These cultural dimensions provide an opportunity to test the relationship between cultural dimensions and language use, yet few studies have tried to do so. Semin and Rabini (1990) investigated the relationship between individualism-collectivism and verbal abuse. They hypothesised and found that verbal abuses in individualistic cultures were likely to be directed to the individual (eg, you are stupid), whereas insults in collective cultures were more likely to be directed at significant others (eg, I wish cancer on you and all your relatives). Kashima and Kashima (1998) focused on pronoun use and found that choice of which pronoun has immense implications for the relationship between speaker (self) and addressee (other person) because the choice defines the relationship. In English there is only one-second person pronoun (ie, "you") and thus the relationship between speaker and addressee remains unstated. However, in many European and Asian languages (including the Tamil language in India), there is more than one second person pronoun (for example, singular-intimate and plural-formal), which clearly indicates the social relationship between the speaker and the addressee. As predicted, pronoun use was correlated with two of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (individualism and uncertainty avoidance). This research will allow people from India to response either in English or their native language of Tamil. The indigenous researchers will make their judgement using the language used by the respondents. In this way, this research will also seek to determine the role of language in the way tourists perceive their experiences. Interestingly, no research has been reported comparing bilingual with monolingual people from the same ethnic group or their (possible) differing perceptions of tourism and tourist experiences.

Method

Australian sample

The data collected from the Australian sample has been reported on in two previous studies (see Jackson et al, 1993; Jackson et al, 1996). Using a limited snowball sampling technique, students from an Australian University collected

456 completed surveys. The survey form asked for basic demographic details (age, sex, occupation and travel experience) and provided respondents with the opportunity to complete up to a half page description of their most positive tourist experience and up to another half page on their most negative tourist experience. The only restriction was that respondents were to clearly indicate why this experience fitted their criteria. This critical incident methodology has been widely used in organisational research since being introduced by Flanagan (1954).

A quantitative data analysis applied the attribution dimensions (see Heider, 1958) to the data. First the researchers indicated whether the respondent attributed the experience to internal (person, dispositional) factors or to external (other person, situation / context) factors. Then the researcher indicated whether the causal attribution was stable (ability or task specific) or unstable (effort or luck). Inter-rater reliability for these tasks were .91 (for internal versus external) and .81 (for stable versus unstable).

Indian sample

The sample was drawn from Coimbatore and the third author collected the data. The survey form used to collect the data was the same form (used to collect the Australian data) with slight modifications (eg, an urban / rural demographic was added). Respondents were given the opportunity to complete the survey either in English or Tamil (the indigenous language in the region). The English – written responses were treated as a separate group in the data analysis. A summary of the demographics for all three nominal "groups" is provided in table 1. The same two forms of data analysis (qualitative and quantitative) were completed (by the first two authors). All inter-rater reliability checks were completed on the data from the English – speaking Tamil Indian group

Table 1. Demographics of the comparative samples

Factor	Australians	English-speaking Tamil Indians	Tamil-speaking Tamil Indians
Sample size	456	358	223
Male: Female ratio	38: 62	59: 41	52: 48
Mean age (years)	32.6	24.7	23.6
Age (standard deviation)	9.39	8.27	7.13
Age (range)	18 - 72	18 - 57	18 - 71
Urban: rural ratio	100: 00	79: 21	70: 30
Travel experience Interstate			
No (% of total)	2	11	52
Yes (% of total)	98	89	48
For yes, mean states visited	2.52	1.74	1.40
Travel experience Overseas			
No (% of total)	27	90	98
Yes (% of total)	73	10	2
For yes, mean continents visited	1.69	1.49	1.00
Occupation Prof: non-prof: non-employed	59.6: 36.5: 3.9	73.7: 10.9: 15.3	71.7: 17.5: 10.8

The researchers on both Indian samples completed a quantitative data analysis. Positive and negative summary stories were first coded on the locus of control attribution dimension (ie, internal versus external) and then on the stability dimension (ie, stable versus unstable). Inter-rater reliability measures were moderate to high (r = 0.82)

A visual analysis of table 1 indicates some potential threats to the validity of the study (Mason & Bramble, 1978). The Australian sample has a greater proportion of female tourists; the sample is on average, approximately eight years older and is drawn exclusively from an urban environment. The Australian sample has traveled much more extensively. The overwhelming majority (98%) have travelled interstate, have traveled much more frequently, three quarters of the sample have traveled overseas and made significantly more trips. While the two samples from within India have similar male: female ratios and are of similar age, the sample of English-speaking Tamil Indians are more urbanised, are more likely to have traveled interstate, traveled to more states and have traveled overseas more often to more destinations. Such sampling differences may confound the results of this research.

Results

Attributions associated with positive tourist experiences

The most positive tourist experiences for Australian tourists, English-speaking Tamil Indians and Tamil-speaking Indians are tabulated within the attributional framework (see table 2). An overall statistical analysis was carried out to determine if there were statistical differences in the collected data and to set the alpha level for all subsequent comparisons (Reynolds, 1977). An overall factor analysis using a Chi-square test for association indicated a significant difference between observed and expected frequencies ($x^2 = 44.9$, df = 6, p < 0.05). Specific tests to determine where these significant departures were located were completed with all alpha levels set at p < 0.05 (Reynolds, 1977). A summary of planned comparisons for positive tourist experiences (see table 3) illustrates there are significant differences between Australian tourists' positive attributions and the attributions of both groups of tourists from India. There were no significant differences between the two groups from India.

Table 2. Percentage responses of attributions for positive tourist experiences

	Australian	English-speaking Tamil Indians	Tamil-speaking Tamil Indians
	N = 456	N = 358	N = 223
Ability	21	24	25
Effort	31	14	8
Total internal attributions	52	38	33
Task ease	42	26	27
Luck / fate	6	36	40
Total external attributions	48	62	67

Table 3. Planned comparison for positive tourist experiences

Comparison	Chi statistic	Explanation
Australian tourists versus English-speaking Tamil Indians	$\square^2 = 55.8$, df = 1, p < 0.05	Australian tourists attributed positive outcomes to effort and task ease, while English-speaking Tamil Indians focused more on good luck / fate
Australian tourists versus Tamil-speaking Indians	$\square^2 = 103.9$, df = 1, p < 0.05	Australian tourists attributed positive outcomes to effort and task ease, while Tamil - speaking Indians focused more on good luck / fate
English-speaking Tamil Indians versus Tamil-speaking Indians	$\square^2 = 4.9$, df = 1, not significant	There was no significant difference between these two groups

Attributions associated with negative tourist experiences

The major cultural difference was that Australian tourists were more likely to use internal attributions (more specifically – own effort). For external attributions, Australian tourists were less likely to focus on luck / fate compared to tourists from India. The most significant cross-cultural finding was on the locus of control dimension. Fifty-two percent of Australian tourists used internal attributions to explain positive outcomes, significantly higher than both English-speaking Tamil Indians (38%) and Tamil-speaking Indians (33%).

Attributions associated with negative tourist experiences

Table 4 summarises the attributions associated with the negative tourist experiences of Australian, English-speaking Tamil Indians and Tamil-speaking Indians tourists. An overall statistical analysis ($?^2 = 12.9$, df = 6, p < 0.05) indicated there were statistically significantly differences between the three groups of tourists. A summary table of planned comparisons (see table 5) illustrates small, but significant differences between all three-tourist groups. Australian and English-speaking tourists are more likely to focus on task difficulty (attribute cause to others) compared to Tamil-speaking Indian tourists who focused more on bad luck / fate (external, unstable factors). More Australian and Tamil-speaking Indian tourists attributed negative outcomes to lack of effort compared to Indian tourists with an English-speaking background.

Table 4. Percentage responses of attributions for negative tourist experiences

	Australian	English-speaking Tamil Indians	Tamil-speaking Tamil Indians
	N = 434	N = 348	N = 205
Lack of ability	8	9	13
Lack of effort	4	1	8
Total internal attributions	12	10	21
Task difficulty	43	39	23
Bad luck / fate	45	51	56
Total external attributions	88	90	79

Table 5. Planned comparison for negative tourist experiences

Comparison	Chi statistic	Explanation
Australian tourists versus English-speaking Tamil Indians	$\square^2 = 10.2$, df = 1, p < 0.05	Australian tourists are more likely to attribute negative outcomes to lack of effort
Australian tourists versus Tamil-speaking Indians	$\square^2 = 23.1$, df = 1, p < 0.05	Australian tourists are more likely to attribute negative outcome to task difficulty whereas the Tamil-speaking Indian tourists are more likely to focus on bad luck / fate
English-speaking Tamil Indians versus Tamil-speaking Indians	$\square^2 = 18.7$, df = 1, p < 0.05	English-speaking Tamil Indians are less likely to focus on effort and more likely to focus on task difficulty compared to Tamil-speaking Indian tourists

Attribution bias

A Chi square goodness of fit was calculated to determine the self-serving attribution bias. Australian tourists showed a statistically significant self-serving bias ($?^2 = 234$, df = 1, p < 0.05) with 52% of tourists using internal attributions to explain positive tourist experiences but 88% of tourists using external attributions (mainly task difficulty) to explain negative tourist outcomes. Statistically, 40% of Australian tourists demonstrated attribution bias. Both groups of Indian tourists also showed a self-serving attribution bias, but the size of the effect was much less. For both groups of Indian tourists, the attribution for both positive and negative tourist experiences was luck / fate. English-speaking Tamil Indians showed an attribution bias ($?^2 = 34.2$, df = 1, p < 0.05) with a statistical shift of 28%. Tamil-speaking Indian tourists demonstrated the self-serving attribution bias ($?^2 = 12.7$, df = 1, p < 0.05) with a statistical shift of 12%.

Discussion

Methodological issues

The first conclusion from this research is that imposing Western-based theories and their findings onto different cultures is not necessarily viable and that the first stage in such inter-cultural research should be an evaluation of the generality of such theories. The statistically significant differences in social attributions from one culture to another indicate that attribution theory has limited generality. Further, the research should follow the methodology used as a model to evaluate all Western theories across diverse cultures (see Jackson & Niblo, 2003).

The use of open-ended responses has allowed tourist-respondents in each country the freedom to express their conceptions of tourism and the causation of tourist-related outcomes in their own words (high validity). The current researchers required minimum training to achieve moderate to high inter-rater reliability and found that Heider's four attribution categories were readily identifiable. It is strongly recommended that this methodology be adopted in future cross-cultural studies regarding the "tourist experience". The major limitation (and thus major revisions) of the research methodology of the current study was sampling. While sampling issues were not adequately addressed in the planning stages of this research, future cross-cultural tourism research needs to consider possible (culture-bound) issues such as: age; gender; socio-economic class; religion; urban/ rural living and language. The use of either a random (or representative) sampling technique or a non-random (matching) sampling technique needs to be considered. Another post-hoc strategy would be to use a within (culture) statistical analysis to determine which factors (eg, age, gender, class, religion, urbanity, language) interacted with culture to significantly influence the findings. The current methodology allowed indigenous researchers to explore the fundamental connections between culture and the tourist experience. It also supplied the "rich" database upon which the quantitative analysis was completed. The indigenous researchers could readily classify open-ended responses within the attribution framework.

Cultural influences on Australian and Indian tourists

Australian tourists show a self-enhancing attribution bias whereby they are more likely to attribute successful tourist experiences to internal factors (mainly their own activity / effort), but blame others (including the tourist industry) for their worst tourist experience. The ultimate consequences regarding this bias is that tourists will credit their own ability and effort and ignore the hard work of the tourism industry and host community in providing quality tourist experiences. However, when some aspect of the trip goes wrong, the Australian tourist will not attribute any blame on themselves, but focus on the tourism industry and others (either hosts or other tourists). This bias (or error) is best illustrated by exploring the major (stated) causes of their worst tourist experiences. Australian

tourists minimized their own role in experiences such as health (and their role in avoiding common illnesses such as traveler's diarrhea); crime (and their role in safety); poor weather (and their role in camping / hiking in winter-time); cultural misunderstanding (and their role in learning basic language phrases and customs before traveling); and, travel disruptions (and their role in preplanning and booking). This attribution bias will prevent behaviour change in Australian tourists. That is, the use of external attributions (blame others) for their negative tourist experiences will mean that when confronted with similar future experiences, these tourists will continue to expect the tourist industry, hosts, or whomever else they deem responsible, to change their actions. For example, if they become a victim of crime, in the future they will not be more careful (prevent crime) but will expect more vigilance by the host community's police force.

From the Indian tourists' perspective, the majority of causal explanations for both positive and negative tourist experiences were external factors. The major causal attribution provided by both groups of Indian tourists focused on luck or fate. The frequent use of fate / luck for both positive and negative tourist experiences distances the Indian tourist from radical changes of any (tourist) behaviour. The role of religion and the associated beliefs strongly influences the Indian tourist's interpretation of tourist events. However, the relative / cultural meaning of these two terms need to be investigated. While both indigenous researchers allocated responses into the category (external, unstable), was the meaning of the attribution the same for both cultures? The Australian tourist seem to use the term "luck" as indicating an uncontrollable (thus totally external), random (thus totally unstable) event. The Indian tourists used the term "fate" as indicating lack of personal control (part external) but an event that is planned at a higher level (non-random) and that is part of a person (part internal). Thus, while the external, unstable category best fits both concepts from an attribution viewpoint, the terms are not synonymous. Much more (cross-cultural) research is required to understand the full meaning of tourist events that are external and unstable. Thus, another limitation of this research study would seem to be the equivalence of some attribution concepts.

Differences between English-speaking Tamil Indians and Tamil-speaking Indians

There are several possible explanations for the finding that English-speaking Tamil Indians differed significantly from Tamil-speaking Indians in terms of attribution explanations of positive and negative outcomes of tourist experiences. The possible explanatory factors include language and socio-economic explanations.

Language factors

The first possible explanation focuses on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that language influences cognitions which in turn influences tourist behaviours. Kashima and Kashima (1999) studied the relationship between language and culture-value dimensions and found different language characteristics (especially the type and use of pronouns) are related to the cultural dimension of individualism. More specifically, the English language with no pronoun drop (focus on the person) and only one-second-person pronoun (ignoring the relationship between people) is associated with individualistic cultures. In contrast, the Tamil language has multiple second person pronouns which forces the speaker and listener to focus on the relationships between people (a sign of collectivism) (Kashima & Kashima, 1999). This finding creates two possible explanations for the findings of this research.

The reported differences in the tourist experiences may be due to speaking / writing of their tourist experiences in English or it may be due to being educated and thinking within the framework of the English language. These competing explanations could be easily evaluated by requesting the bilingual English-speaking Tamil Indians to recount their stories in both languages. If the differences in conceptualization and attributions disappear, then, the structure of the language is influencing the results, not the manner in which this sub-group of Tamil Indians are conceptualizing the world. If the differences do not disappear, then language is influencing conceptualization.

This may arise directly from the structure and functional consequences of the language or indirectly because of different opportunities / experiences arising from speaking a second language. The direct mechanism may arise because English-speaking Tamil Indians are constantly exposed to Western ways of thinking and receive information directly from the highly individualistic source. Thus, tourism concepts for English-speaking Tamil Indians have developed within a Western context through the availability of the written and spoken English language. Tamil-speaking Indians are primarily exposed to traditional Eastern (collective) concepts associated with tourism. Tamil-speaking Indians are exposed to only a few Western ideas regarding tourism and only those ideas that have been translated and conceptualized within a collectivist linguistic framework. Thus, if language influences the way people think, English-speaking Tamil Indians will have a more Western (individualistic) perspective of life compared to Tamil-speaking Indians whose thinking remains more traditional (Eastern) and collective. The attribution results indicate that on average, English-speaking Tamil Indians are partway between the extremes of Western (Australian) cognitions and the Eastern (Traditional Tamil-speaking Indians). Thus, the two ethnic groups within India have different conceptions of tourism and tourist behaviours because of the differential exposure to Western ideas.

Socio-economic explanations

Indirect ways in which language may influence the attributions associated with tourist behaviour include socio-economic level and family traditions. These cultural differences may arise from the advantages of learning to read and write the English language. Knowledge of the English language is considered advantageous socially and leads to greater opportunities for work and thus achieve better socio-economic living conditions. This socio-economic factor may explain the differences or may lead to more complex explanations. Not all Tamil Indians speak English. Speaking English is associated with higher socio-economic status, urban living, modern "Western" life-style, more travel and more travel not involving some form of pilgrimage. There may be a difference in those who choose (or who are given an opportunity) to speak English. Given that learning a second language requires effort, and that this individual effort is rewarded, English-speaking Tamils may be more likely to attribute all successes to an increase in personal effort (an internal attribution). Further, learning English gives these Tamil Indians the lived experience of social mobility due to their effort (with the possibility of causing a shift toward internal focused attributions). Further research needs to be undertaken to determine if the rewarded effort and its signs of success (eg, social mobility) influence the type of attributions made in life and in tourism settings within the Indian sub-continent.

The second implication for learning the English language and having better economic living conditions is the increased opportunity to travel and work interstate and overseas (see table 1). Such exposure creates greater variation in travel experiences and would certainly alter the fundamental concepts these people hold about tourism. For example, English-speaking Tamil Indians are more likely to embrace the Western style nuclear family (which focuses on individualism) whereas the Tamil-speaking Indians continue to embrace the extended family that emphasizes collectivism and mutuality. The third implication is this economic advantage that allows travel / education overseas, also provides a world-view. For less affluent Indians, meeting and talking with foreign travelers allows them the only opportunity to gain such a view.

Economic status is also reflected in differences in the most negative tourist experiences. Tamil-speaking Indians are more likely to mention unmet expectations thanks to their real world conditions. Their relatively poor economic status typically limits them to one major tourist experience (in their lifetime) and causes them to mix piety (religious pilgrimage) with pleasure. The economics of travel causes them to have unrealistically high expectations on what they can do and see at so little cost in such a short period of time. However, while they will allude to their disappointments, they will not generally highlight them and will not blame others for their misfortunes (minimal external, stable attributions). By blaming themselves (internal attributions) or attributing the outcome to fate (external, unstable attributions), they develop a sense of forebearance, feeling

that servicing others may bring them better life conditions in their next birth. This is represented by a decrease in task difficulty and an increase in ability and luck/fate attributions for their negative tourist experiences. On the other hand, English-speaking Tamil Indians have more resources, organize more travel opportunities and find it more exasperating when confronted with mediocre tourist facilities and more management. Hence, a shift in attribution to external stable factors including inadequate transportation, travel delays, too expensive and poor facilities). Thus, these tourists are more likely to be critical of the tourist industry.

Implications

There are some valuable lessons to be learnt from this study for the benefit of the tourism industry researchers who would like to fathom the impact of the cultural upbringing on tourist attitudes and preferences to set of tourist experiences (products). As mentioned earlier under the sub-heading of cultural influences on Australian and Indian tourists, the researchers have unmistakably found basic social attributional differences between the culturally heterogeneous groups of tourists. Hence, one can be confident about the tourists' expectations whenever or wherever   tourists belonging to these cultural groups visit destinations of their choice. As we have seen, there are cultural groups with very strong external social attributions who could normally be fastidious and expect the host or the industry operator to be exceptionally punctual and serve with quality and care.   On the contrary, tourists from collective cultures with very little western or foreign language exposure and training would be more adjustable even in severest of the negative travel experiences. This does not mean they are a push over and they will accept any sort of poor service or product experience. The researchers did not attempt to research their tourism product or service preferences nor even their tourist expectations. Had this been included, with some confidence, the researchers could come out with plausible statements with regard to these tourists' inherent qualities. The maximum one could infer from the low outward social attribution i.e. not blaming any one for a bad experience is this particular group may need more guidance from the tour operators while on tour especially when they travel overseas destinations. These tourists need adequate protection and care more than quality tourism service or products.

Tour operators from westernized destinations, who would like to penetrate and promote their tourism products in collective cultural markets, need to pay attention to this particular characteristic. In the same token, tour operators who promote their collective cultural destinations to the individualistic tourist markets need to pay more attention to the quality of the tourism product and services they offer to their clientele rather than any other aspect of international tourism. Failing to do this may result in losing the profitable international tourism market altogether. There is so much for the Australian tour operators and tourism promoting public agencies to learn from this sort of investigation when Australia

is aggressively marketing its tourism destinations and products to various Asian and Indian subcontinent countries. Despite being a transformed multicultural nation on account of economic and industrial compulsions, Australia and for that matter any other industrialized western country needs to focus more on the collective cultural nature of their tourism export markets. Promoting tourism products and experiences is totally different from promoting educational opportunities to these countries as there is a strong compulsion to educate one self in these collective societies. However, influencing tourists with very low external social attributions is yet another matter altogether as there is no readymade compulsion to travel in the first place even if there is a financial capability. Most of the collective cultural destinations by themselves are exotic international tourist destinations bestowed with exotic flora, fauna, historic and cultural attractions as such these potential tourists could be satisfied with domestic tourism experience unless otherwise they are assured of attention and care in unknown overseas destinations.

Very little attention is paid to these sort of issues in many Australian tourism promotional campaigns and overseas endeavors although few instructional videos were made while developing and nurturing the Japanese market. However, a keen and experienced market researcher would easily pick up the major differences that exist between the collective cultures of the world today and hence; a stereotyped tourism marketing style may not be applicable to every single destination though they may be straight jacketed as collective societies.

Limitations

As mentioned earlier under the sub-heading of 'methodological issues, the researchers are aware of the shortcomings of the generalized sample adopted for this research endeavor. Had a very stringent stratified sampling frame been adopted with due importance given to variables such as age, gender, lifestyle, literacy level, occupation etc, the results could have been a bit different from what they are now. As admitted earlier, the methodology has only allowed the researchers to explore the connections between culture and the tourist experience. Perhaps, for a future study a well-stratified unaligned sampling could be better option and thereby more tangible comparisons may be made and stronger inferences could be made for tourism marketing research. As many developing countries of today are predominantly collective social cultures despite being industrially advanced for over a half a century and slowly adopting to nucleated family lifestyles, hence, a stratified sample on the basis of the above mentioned demographic and social variables might yield an interesting research results that would be advantageous to many overseas tourism promotional agencies located in postmodern industrial societies.

Further, although the researchers could not conclusively discriminate the quality of the external social attribution between the Tamil Indian tourists and the English

knowing Tamil Indian tourists, there were certain distinct traits were identified. A well-stratified purposive sample would certainly have thrown more light to this aspect. The researchers are able to fathom the importance of knowing a foreign language and the resultant tourist experience among the Indian tourists and this is yet another aspect the Australian tourism marketers need to focus on. It has been observed the English speaking Tamil Indians are part-away between the extremes of Western (Australian) cognitions and the Eastern (Traditional Tamil speaking Indians) as such a singular market strategy to popularize Australian destinations among the homogenous (same linguistic identity) may not have much impact. The researchers are aware that multicultural societies such as India, a multi –ethnic sample would be more advantageous than a one that adopted in this research. However, the intention was only to understand the broad basic tourist attributions that exist between collective and individualistic groups of cultures. Perhaps, a deeper study based on multicultural aspects of the modern collective and individual tourist backgrounds would be more beneficial in developing micro tourism marketing strategies.

Conclusion

This study has fundamentally attempted to explore the hypothesis of Sapir-Whorf and highlight the influence of language in cognitions and tourist behaviours on one side and fathom the external and internal social attributions of tourists who hail from opposite cultural groups on the other. Interestingly, this study has raised opportunities to study and explore cross-cultural tourism experiences and given confidence to stress for more micro strategies while developing tourism destination marketing strategies and develop tourism products that should be appeal to exotic but culturally heterogeneous markets. This study has also identified the possible gaps that presently exist in tourist marketing as well as psychology of tourism literature.

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