2019 APacCHRIE & EuroCHRIE Joint Conference Template for **Abstracts** (Maximum 1,500 Words) and for **Full Papers** (Maximum 5,000 Words)

Title: The Impact of Social Contact on Diaspora Tourism---A Mediating Role of Social Identities

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The Impact of Social Contact on Diaspora Tourism---A Mediating Role of Social Identities

Abstract:

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between social contact and diaspora tourism and the mediating role of social identity between them. 303 valid questionnaires were collected and partial least square method was used to estimate the structural equation model. The estimation results show that there is a significant positive/negative relationship between Mainland Chinese migrants' contacts with Hong Kong local residents/Mainland Chinese and their home visit behaviour. The contact of migrants with home country also positively relate to China and Hong Kong identities.

1. Introduction

Although there is no official statistics indicating the volume of international migrants globally, it is estimated that 244 million people migrated to other countries/regions in 2018, accounting for 3% of the population in the world (International Organization of Migration, 2019). Migrants desire more to visit their source countries/regions where they have physical or mental connections (Tie, Holden, & Park, 2015). As the development of transportation, the diaspora tourism market is predicted to enjoy a sustainable growth. Previous studies have explored the segments of diaspora tourism (Li and Mckercher, 2016) and most studies showed that travelling back to their "hometown" could enhance the identity to home countries/regions (Huang, Haller & Ramshaw, 2013; Tie et al., 2015). However, little light has been shed on the roles that social contact and social identity play on diaspora tourism, particularly from a quantitative perspective. The aim of this study is to investigate the mediating role of social identity between social contact and hometown visit using the Mainland Chinese migrants in Hong Kong as an example.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Identity

Social identity represents the extent to which the in-group has been incorporated into the sense of self, and meanwhile, the self is perceived as an integral part of the associated group (Brewer & Rocass, 2001). This encourages individuals to have positive evaluation of the in-group and positive orientations toward fellow in-group members. Evidence have suggested that migrants may have dual identities simultaneously in the migration process which are home-identity and host-identity (Lee, 2010). Home-identity helps migrants to be more confident when communicate with people from other cultures whereas host-identity facilitates migrants to integrate into the destination society (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999; Ward & Kennedy, 1994). In tourism literature, Pearce (2012) argued that people are keen to travel to destinations where connect their past experience. Thus it is expected social identities play as determinants of diaspora tourism.

2.2 Social Contact

Cross-cultural social contact is defined as the face-to-face contacts between people from different cultural backgrounds (Cusher & Brislin, 1996). Social contact can be measured by contact quantity and quality, respectively and it is suggested the social contact between tourist and hosts could reduce the perceived cultural distance (Fan, Zhang, Jenkins and Lin, 2017). Thus, in the migration context, it is expected the social contact could have significant impact on social identity and facilitate diaspora tourism.

2.3 Diaspora Tourism

Diaspora tourism has drawn increasingly attention in recent years (Tie et al., 2015; Li & McKercher, 2016; Huang, Hung & Chen, 2018). Tie et al. (2015) conducted 35 semi-structured interview and found that the existence of dual-identity and the home-identity is one of the motivations for diaspora tourism. Li and McKercher (2016) identified five types of diaspora tourists by 28 interviews. They further indicated that the impact of diaspora tourism on cultural identity is different across various types of diaspora tourists. Huang et al. (2018) is one of the few quantitative studies which suggested that the definitions of "hometown" are diverse in different generation of migrants. In diaspora tourism literature, little light has been shed on the impact of social identity and social contact on diaspora tourism, particularly from a quantitative perspective. To fill in this gap, a structural equation model is proposed to examine the mediating role of social identities between social contact and hometown travel. Limited by the space, details of the framework are available upon request.

3. Methodology

3.1. Measurement

All the measurements are obtained from existing literature with necessary amendment to fit the new research context. Specifically, two social contact constructs are developed base on Fan et al. (2017) and focus on migrants' social contact with people from source countries/regions and destination, respectively. As the development of information and communication technology (ICT), contact activities are further split into online and offline social contacts as sub-order constructs. Due to the existence of dual identities, two second order constructs home identity and host identity are developed based on Cameron (2004). All the items are measured by 5-points Likert scale and the number of days spent for hometown visit is used to represent diaspora tourism demand.

3.2 Data and Method

Migrants from Mainland China to Hong Kong are selected as the research objectives and 303 questionnaires were collected by a professional market research company at the boarder gates of Shenzhen and Dongguan in Nov 2018 – Jan 2019. The samples are randomly split into two sub-samples averagely. One sub-sample was used to conduct exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and the other for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Limited by the sample size and the use of second order constructs, partial least square (PLS) method is used to estimate the factor loadings of CFA and the coefficients in path analysis.

4. Results

Two thirds (66%) of the respondents are female and four thirds (74%) are 25-44 years old. 73% of them have college or above education background with the monthly household income of HKD 60-120 thousand. After EFA, 13 items were removed and 26 items were left to conduct for CFA. In the seconder order CFA analysis, all the composite reliability and average variance extracted of the four second order variables including social contact with Mainland China, social contact with Hong Kong, Mainland China social identity and Hong Kong social identity, are larger than 0.7 and 0.5, which are satisfied to the reliability and convergent validity. The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratios between each pair of constructs are all less than 0.9, indicating the measurement model passed the discriminant validity, except the two social contact constructs, probably due to the relative small sample size.

In the path analysis, PLS and bootstrapping results show that social contact with Mainland China has a significant positive relationship with Mainland China and Hong Kong social identity, respectively, and a significant negative relationship with diaspora travel at 5% significant level. Social contact with Hong Kong only has a positive significant relationship with diaspora travel and the relationships between social identities and hometown travel are not significant.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The estimation result shows that social contacts with home and host country/region have direct significant relationships with diaspora tourism. Specifically, the contact of Mainland Chinese migrants with Hong Kong local residents positively correlate with hometown visit whereas the contact with Mainland Chinese displays a

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negative correlation. As the development of ICT, contact with relatives and friends in Mainland China is much easier and more frequency. The increased contact fulfills the emotional and mental needs of the home country, thus, migrants could decrease the times for diaspora tourism. It is reasonable to see social contact with Mainland China positively correlates with Mainland China identity. As argued by Ward & Rana-Deuba (1999) and Ward & Kennedy (1994), home identity makes migrants more confident to integrate to host society. Thus, as shown in the model, Mainland China identity mediates the relationship between social contact with Mainland China and Hong Kong identity. In future studies, moderating effects should be introduced into the model to investigate the non-linear relationships among variables and the endogeneity between social identity and diaspora tourism should be fixed.

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