RESEARCH NOTE

MAPPING BOASTFULNESS WITH WARMTH AND COMPETENCE IN TOURIST STEREOTYPES

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Early research on tourist stereotyping often drew upon two dimensions of warmth and competence, yet recent studies have suggested an additional dimension of boastfulness, a negative tourist stereotype with voice excessive self-pride and consumption powers. This study aims to investigate how boastfulness would influence views of warmth and competence. By using a multinational sample of residents in Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, this study seeks to contribute to the literature through the integration of boastfulness from tourism, with warmth and competence from social psychology. Practically, the findings provide insights for facilitating positive host–guest relations, which is crucial for tourism development.

Key words: Tourist stereotype; Boastfulness; Warmth; Stereotype content model; Competence

Introduction

Investigating tourist stereotyping is a significant topic in tourism research. Tourist stereotyping refers to the biases that residents hold against tourists, which could influence their interactions and behaviors in host–guest relations (Chen & Hsu, 2021). Residents' attitudes and biases could, in turn, affect tourists' experiences and their destination image (Hsu & Chen, 2019). Tourist stereotyping refers to an individual's cognitive biases towards another individual, which results in group categorization and differentiation that may lead to discrimination (Taylor et al., 1996; Tse & Tung, 2021).

Early research on tourist stereotyping often drew upon the stereotype content model (Fiske et al.,

2002). This model consists of two dimensions: warmth and competence. Warmth reflects one's view of the approachability of other individuals (e.g., their perceived sincerity and friendliness), while competence refers to their abilities and characteristics (e.g., intelligence and industriousness). More recently, studies in tourism have suggested an additional dimension: boastfulness (Chen et al., 2018). Boastfulness is a negative stereotype held by residents against tourists who voice excessive self-pride and materialistic, consumption powers (Tse & Tung, 2023). For instance, mainland Chinese tourists have been viewed by Singaporeans as boastful based on their consumption styles and powers, especially on luxury merchandises (Tse & Tung, 2022). Tourists who are stereotyped as boastful reflect a negative view held by residents (Fan & Jia, 2023).

The purpose of this research note is not to present descriptive examples of boastfulness, but rather to examine how this dimension relates to the two other fundamental dimensions in the stereotype content model. In other words, how would boastfulness influence views of tourists' warmth and competence? In recent years, a new term "tuhao" (土豪), which translates as "rural rich," a local, rich tyrant who spends irrationally and often shows off his/her wealthy, manifested on the Internet and media reports. It is used against the mainland Chinese tourists to denote their lavish expenditures and material ambition yet lacking a quality characteristic (Ingebretson, 2017; Xu & Tian, 2017). The increasing popularity of "tuhao" effect has caused negativity towards this new social group who are perceived to be uneducated, uncultured, and unreasonable (Lui & Chan, 2022; Wu et al., 2018). As such, based on the social phenomena and significant economic contribution, this study aims to investigate how tourists who are stereotyped as boastful be perceived as less sincere, friendly, or competent.

By using a multinational sample of residents in Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, this study seeks to contribute to the literature by examining the relationships among boastfulness as identified from tourism research, with warmth and competence in the stereotype content model from social psychology. Theoretically, the presence of boastfulness serves as an additional stereotypical dimension

in intergroup relations research in tourism. Practically, the findings provide insights for destinations and tourism policymakers that are engaged in facilitating positive host–guest relations, which is crucial for tourism development.

Methodology

An online survey was distributed to residents in Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand to assess their stereotypes of mainland Chinese tourists. It was distributed through Qualtrics, a market research company that has been employed in previous tourism research (Suess et al., 2020). The study purposely sought to recruit a gender-balanced sample as gender have been found to influence stereotypical views (Ifatunji & Harnois, 2016). With regards to measurement items, three items assessed "warmth" (i.e., friendly, sincere, and good), three items evaluated "competence" (i.e., intelligent, industrious, and competent), and two items measured "boastfulness" (i.e., loud and materialistic) as drawn from previous research (Fiske et al., 2002; Tse & Tung, 2021). All items were measured on a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Results

A total of 817 surveys were collected (Malaysia, $n = 219$; Singapore, $n = 213$; Thailand, $n = 236$). Approximately 58.40%, 55.90%, and 52.10% were male for Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, respectively. The majority of the respondents were between 25 and 44 years old (Malaysia: 62.50%; Singapore: 62.90%; Thailand: 68.70%). Furthermore, 64.30% of Malaysians, 63.40% of Singaporeans, and 85.10% of Thai respondents received at least a bachelor-level university degree. Table 1 presented the composite reliabilities (CR), Cronbach's alpha (α), means, as well as ANOVA analysis for Warmth, Competence and Boastful across Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. The values of CR and Cronbach's alpha exceeded 0.7, indicating good internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978).

To assess the relationships among the dimensions, a frequency mixed combination approach was utilized whereby the composite mean of each dimension was transformed into binary codes

Table 1

Descriptive Analysis Across Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand (*N* = 817)

Stereotypes	Malaysia (MY)			Singapore (SG)			Thailand (TH)			*F* Value	Pos Hoc Test
	CR	α	Mean (*SD*)	CR	α	Mean (*SD*)	CR	α	Mean (*SD*)		
Warmth	0.81	0.83	4.59 (1.13)	0.81	0.86	4.36 (1.19)	0.88	0.89	4.91 (1.27)	13.12*	TH > MY, SG
Competence	0.74	0.79	4.68 (1.05)	0.77	0.81	4.88 (1.04)	0.83	0.82	5.15 (1.07)	12.65*	TH > SG, MY
Boastful	0.8	0.82	4.61 (1.51)	0.71	0.74	5.30 (1.27)	0.82	0.84	4.41 (1.83)	22.10*	SG > MY, TH

*p < 0.001.

of "high" or "low." This approach allows for the clear mapping of boastfulness against warmth and competence (Fiske et al., 2002), and binary data approach could aid research interpretation as much as scale ratings with better stability (Dolnicar & Grün, 2013), which could be particularly relevant for short communications such as the present research note.

Figure 1 presents the three-dimensional frequency mixed distribution of warmth by competence by boastfulness. Across the three countries, compensatory effects among the three dimensions were generally found whereby at least one of the dimensions was reported in an opposite direction. For example, when mainland Chinese tourists were stereotyped as high in boastfulness, they were rated correspondingly low in warmth and competence. This pattern was shared by Malays and Thais in

that most residents reported rather extreme combinations where boastfulness mapped in the opposite direction of the two positive stereotypes of warmth and competence.

A surprising finding, however, was noted from Singaporeans. Unlike residents in Malaysia and Thailand, a substantial number of Singaporeans indicated that high boastfulness was mapped to low warmth but not low competence. In other words, when mainland Chinese tourists were viewed as "overpresenting" themselves through loud and materialistic consumptions, Singaporeans still perceived tourists as intelligent and competent. A possible explanation for this interesting finding is that boastfulness, and hence, spending power, could be seen as closely related to an individual's disposable income, which reflects attributes such as job status and salary. These attributes are highly valued in a
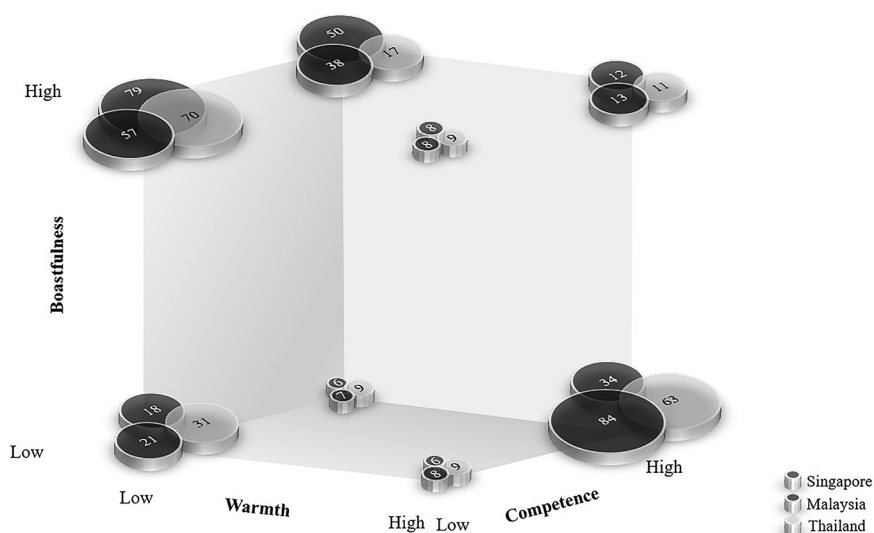

Figure 1. Three-dimensional frequency mixed distribution of tourist stereotypes.

hypercompetitive and capitalistic society such as Singapore (Lee et al., 2022).

Discussion

This study sought to contribute to the tourism literature by highlighting how the dimension of boastfulness relates to the two other dimensions in the stereotype content model: warmth and competence. While previous work generally focused on the contents of tourist stereotypes and separated them into positive and negative biases, this study examined them together via a frequency mixed distribution map to illustrate the presence of compensatory effects among the three dimensions. In doing so, this study contributes by showing how an integrated approach could enhance the literature on the interactions among tourist stereotype dimensions.

The findings indicate the presence of compensatory effects between boastfulness and warmth from residents' perception towards tourists. Previous studies on the stereotype content model (SCM) suggest the possibility of ambivalent and compensatory warmth–competence relationship, whereby these two dimensions can result in the same polarity. Yet, this study differs as tourists' consumption power reduces either their approachability, capabilities, or both. In other words, this study extends the SCM by considering the influence of an individual's self-pride and spending style onto intergroup relations.

Previous work in social psychology and intergroup research have emphasized the two-dimensional framework of warmth and competence. Extending from this concept, this study contributes to the literature by presenting an alternative angle with a three-dimensional mapping of boastfulness, warmth, and competence to illustrate the nature of host–guest relations that are specific to tourism research. Specifically, this study highlights how evaluations of boastfulness as a negative stereotype could lower residents' perception of tourists as warm, but not necessarily competence as that could depend on the values and cultures of the host destination (e.g., Singapore vs. Thailand and Malaysia).

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study may alert destination marketing organizations (DMOs) in their marketing strategies as tourism recovers from COVID-19. International tourism has been seriously affected, resulting in economic hardships in many destinations due to lower tourist arrivals and expenditures (UNWTO, 2021). As a result, DMOs may aiming to boost tourist spending as much as possible. Yet, the finding suggests a potential dilemma in doing so (Berselli et al., 2022; Stylidis, 2018); that is, encouraging unbridled tourist consumption may lead to views of boastfulness that may damage residents' views of tourists as warm and competent.

This dilemma may become particularly salient as the pandemic has increased wealth disparities and inequalities among individuals due to the tightening of incomes and disposable spending (United Nations, 2020). Consequently, when international tourism resumes, those who can travel aboard could be regarded as "wealthy" compared to residents who could no longer easily do so (Selvanathan & Selvanathan, 2022). DMOs that focus heavily on tourist expenditures through certain events and experiences (e.g., shopping and spending) could intensify stereotypes of boastfulness, and reduce positive views of tourists as warm and competent. DMOs would need to weigh the economic health of their destination with the social aspects of host–guest relations when international tourism resumes (Rodrigues et al., 2020; Stylidis et al., 2022).

Finally, there are limitations to this study and opportunities for future studies, especially for emerging researchers who are looking for new ideas (Tung & McKercher, 2017). A limitation of this study is the self-evaluation of residents' own consumption behaviors and spending patterns, which could influence the extent that they view tourists as boastful. For instance, residents with affluent spending habits might not perceive tourists as boastful while less affluent residents may regard tourists as otherwise. Consequently, it would be interesting for future research to assess the extent to which residents rate their own boastfulness, which subsequently could affect their views of tourists as warm and competence. Displaying one's affluence is not necessarily limited to tourists as residents who are capable and/or willing to spend could also exhibit boastful behaviors, especially in major urban destinations such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Seoul, and Tokyo that attract a large number of mainland Chinese tourists. Studies have shown the spillover effect of stereotypes from one social

group to another; as such, it would be interesting to examine how residents' views of themselves (i.e., their self-views of warmth, competence, and boastfulness) could spill over to their evaluations of tourists. Additionally, future studies could also examine how stereotypes could spill over to affect tourists' evaluations of a destination's image (Tung et al., 2021). Besides the above-mentioned, this study employs only gender as the control variable of the analysis; hence, future studies could address this limitation by adding more control variables such as age, education, and income.

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