

## Ethics of Chinese & Western Tourists in Hong Kong

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### ABSTRACT

The potential for tension between tourists and residents due to tourist behaviour is rising. In such environment, understanding tourists' ethical judgments of different scenarios is important. This study asks tourists and residents to ethically evaluate five different scenarios, using a multidimensional ethics scale and rate the likelihood they are to engage in these scenarios while at home and on vacation. An intercept survey of 1,827 questionnaires were collected from Hong Kong residents, Mainland Chinese and Western tourists. Teleological ethical theories may justify actions that are deemed ethically inappropriate by deontology or ethics of justice. Western tourists are more likely to engage in unethical behaviour on holidays than at home. For Mainland Chinese visitors, the opposite is true.

**Keywords:** ethics; relativism; Multidimensional Ethics Scale; scenario; Hong Kong

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism's role in enhancing the quality of lives of both tourists and the host community has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years. Due to the continuous growth of tourism, concerns regarding the social responsibility of individuals and organizations involved in tourism have been raised. A proliferation of codes of ethics, sustainability toolkits and certification schemes have been designed to direct tourism organizations towards a more ethical operation (for examples see European Commission, 2016; UNWTO, 2001). However, there has been less attention given to the role of tourists as agents of ethical judgment and decision making. Indeed, tourism has been discussed as a predominantly hedonistic and liminal experience which reveals hidden values and deviant behaviours that are repressed in the usual place of residence (McKercher, 2015; Selanniemi, 2003). It is argued that tourists are more likely to exhibit unethical and deviant behaviour during travel than at home. Tourists are also likely to employ various neutralisation tactics to justify such behaviour (McKercher, Weber, & du Cros, 2008).

Ethics is one of the fundamental areas of research and ethical questions have been raised by philosophers since ancient times. In recent decades, most notably in 1980s (Rest, 1986), there has been a growth of body of knowledge related to ethical judgments. The topic has been approached from various angles employing different ethical theories. Normative ethical theories of teleology, deontology, virtue ethics and ethics of justice are often employed to determine what actions may be deemed ethical (Fennell, 2006b). Ethical questions started to be addressed by

tourism researchers only in the 1990s with major works published in 2000s (Fennell, 2015). Research on ethics in tourism setting is especially interesting from a relativist perspective, due to tourism's inter-cultural nature (Smith & Duffy, 2003). In contrast with moral absolutism, which states that ethics originate from unquestioned principles and certain actions are intrinsically right or wrong, ethical relativism stipulates that there is no universal truth regarding what is right or what is wrong. This is because different societies and cultures have different understandings about what constitutes an ethical action (Fennell, 2006b). Different ethical perspectives may clash within a destination. In recent years this has led to resident protests, for example, in Barcelona (Colau, 2014) and Hong Kong (Lai & Lam, 2015). Being rude to service staff, urinating in public and disorderly queuing are some of the behaviours that Mainland Chinese tourists are accused of that stir protests in Hong Kong (Li, 2014).

This study contributes to the important, but somewhat under-researched area of ethical decision-making in tourism, in particular to the understanding of tourist ethical evaluation. The study employs various ethical theories in order to explain tourist ethical judgments in five different scenarios. The research addresses the question of the relativist nature of ethics and tests what behaviour tourists and residents perceive as ethically inappropriate in their usual place of residence or during travel. In the context of Hong Kong, the research investigates ethical judgments, using the multidimensional ethics scale (Reidenbach and Robin, 1990), of five different scenarios across three segments: Mainland Chinese tourists, Hong Kong residents and Western tourists. Whilst similar research has been undertaken in cross-cultural settings to explore ethical attitudes (e.g. Bucar, Glas & Hisrich, 2003, Rountree, O'Keefe & Chadaba, 2014) to the authors' best knowledge, this is the first attempt to conduct this type of research amongst tourists. The present study explores why tourists may exhibit socially deviant behavior. Understanding ethical differences between the cohorts of tourists and the likelihood of people to behave inappropriately on vacation provide valuable information for academics, policymakers and industry practitioners for further development of mitigation strategies to reduce anti-tourism sentiment among residents of Hong Kong and other popular tourist destinations. The following section reviews various ethical decision-making theories and previous research of ethical evaluations.

## **ETHICAL DECISION MAKING & EVALUATION**

Meta-ethics is a branch of ethical philosophy which discusses the origin of ethics. There are three main streams within meta-ethics: moral absolutism, relativism and subjectivism. Absolutism entails that what is right and wrong is based on universal principles. In contrast, relativism suggest that ethics has cultural origins and the understanding of what is right and wrong varies between cultures. Subjectivism suggests that ethics are personal and each person decides for him/her-self what is right and wrong (Fennell, 2006b). As a cross-cultural study about tourism, which entail interaction of people of various cultures, the paper takes a relativist perspective on the nature of ethics. Nevertheless, this study is predominantly informed by normative ethics rather than a meta-ethical debate. Normative ethics is a branch of ethics that studies moral decision making. Although, cultural relativism can be also applied from a normative ethical perspective as a guiding principle for the moral decision making (Gensler, 2011).

For centuries, ethical theories have evolved separately between the European countries (and later North America, Australia and New Zealand) and Asian countries. Existing academic literature suggests that values and ethics are considered relatively homogenous within the 'West' and could potentially be very different from 'Eastern' values and ethics (Forsyth, O'Boyle, & McDaniel, 2008; Lu, Gilmour & Kao, 2001; von Weltzien Hoivik, 2007). Hofstede (1984; 2011) demonstrates cultural similarities across various countries of the West and their difference from East Asian countries. The terminology of 'Western' tourists is also applied in tourism ethics related articles (e.g. Font, Garay & Jones, 2016; Holden, 2003; Lovelock, 2008). Hofstede's (1984) framework has been critiqued as it looks at national cultures and disregards ethnic differences within nations (Baskerville, 2003). While the present study does not suggest that all 'Westerners' have same ethics, following the previous research it appears theoretically coherent to contrast China with the collective 'West' for the purposes of the present research.

Normative ethics include a variety of ethical theories. The two largest groups of conflicting ethical theories are teleology and deontology. Teleology judges an action as moral based on its consequences. Deontology implies that actions are moral or immoral in themselves irrespective of the consequences. There are two branches of teleology: utilitarianism is concerned with consequences of actions, while egoism is concerned with the consequences for the individual him/herself (Clark & Dawson, 1996). During the decision-making process egoism and altruism often oppose each other within the teleological ethics, as one often needs to consider forgoing self-benefits in the interests of others. Egoism may include hedonism; the seeking of pleasure. However, an egoist action is not necessarily hedonic, as such self-directed benefits as gaining financially is not necessarily pleasurable (Fennell, 2006b). Deontology is concerned with the concept of 'doing the right thing' because it is the right thing to do (Fennell, 2006b). Kant (1797) was one of the first theorists of deontology and proposed ethical judgment based on the application of an action as a universal law. Kantian deontology is a basis of contractualism whereby individuals within a society agree to act with respect towards each other and maintain social contract. Another group of normative ethics is the ethics of justice. Ethics of justice are related to fairness, including fair benefit distribution, human rights and positive laws (legal system) (Hansen, 1992). Virtue ethics derive from ancient Greek philosophy, where actions are judged as moral, based on whether they demonstrate that a person undertaking such actions possesses good character traits or virtues (Fennell, 2006a; Gensler, 2011).

Mudrack and Mason (2013) provide a useful review of research into ethical judgment and behaviour in the business literature up until 2012. Mudrack and Mason (2013) focus their review predominantly on Reidenbach and Robin's work (1988) in developing a multidimensional ethics scale (MES), which employs various normative ethical theories. Capturing pluralistic moral philosophy using Reidenbach and Robin (1990) method forms the basis for this research. Reidenbach and Robin (1990) argue that a single-item measure of ethical behaviour is insufficient to assess someone's ethics. Their multidimensional scale, which has been built on and extended by others, takes into account different philosophies of ethics. These include the aforementioned relativism, theories of justice, deontology, utilitarianism and egoism (Reidenbach & Robin, 1990). MES applies relativism as a normative ethical theory which influences a particular ethical judgment. Such a view is in contrast with a meta-ethical approach

to relativism introduced within this paper. From a meta-ethical perspective, relativism stipulates that the nature of ethics is indeed cultural, rather than universal (all people have same ethics) or subjective (each person has his/her own ethics) (Fennell, 2006b). Notably, virtue ethics do not form part of MES. While virtue ethics is a valuable approach to ethics it is not recommended for self-reporting studies nor for scenario-based ethical judgment research (Shanahan & Hyman, 2003). Virtue ethics is based on the traits, personality and character which an individual or an organisation demonstrates over time, not from a single action. Moreover, MES is usually applied towards scenarios illustrating moral dilemmas therefore a person undertaking an action in these scenarios may not demonstrate any virtues.

The MES developed by Reidenbach and Robin (1988, 1990) has been used in a variety of contexts (Mudrack & Mason, 2013). Reidenbach and Robin (1990) implement their scale first using business and marketing scenarios. Hansen (1992) re-examines the MES scale, also applying it to business ethics. Schwepker Jr and Ingram (1996) use the MES to find a positive relationship between a salesperson's moral judgment and their job performance. Clark and Dawson (1996) explore how religiousness affects ethical judgements, using the MES with three business scenarios. Rountree et al. (2014) implement the MES across four cultures: USA, Romania, Poland and the Czech Republic. They find that there are some distinct differences in ethics across the four countries. Due to cultural backgrounds, social norms, religion and socio-economic development, the same scenarios may be perceived differently by respondents from different countries.

Despite the popularity of MES as a means of understanding ethical judgments, the scale has faced some criticism. Some items may be interpreted differently by researchers and respondents. For example, in Bucar et al.'s (2003) study, respondents interpreted the good/bad item as a strictly utilitarian "good/bad for business" item rather than an item related to the general construct of goodness. Similarly, the conclusion drawn in MES studies often go beyond what the instrument offers. For example, MES does not offer any insight on how respondents will actually behave. It only demonstrates whether respondents judge a certain scenario as ethically acceptable (Mudrack & Mason, 2013). A person may believe that an action is unethical and still undertake it for various reasons.

The MES is not the only measurement to assess ethical judgment. Other instruments and frameworks have been developed to understand different stages of ethical decision-making process including ethical judgments. Kohlberg (1984) proposed that moral development is a hierarchical process of three levels: 1) egocentric rationale; 2) social approval; and 3) ethical norm considerations. This model is used in Defining Issues Test for measuring ethical decision making (Rest, 1979). Cohen (1995) develops the concept of a moral climate continuum which emphasises the importance of social context for moral decision making. Sims (2003) aims to explain why unethical behaviour occurs in organizations based on individual factors, individuals' value systems, locus of control, Machiavellianism, cognitive moral development, situational influences and cultural differences.

Jones' (1991) comprehensive framework integrates several ethical decision making models, i.e. Dubinsky & Loken (1989), Ferrell & Gresham (1985), Hunt & Vitell (1986), Rest (1986) and

Trevino (1986). Jones' framework (1991) highlights the environment in which an ethical decision making process is taking place, the characteristics of the issue at hand, recognition of the moral issue, judgment, establishment of the moral intent and engagement in moral behaviour. The characteristics of the moral issue are defined by Jones (1991) in terms of moral intensity. Moral intensity has the following dimensions: magnitude of consequences, social consensus, probability of effect, temporal immediacy, proximity, and concentration of effect. While each of the aforementioned frameworks has merit to be applied in tourism studies, the present study uses MES as a means of understanding ethical judgment as one of the key concepts within the ethical decision-making process. The value of MES lies in the connection that it provides between the classical normative theories and their application to everyday scenarios. MES focuses on specific actions rather than long-term development of individuals' ethics, and focuses on one stage in ethical decision-making process: ethical judgment, rather than the overall process. Thus, it is both theoretically rigorous and practically relevant.

## **ETHICS IN TOURISM STUDIES**

Fennell (2015) provides a thorough review of ethics within tourism studies. Fennell (2006b) is arguably the most comprehensive text to date that applies various ethical theories to tourism. Lovelock & Lovelock (2013) discuss the ethics of various types of tourism such as sex tourism, medical tourism and nature-based tourism, and take a more issue-based approach rather than focusing on ethical theories. Ethics in tourism studies have often been discussed in relationship to sustainability (Holden, 2009; Macbeth, 2005). Related research has been undertaken on the topic of codes of ethics or code of conduct among tourism organizations and tourists (Cole, 2007; Malloy & Fennell, 1998). Hultsman (1995) and Higgins-Desbiolles (2006) move beyond triple-bottom line sustainability to discuss tourism as a force for social justice. Ethical concerns in tourism education and research are the other topics discussed within the academic literature (Hudson & Miller, 2005; Pritchard, Morgan, & Ateljevic, 2011; Ryan, 2005).

Normative ethical theories can be applied to understanding any action or lack of action, including those that occur during travel. Tourism cases are nevertheless interesting, since tourism is often considered a hedonic and egoistic pursuit, as major motivations for leisure travel are self-directed and self-benefiting (McKercher, 2015). Travelling away from the place of residence provides opportunities to free oneself from the judgment by family, friends or broader society thus removing some of the social constraints towards engaging in deviant behaviour. This alludes to the liminality of tourism experiences (Selanniemi, 2003). At the same time there are more calls from various organisations for tourists to behave more ethically in destinations and be more respectful towards local culture and nature, suggesting it is also tourists' duty to protect culture and the environment (McKercher et al., 2008; Mostafanezhad & Hannam, 2014). Nevertheless, there remains a lot of ambiguity around definition of ethical consumption in tourism (Weeden & Boluk, 2014).

There has been little utilisation of ethical theories, in particular MES, in tourism research, despite the popularity of the MES scale in related disciplines. Fennell & Malloy (1999) use the MES in a tourism context by examining the ethical nature of ecotourism, adventure, fishing, golf and cruise lines tourism operators. Fennell & Malloy (1999) find that tour operators are not all the

same when it comes to ethical behaviour. Ecotourism operators are more ethically orientated than fishing, golf and cruise line operators. The differences between tour operators are especially significant when the ethics of justice scale is applied. They also note a positive relationship between level of education and ethical behaviour. Nazari & Weerakit (2014) examine ethical decision making among tourism and hospitality students in Thailand using MES. They conclude that these students are more socially and economically ethical than environmentally ethical. Students weigh justice theory and relativism more strongly in their decision making than deontological values. Students perceive themselves to be more ethical than their peers. Tourism presents vast opportunities to explore questions related to ethics and morality. The present study employs the MES to advance knowledge of tourist ethics. The subsequent sections of this paper present the methodology and findings of the study.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Research Instrument*

Few studies of tourist ethics have been undertaken to date. The literature review for this study has not yielded any examples of analysis of ethical decision-making among different tourist segments. This study uses an MES adapted from Reidenbach & Robin (1990) and Rountree et al. (2014). A ten item 7-point semantic differential scale was developed to assess the perception of the respondents regarding how ethical different activities were. The higher the score, the more ethical the activity is perceived by the respondent. Table 1 presents the scale and the ethical theory behind each measurement:

**Table 1: Multidimensional Ethics Scale used in the Study**

<b>Ethical scale</b>	<b>Ethical theory</b>
Fair (7) / Unfair (1)	Ethics of Justice
Acceptable (7) / Unacceptable in my culture (1)	Relativism
Acceptable (7) / Unacceptable for me if there is no punishment (1)	Egoist Teleology
Acceptable (7) / Unacceptable to my friends and family (1)	Relativism
Based (7) / Not based on sound judgment (1)	Egoist Teleology
Personally (7) / Not personally satisfying and pleasurable (1)	Egoist Teleology
OK (7) / Not OK if it can be justified by positive consequences (1)	Utilitarianism
Does not (7) / Does compromise important principles by which I live (1)	Deontology
Does not (7) / Does violate established social norms (1)	Contractualist Deontology
Morally (7) / Not morally right (1)	Deontology

A typical method to evaluate ethics is to present respondents with a brief scenario in which an ethically questionable behaviour is described (Mudrack & Mason, 2013). Five different scenarios of ethical behaviour were tested. The scenarios describe behaviours that are applicable both at home and while on vacation, and were developed based on the examples from academic literature and popular media. The scenarios were chosen to represent actions of different moral intensity as per Jones (1991). The moral intensity of each scenario is not dictated to respondents as they make their own judgment. The scenarios also represent moral dilemmas that are often associated with tourism. The research has been undertaken in Hong Kong as the issue of unethical behaviour among visitors of different backgrounds, especially from Mainland China,

has been highly debated in popular media in recent years (Lai & Lam, 2015; Loi & Pearce, 2015). Hong Kong has been often described as an “East Meets West” destination, thus it is highly suitable for a cross-cultural study.

The first scenario asks about knowingly purchasing a counterfeit handbag at an open-air market. China and Hong Kong are two of the most common destinations where counterfeit goods are made and sold (Sharma & Chan, 2016). The second scenario relates to disorderly conduct in public due to drunkenness. Excessive drinking and inappropriate behaviour as a result of drunkenness has been the subject of previous tourism research (Thurnell-Read, 2012). The third scenario relates to jumping the queue so that there is no need to wait in line for entry into a restaurant or attraction, which is one of the most annoying tourist behaviours as perceived by Hong Kong residents (Loi & Pearce, 2015). The fourth scenario describes the possibility of the respondent lying about the age of a child in the travel party so they qualify for entry into an amusement park with a child price, since cheating represents an interesting phenomenon within the host-guest relations (Fennell, 2006a). The last scenario asks about engaging the services of a prostitute, since sex tourism is one of the prominent controversial topics (Bauer, 2014; Omondi & Ryan, 2016).

Upon rating the five scenarios on MES, respondents were asked how likely they were to undertake this activity while at home and while on vacation, on a 5-point Likert scale. A standard set of demographic questions were asked capturing age, gender, education level, marital status and employment status. For both Western and Mainland Chinese tourists, a set of travel-related questions were asked. These questions included length of stay in Hong Kong, main purpose of trip, travel party size and composition, country of origin, first time or repeat visitor to Hong Kong and package tourists or independent tourists.

The questionnaire was first developed in English and then translated into traditional Chinese and simplified Chinese by one of the authors, a native Chinese speaker. The questionnaire was pre-tested among six respondents in both English and Chinese for ease of comprehension. As a result, there were slight wording changes. For example, ‘prudent’ (Reidenbach & Robin, 1988, 1990) was difficult to translate into Chinese and hence was changed to ‘sound judgement’.

### *Sampling*

The data collection involved in-person intercept surveys among the three cohorts: Hong Kong residents, Mainland Chinese tourists and ‘Western’ international tourists. Mainland Chinese tourists were chosen for two main reasons. Firstly, this segment comprises an increasing proportion of tourists to Hong Kong. According to the Hong Kong Tourist Board, over 47 million tourists from Mainland China visited Hong Kong in 2014, comprising 77.7% of all visitors (Hong Kong Tourism Board, 2015). Secondly, there have been numerous reports in the media and subsequent academic research on the socio-cultural tension between Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese Tourists (Loi & Pearce, 2015) as noted above. The second cohort are other international tourists comprising of ‘Western’ tourists from the USA, UK, Europe, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. This group was chosen as values and ethics are considered relatively homogenous within the ‘West’ and could potentially be very different from ‘Eastern’ values and

ethics (Forsyth, O'Boyle, & McDaniel, 2008; von Weltzien Hoivik, 2007). A cohort of local residents was included in the sampling as a control group; a benchmark against which to measure these two tourist groups. The Hong Kong sample was all ethnically Chinese. The data collection took place over several weeks in October 2015 at common tourist locations in Hong Kong.

A total of 1,827 surveys were completed. The sample size for Hong Kong residents is 410. This provided a maximum sampling error at the 95% level of confidence of  $\pm 4.84\%$ . The sample size for Mainland Chinese tourists is 796 and for other international tourists, it is 621. This gives a maximum sampling error of  $\pm 3.47\%$  and  $\pm 3.93\%$  for those segments, respectively. A stratified sampling technique was employed to ensure representative samples based on age and gender for the three cohorts. Target sample proportions for Hong Kong residents' gender and age were obtained from the Hong Kong Census data (Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2014). The target population proportions for Mainland Chinese tourists and other international tourists were obtained from the Hong Kong Tourist Board annual report (Hong Kong Tourism Board, 2015). The research assistants were a mix of males and females. Potential respondents were informed of the aims of the research and asked to participate. These individuals were also informed that all information would remain confidential, that no individual identifiable data would be revealed and told they had every right to withdraw from the study before or during the survey process without penalty of any kind. Respondents were screened to ensure they were 18 years or above and completed the survey individually, if they were travelling as part of a group. The researchers received human research ethics approval from their university before commencing the data collection. Full demographic profile of respondents is provided in Appendix 1.

### *Analysis*

Firstly, descriptive statistics have been employed, calculating mean scores for each scenario, each item on the MES scale across scenarios and each cohort. Based on the outcome of an exploratory factor analysis it was possible to draw grand mean scores for each scenario. Mean scores for the likelihood of undertaking the proposed controversial actions at home and on vacations were analysed as well. ANOVA and paired t-tests were then conducted to explore statistically significant differences by cohort (international 'Western' tourists, Mainland Chinese tourists and Hong Kong residents), by demographic characteristics (e.g. age, gender) and travel characteristics (e.g. independent/package travel). Conducting statistical tests for differences in mean scores among different cohorts has been undertaken in line with previous studies (see Fennell & Malloy, 1999; Nazari and & Weerakit, 2014).

## RESULTS

The study asked respondents to evaluate how ethical five different scenarios were according to a multidimensional ethics scale and state how likely they were to engage in actions described in scenarios when they were in their place of usual residence or on vacation. The results show a consistent pattern across different ethical theories, and demonstrate significant differences when considering different scenarios. There are also statistically significant differences across the three



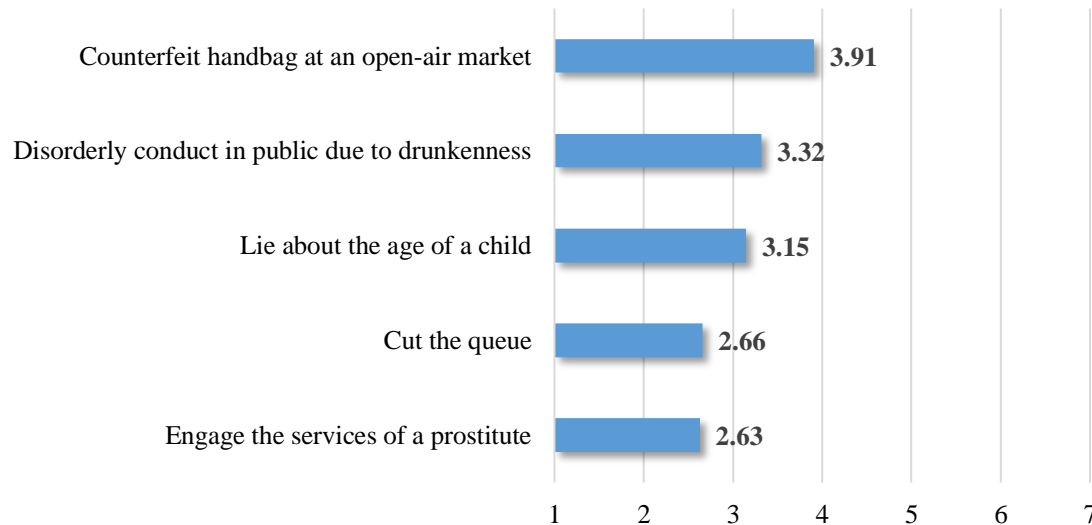
cohorts: Western tourists, Mainland Chinese tourists and Hong Kong residents, for different scenarios.

### Overall Results

Taking the grand mean across the ten items in the MES scales allows a comparison of the relative ethical perceptions of the five scenarios. The justification for averaging the ethics scores across the ten items is that factor analyses (principle component analysis), conducted on the five scenarios to explore the interrelationship among the ten items, show that each scenario is represented by only one underlying dimension. Each factor explains 67% to 75% of the original variance. The inter-item reliability of each factor, measured by Cronbach's alpha, is larger than 0.94 indicating high reliability. The results of factor analysis suggest that grand means can be used to represent each scenario.

The results demonstrate significant differences in ethics among tourists' and residents' perceptions of each scenario (Figure 1). The lower the score, the less ethically acceptable a scenario is perceived by respondents (Reidenbach & Robin, 1990). Overall, engaging the services of a prostitute is considered the least ethical behaviour, followed by cutting the queue, lying about a child's age and disorderly conduct due to drunkenness. Purchase of counterfeit products is considered the least unethical behaviour. The mean scores for all scenarios except purchase of counterfeit products is below 3.5 (below the mid-point on a seven-point scale) signifying that respondents perceive the scenarios, in general, as unethical.

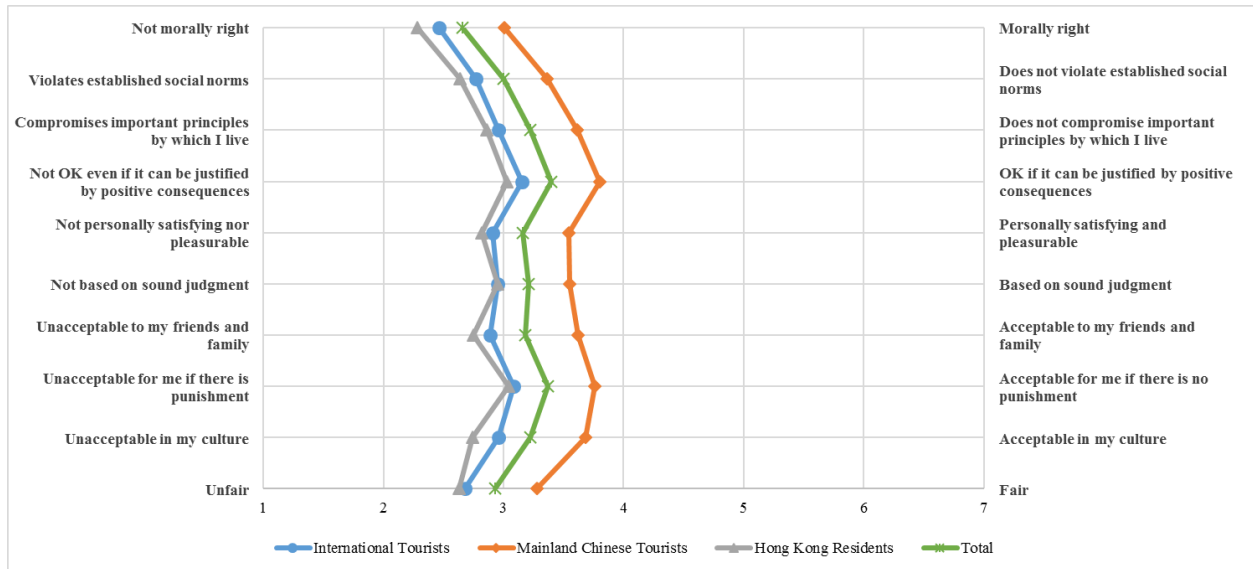
**Figure 1: Grand Means of Ethical Perceptions for the Five Scenarios**



Next, for each item in the MES, we aggregate the five scenarios to examine how the different items in the MES vary within cohort. This allows an understanding of which type of ethics respondents use when judging questionably ethical behaviour. Interestingly, a similar pattern emerges across the three cohorts as shown in Figure 2. Generally, the deontological question of

whether something is morally right yields the lowest mean score while the utilitarian question of positive consequences yields the highest mean score. This means that according to the deontological items, respondents consider the scenarios as less ethically acceptable than according to utilitarian items.

**Figure 2: MES Means Aggregated by Scenario**



Overall, the ethical theories of utilitarianism, egoism and relativism allow more flexibility than the ethics of justice and deontology. This is a general pattern that does not differ by cohort. This pattern can be seen in the Figures below in four of the five scenarios; the exception being engaging the services of a prostitute.

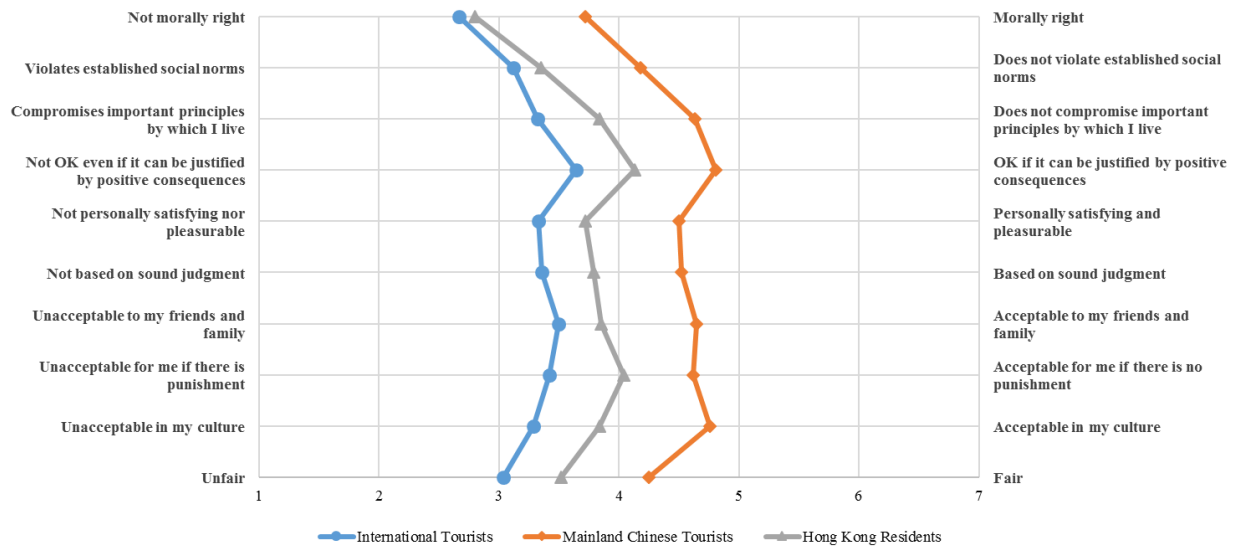
*MES Differences in the Five Scenarios by Cohort*

When examining the ethical judgments of the five scenarios and when aggregating across the 10 items in the MES, clear differences among the three cohorts are identified (see Appendix 2 for detailed statistical analysis). While it might have been expected that Hong Kong residents and Mainland Chinese tourists would respond more similarly compared to Western International tourists due to shared beliefs originating in traditional Chinese culture (Leung, 2010), the data reveals that Hong Kong residents perceive the behaviours outlined in the scenarios as more unethical than Western International tourists, who in turn, perceive the scenarios as more unethical than Mainland Chinese tourists.

In general, Mainland Chinese tourists show significantly higher degree of acceptance towards buying counterfeit handbags, jumping queues, and lying about the age of a child. However, disorderly conduct due to drunkenness and engaging the services of a prostitute are more accepted by Western tourists than their Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong counterparts. Hong Kong residents find it difficult to accept most deviant behaviours identified in this study, with the exception of buying counterfeits. For all the following analyses, ANOVA (for more than two groups) and pair t-tests are performed across the segments and the familiar SPSS output showing which mean scores are different from others can be found in Appendix 2.

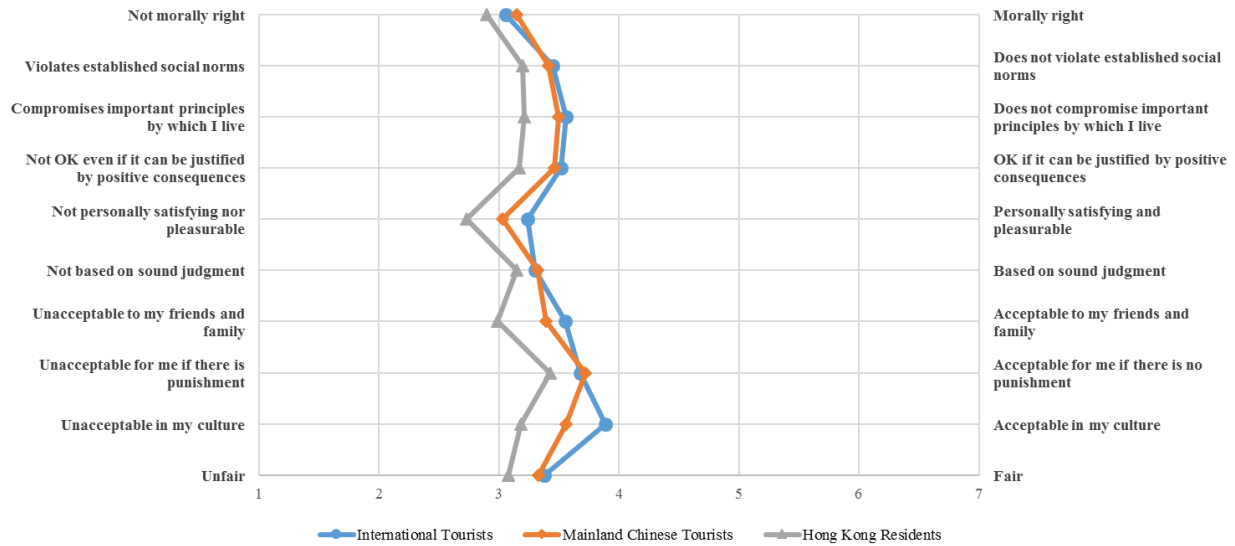
The first scenario looks at the issue of knowingly purchasing counterfeiting products. Western tourists perceive counterfeiting to be more unethical compared to the other cohorts. Mainland Chinese tourists are the most receptive. Hong Kong residents exhibit responses in-between the international tourists and Chinese tourists across the MES scale. The three cohorts exhibit the same pattern of responses to each scale item on the MES as shown in Figure 3. Generally, buying counterfeits can be justified if it has positive consequences (utilitarianism), no punishment (egoism teleology) and is acceptable to friends, family and those of the same culture (relativism).

**Figure 3: Knowingly Purchase a Counterfeit Handbag by Cohort**



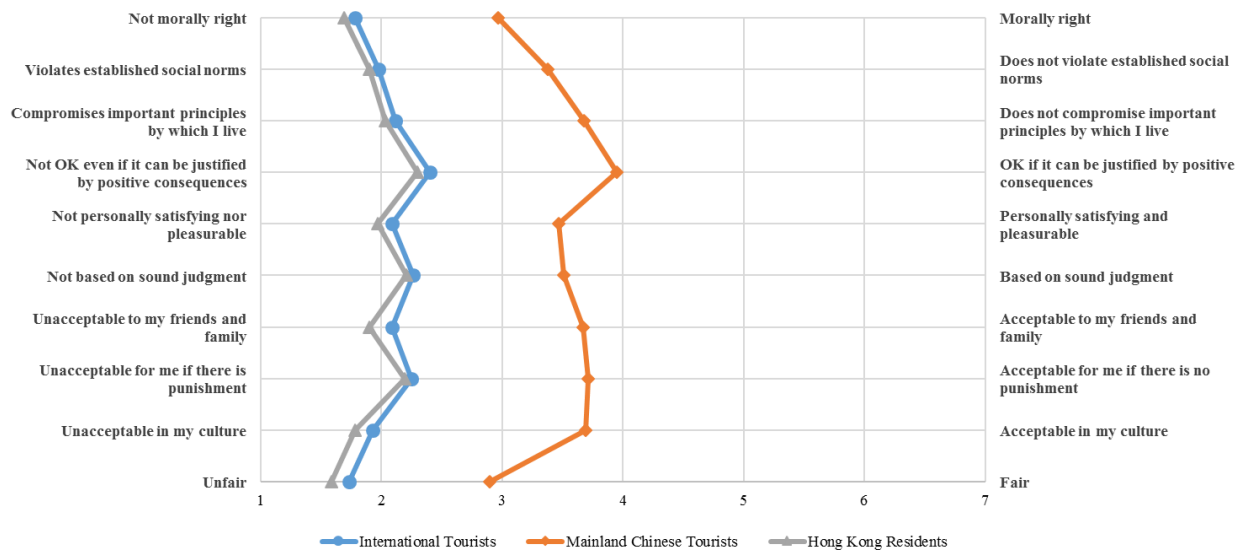
A different pattern emerged regarding the question of disorderly behaviour due to drunkenness. Mainland Chinese tourists and Western tourists provide similar responses, differing from Hong Kong residents. Hong Kong residents are less receptive of such behaviour. Mainland Chinese tourists and Western tourists have similar responses for teleological, justice and deontological ethics, however the relativistic ethic scale suggests that disorderly behaviour due to drunkenness is more acceptable in the Western culture than in Chinese culture (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Disorderly conduct in Public due to Drunkenness by Cohort**



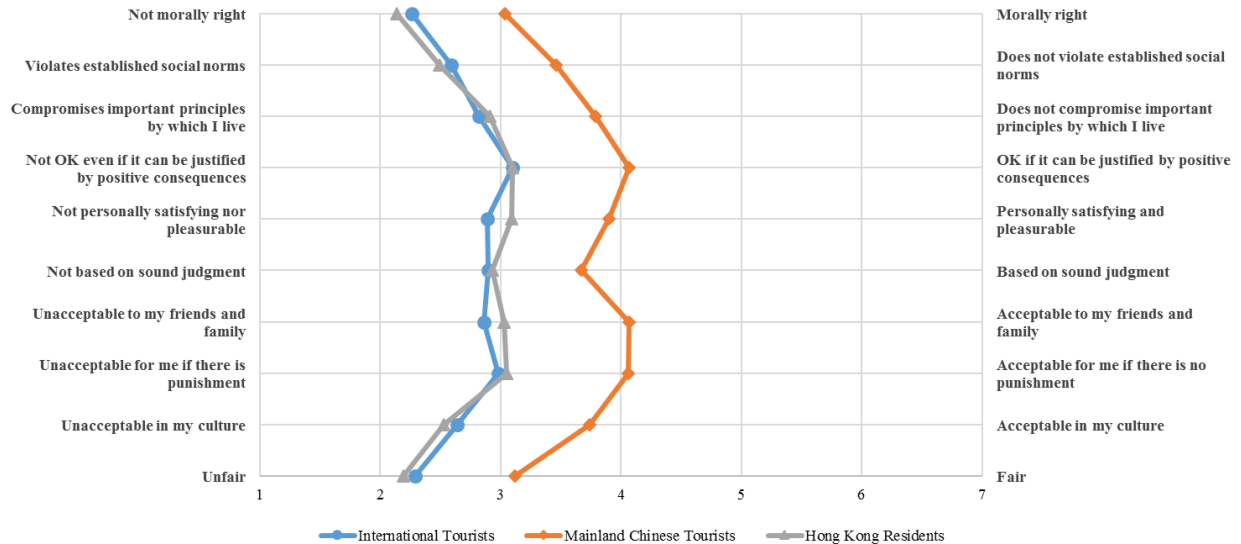
The third scenario asks about the ethics of jumping the queue. In this scenario Western tourists and Hong Kong residents display similar ethics, which is statistically significantly different from the Mainland Chinese tourists. As shown in Figure 5, jumping the queue appears acceptable in Mainland Chinese culture as well as personally acceptable to Chinese individuals if the action can be justified by positive consequences. Although, they do recognize that such behaviour may not be fair or moral, they still perceive it to be more moral and fair than Hong Kong residents and Western tourists. Based on the results, it is possible to conclude that in Hong Kong and Western cultures, queue jumping is considered unfair and unacceptable and is rarely justified, even if there were positive consequences as a result.

**Figure 5: Cutting the Queue by Cohort**



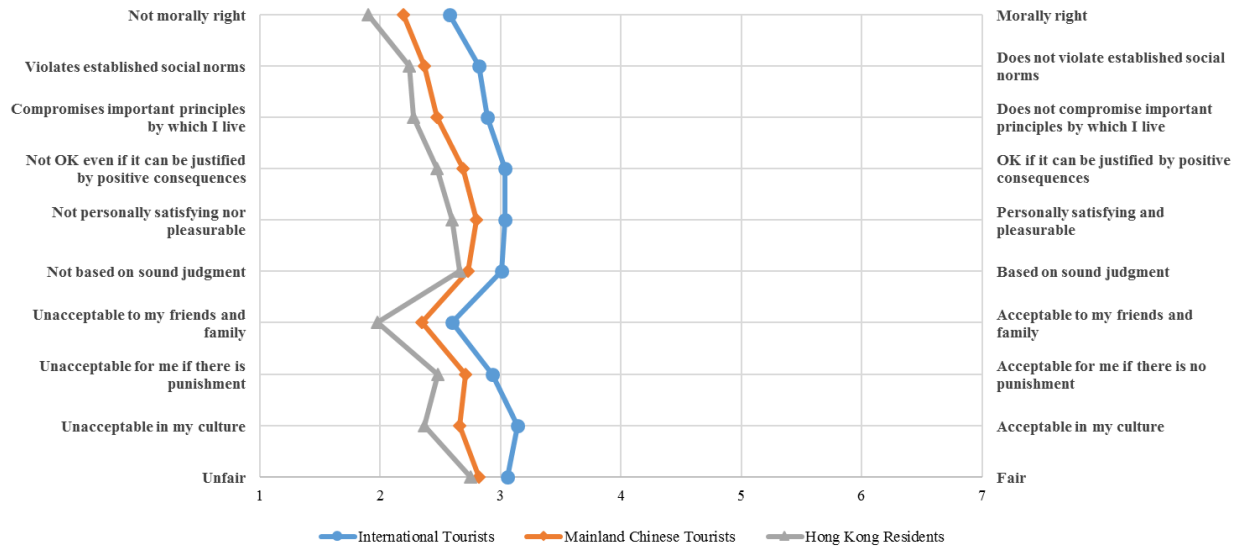
Lying about a child’s age so they qualify for entry into an amusement park with a child price produced results similar to scenario of cutting queues: Hong Kong residents and Western tourists differ significantly from Mainland Chinese tourists. Mainland Chinese tourists are more receptive of such practices. As shown in Figure 6, the utilitarian approach appears important for this scenario as positive outcomes of reduced cost and lack of punishment justifies its means. Interestingly, across the three cohorts, this scenario is more acceptable for friends and family than for their culture in general.

**Figure 6: Lying about the age of a child by Cohort**



The prostitution-related scenario provides a different outcome to other scenarios. Western tourists were the most receptive towards the practice in comparison to Mainland Chinese tourists and Hong Kong residents. Differences in responses are especially stark between the Western tourists and Hong Kong residents. As shown in Figure 7, prostitution appears more acceptable in Western culture, although it is not acceptable for friends and relatives across the three cohorts.

**Figure 7: Engaging the Services of a Prostitute by Cohort**



The comparison of responses between the three cohorts provides interesting insights into the relativist perspective of ethical decision making. The results demonstrate that with regards to ethics it is incorrect to assume that there is a general pattern of differentiation between Western culture and Chinese culture, as well as assuming that one culture is more or less “ethical” than another.

*Unethical behaviour on Vacation versus at Home*

Individuals were not very likely to take part in actions portrayed within the scenarios neither at home nor on vacations with mean scores of 2.41 and 2.44 respectively (Table 2). Hence the difference between the general likelihood to perform deviant behaviour on vacation and at home is not statistically significant. Nevertheless, significant differences emerge within and between scenarios. Among the five scenarios, individuals are most likely to participate in the purchase of counterfeit products both on vacation and at home. As shown in Table 2, Mainland Chinese tourists were more likely than Western tourists and Hong Kong residents to participate in three out of five activities, both at home and on vacation: purchasing of counterfeit products, cutting the queue and lying about the age of a child. Western tourists are more likely to misbehave due to drunkenness and engage services of a prostitute both at home and on vacation, compared to the other cohorts. Western tourists are less likely to purchase counterfeit handbags than the other two groups, as well as lie about a child’s age. Hong Kong residents are comparatively less likely to misbehave due to drunkenness, cut the queue or engage the services of a prostitute. These findings correspond to the MES results suggesting that an individual’s ethical judgments are consistent with their behavioural intention. Hence, individuals with higher scores in the MES are also more likely to undertake these activities both at home and while on vacation. A bivariate correlation analysis reports that all correlations between aggregated MES scores for the five scenarios have moderate to strong positive correlations with the likelihood to undertake these activities. The correlations range from 0.583 for disorderly conduct in public due to drunkenness while on vacation to 0.769 for cutting the queue while at home.

**Table 2: Likelihood of undertaking Deviant Behaviour At Home and On Vacation**

Scenario		Total	International Tourists (A)	Mainland Chinese Tourists (B)	Hong Kong Residents(C)
Counterfeit handbag at an open-air market	At Home	2.78	2.1	3.40(AC)	2.65(A)
	On Vacation	2.96	2.66	3.25(AC)	2.85(A)
Disorderly conduct in public due to drunkenness	At Home	2.69	2.84(C)	2.75(C)	2.37
	On Vacation	2.61	2.82(BC)	2.55	2.39
Cut the queue	At Home	2.27	1.68	3.05(AC)	1.66
	On Vacation	2.19	1.70	2.83(AC)	1.69
Lie about the age of a child	At Home	2.53	2.09	3.03(AC)	2.22
	On Vacation	2.55	2.18	3.01(AC)	2.22
Engage the services of a prostitute	At Home	1.78	1.90(C)	1.81(C)	1.52
	On Vacation	1.91	2.07(C)	1.91(C)	1.67
<b>Total</b>	At home	2.41	2.12	2.81	2.08
	On vacation	2.44	2.29	2.71	2.16

Results are based on two-sided tests assuming equal variances with significance level .05. For each significant pair, the key of the smaller category appears under the category with larger mean.

Tests are adjusted for all pairwise comparisons within a row of each innermost sub-table using the Bonferroni correction.

Western tourists are more likely to participate in deviant behaviour on vacation in all scenarios except “disorderly conduct in public due to drunkenness” (mean score of 2.84 at home versus 2.82 while on vacation). Mainland Chinese visitors are statistically less likely to participate in deviant behaviour on vacation than at home in all scenarios except when engaging services of a prostitute. Hong Kong residents are generally more likely to exhibit deviant behaviour while on vacation but the differences are not statistically significant at the 95% level of confidence

#### *Differences in Ethics by Demographics and Trip Characteristics*

There are significant differences in ethical decision making by demographic segment across the three cohorts. Demographic segments with higher mean scores show higher receptiveness and likelihood to participate in deviant behaviours. These groups are considered less ethical. Within and across cohorts, ethical decision making differs by gender, education level, age, marital status, and employment status. For the sake of space, additional test results are shown in Appendix 2. Demographic differences are found across the five scenarios.

Males from the three cohorts are significantly more receptive to disorderly conduct in public due to drunkenness and engaging the services of a prostitute than females. No differences in responses by education attainment were found in Western tourists and Hong Kong residents, but Mainland Chinese respondents who are less educated (less than Bachelor’s degree) are found to consider all five scenarios more ethically acceptable than those respondents from Mainland China with higher education. Western tourists who are single consider purchase of counterfeit handbags, disorderly conduct due to drunkenness, and engaging the services of a prostitute as more acceptable. Married Mainland Chinese tourists consider all scenarios are more acceptable than single Mainland Chinese tourists with the exception of engaging the services of a prostitute. No significant differences in ethics are observed in Hong Kong residents of different marital status. Younger Western tourists (18-34 years old) are less ethical in all of five scenarios, while

older Mainland Chinese tourists (over 35 years old) are less ethical in most scenarios. No significant differences are observed in Hong Kong residents when segmented by age. In conclusion, the effect of demographic variables on ethical decision making is significant for tourists, both Western and Mainland Chinese, but not for Hong Kong residents.

Ethical decision making among tourists can be affected by travel party composition, purpose of trip and whether the trip is a package or independent travel. Mainland Chinese tourists are more likely to buy counterfeit handbags, conduct disorderly due to drunkenness, jump the queue, lie about the age of a child when they travel with friends or relatives and when they travel to Hong Kong as part of an organised tour. Engaging in services of a prostitute is more acceptable when Mainland Chinese tourists are on business trips and travel by themselves. However, these trip-specific differences are only significant for Mainland Chinese tourists; no such differences are observed for Western tourists.

## **DISCUSSION**

### *Normative ethics as guidance for ethical decision making*

The normative ethics of teleology, including utilitarianism and egoism, appear to allow more flexibility in ethical judgments than deontology. This finding holds across tourists from Western countries and Mainland China and for Hong Kong residents. The finding holds for most scenarios in this study. Although tourists are aware that certain behaviours might be immoral or unfair to others, they still consider controversial actions acceptable if there are no negative consequences. This indicates that, when facing ethical dilemmas, those tourists who mainly focus on the consequences to themselves are likely to participate in deviant activities. Bellizzi & Bristol (2005) report similar findings related to unethical selling: since unethical selling leads to additional revenue for the company, supervisors making teleological judgments may be more lenient in disciplinary action towards unethical sales. Fraedrich (1991) suggests that company managers use utilitarian logic in justifying actions that may be deemed unethical, suggesting that unless those actions were undertaken employees would lose jobs and their families would suffer.

While beyond the scope of the present study, future empirical research should address whether people become more selfish on vacations and are driven by egoism in their ethical decision making. McKercher (2015) suggests that the nature of tourism is indeed selfish. Interestingly, Hong Kong residents, as the reference group, also show similar patterns of flexible ethical judgment based on utilitarianism and egoism as tourists. It may well be that humans are egoists irrespective of whether they are local residents or tourists.

### *Importance of scenarios for ethical decision making*

Attitudes towards and likely participation in unethical behaviour appears to depend on the scenarios presented. Jones (1991) and Mudrack & Mason (2013) suggest that the importance of scenarios presented to respondents in ethical judgment studies is often overlooked. The scenarios and the context in which the study takes place impacts results. As Mudrack & Mason (2013, p. 591) state: "Ethical judgments do not occur in isolation". Ethical decision making depends on the characteristics of the ethical issues (Jones, 1991). For example, drawing from the results



presented in Figure 7, engaging in the services of a prostitute is the least ethical behaviour primarily because it is not acceptable to respondents' friends and family although it could be considered as a fully consented business transaction between suppliers (prostitutes) and customers (tourists). According to Jones' (1991) concept of moral intensity, this behaviour has severe negative consequences for one's personal social life (destroying a marriage or reputation loss) and society (human trafficking and exploitation); low social consensus among friends and families; high moral proximity (strong feeling of nearness) to friends and families whose feelings might be hurt. In addition, the scenario of prostitution receives relatively low scores on deontological items. Kantian deontology is often used to demonstrate the immorality of prostitution as it reduces a human being to an instrument for achieving sexual desires with another person. It violates the principle of treating every person as an ends in themselves rather than the means to achieving one's objectives (Papadaki, 2007).

Cutting queues seems to be a very different behaviour since it occurs in public rather than being a private activity. The negative consequence of someone else cutting in the queue might be only a few more minutes' wait; yet it is rated as the second least ethical behaviour with a very similar mean score to engaging in prostitute services. Low scores of queue cutting on deontological and justice items suggests that it is a breach of a social contract established by the consumers, who make an unwritten agreement on how the queue is to proceed (Fullerton & Punj, 1997). Jones (1991) concept of moral intensity offers another potential explanation for low tolerance towards queue jumping, although further research on the issue is required. The reasons for being deemed an unethical behaviour are likely to be the low social consensus and high immediacy of effect (Jones, 1991). The negative effect of cutting queues (a few minutes extra wait) is definitive and immediate, while the negative consequence of engaging the services of a prostitute is uncertain and may take effect a long time after the act has taken place. For tourists, a few more minutes in a queue can become even more important since they may have spent a lot on their holidays and have limited time in the destination. On the other hand, knowingly purchasing counterfeit products is the most acceptable behaviour since it has relatively high social consensus, low feeling of nearness to the victims (luxury brand owners), uncertain probability and low immediacy of negative consequences. Therefore, ethical decision making significantly depends on different ethical dilemmas presented.

#### *Effect of Culture, Demography and Social Group on Ethical Decision Making*

Ethical decision making differs between individuals of different cultures. As with Rountree et al.'s (2014) application of MES, this research finds differences between individuals from different cultures. The findings support relativist ethics since relativism is one of the three ethical theories that guide ethical decision making (Fennell, 2006b; Smith & Duffy, 2003). The present research suggests that individuals are more likely to participate in practices that are considered acceptable in their culture, and refrain from practices that are not considered culturally appropriate. Another approach to cultural relativist perspective discussed by Smith & Duffy (2003) that the present research does not address is the extent to which tourists adopt the ethics of the destination while on holidays. All scenarios received rather low scores (except for purchase of counterfeit products), therefore universalism of ethics across cultures should not be

discarded. Loi & Pearce (2015) have also found similarities in ethical views of tourists from different cultures. Western tourists are more likely to behave disorderly due to drunkenness, but are less likely to knowingly buy counterfeit handbags. However, within cultures, as noted above, the scenario matters. Although Mainland Chinese tourists are more receptive to most deviant behaviours investigated within this study, Western tourists indicate significantly higher acceptance of engaging the services of a prostitute. The effect of relativism is also supported by the fact that ethical decision making by individuals of the same age, gender, educational level, marital and employment status, differ significantly across cultures.

Demographic differences in ethical judgments and decision making occur when considering the same scenario. Previous research (Craft, 2013) demonstrates that individual factors such as gender, age, education, employment are found to have significant effects on ethical decision making. In this study, the effects of age, education, marital and employment status are not always significant, depending on the scenario and the cohort being examined. For example, young Western tourists are less ethical than older Western tourists but young Mainland Chinese tourists are more ethical than older Mainland Chinese tourists in most scenarios. There are no differences by age among Hong Kong residents. Gender is the only variable that has a significant effect across all three cohorts but this still depends on the scenario. Males from all three cohorts are significantly less ethical than their female counterparts in the scenarios of disorderly conduct in public due to drunkenness and engaging the services of a prostitute. This matches findings from previous research where females are usually more ethical than males (e.g. Eweje & Brunton, 2010; Krambia-Kapardis & Zopiatas, 2008).

The effect of social group on individual ethical decision making has been proved to be significant in the context of business organizations (Jackson, Wood, & Zboja, 2012). However, few studies have investigated such effect in the context of tourism. The findings show that the likelihood for tourists to participate in deviant behaviours is significantly higher when tourists are travelling with friends and families, or participating in package tours than when travelling by themselves. This suggests that tourists' ethical judgments can be influenced by travel companions. In the present study, the effect of social group is only significant for Mainland Chinese tourists. Collectivism may explain such outcome. Husted and Allen (2008) have found significant effects of individualism and collectivism on ethical decision making in the context of business organizations. Husted & Allen (2008) apply individualism and collectivism to post-conventional moral judgments (i.e. ethics related to whole of society), based on Kohlberg's (1984) framework. They suggest that moral judgments in individualistic societies are justice-based, while in collectivist societies they are relationship-based. Therefore, since collectivism is a major belief in traditional Chinese culture, Mainland Chinese tourists may be affected more easily by others when making ethical judgments. Western tourists are more individualistic and tend to rely on personal opinions and judgements. Further research is required to investigate the impact of collectivism on ethical behaviour in tourism settings.

#### *Ethics "at home" versus "on vacation"*

In general, Hong Kong residents are more ethical than both Western and Mainland Chinese tourists. This contrasts with the assumption that Hong Kong residents and Mainland Chinese

tourists might have similar ethical stances because they share a Chinese culture. The main reason is that the general situation (location) while answering the survey is different: Hong Kong residents were at home while tourists were on vacation. The situational factors have been proved to have significant effects on behavioural intention of business ethical decisions (Lehnert et al., 2015) and ethical consumptions (Correia and Kozak, 2016). Hong Kong residents are more restricted by laws, rules, ethical codes, and social pressures from friends and families in Hong Kong while tourists are much less affected by such constraints. Therefore, deontology is more emphasized by Hong Kong residents which leads to a lower tolerance of the five moral dilemmas.

Both Hong Kong residents and Western tourists indicate a higher likelihood to undertake unethical behaviour on vacation rather than at home. This result confirms previous research that individuals are more likely to engage in unethical behaviour on vacation than at home because of lower social constraints (McKercher, 2015; McKercher, et al., 2008; Selanne, 2003). However, this thesis requires further validation, as it may not apply for all tourists and all activities. Interestingly, Mainland Chinese tourists were more likely to behave ethically on vacation rather than at home. This may be a China-specific phenomenon, although further research is required to make any definitive claim. In recent years, the surge of outbound Chinese tourists and the incidence of inappropriate behaviour at destinations has given rise to a negative image of the Chinese tourist (Lai & Lam, 2015; Li, 2014; Loi & Pearce, 2015). The Chinese government has been distributing educational information and begun to blacklist uncivilized tourists since 2015 aimed at minimizing inappropriate behaviour overseas (Loi & Pearce, 2015). The tourist blacklist is authorized by the *Tourism Law of China* and has proved to be effective on raising the awareness and minimizing poor behaviour of tourists (Zheng, 2016). Furthermore, Engaging in unethical behaviour could threaten personal safety while traveling (CLSA, 2015). Therefore, Chinese tourists are now more likely to behave more ethically to avoid being blacklisted and ensure their personal safety. This echoes the previous finding that tourists care more about individual consequences (utilitarianism and egoism) when facing ethical dilemmas.

## CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the under-researched issue of ethical behaviour among tourists. The study investigates ethical judgments by tourists from Western countries, Mainland Chinese tourists and Hong Kong residents across five different scenarios. A general pattern emerges: ethics based on utilitarianism, egoism and relativism are more likely to be used to justify questionable actions in moral dilemmas. At a destination management level, in order to minimize negative socio-cultural impacts of unethical behaviours by tourists, policy makers could emphasize the negative consequences of indulging in unethical behaviour. The ethical perception of an action is significantly affected by culture. Perception also differs by scenario. Prostitution and cutting the queue were evaluated as the two least ethical activities within the study despite being very different. The findings support the relativist nature of ethics.

For thousands of years, questions of the origin of morality and how it guides human behaviour have preoccupied social scientists. Tourism is uniquely placed to contribute to the study of ethics as a setting in which one leaves the place of residence and travels to another environment, to

another culture and adopts a different role. This refers to the liminality of tourist experience. How does this affect one's ethics? The present study compares tourists that travel to Hong Kong, but it already demonstrates that each scenario and each cohort of tourists based on their demographics and travel characteristics may affect the ethical judgment and consequent behaviour. While the study precludes broad generalisations, it suggests that tourists through their liminal experiences at the destination adapt their ethics. The study demonstrates an ample opportunity to apply both meta-ethics and normative ethical theories in order to improve understanding of morality.

The present study is based on a cross-cultural comparison, which has its limitations as other meta-ethical perspectives such as universalism and subjectivism are omitted within the study. The present study focused on nationality, which may be considered a limitation. The relationship between ethics and ethnicity and religiosity should be analysed in further research. The present study focuses on ethical judgments and behavioural intentions. It does not address other stages of the ethical decision-making process, such as the recognition of a moral issue and actual behaviour. While MES appears a suitable means of assessing ethical judgment, other research instruments are required to address all stages of ethical decision-making process. Moreover, the findings of the study raise further questions: Are residents of certain countries more likely to behave more ethically on vacation than at home and why? Is engaging in ethically inappropriate activities dependent on the external and environmental factors more than on personal principles and integrity? What are the effective measures for reduction of unethical behaviour? It is evident that ethical issues in tourism warrant further exploration.

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