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## THE ACCULTURATION OF INTERNATIONAL RESIDENTIAL TOURISTS AND THEIR SHOPPING BEHAVIOURS

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### Abstract

This study deals with an unexplored question regarding the role of the acculturation of international residential tourists (IRT), and provides companies in tourist destinations with keys to develop strategies aimed at this type of tourists. Results show that the acculturation of IRT follows a Pareto/Bradford distribution: few show high levels of acculturation and many show low levels. Finally, we find significant differences in shopping behaviour and socio-demographic variables.

Keywords: Acculturation, residential tourism, shopping behaviour, measurement scale

## THE ACCULTURATION OF INTERNATIONAL RESIDENTIAL TOURISTS AND THEIR SHOPPING BEHAVIOURS

### 1. Introduction

The tourism industry is experiencing structural changes due to the new preferences of tourists and their behaviours (Alegre and Cladera, 2006). Thus, many people spend long stretches of time in areas with a better climate than their place of origin (Munar, 2010). This form of tourism (called 'residential tourism') has a strong impact on the area where it takes place (Casado-Díaz, 1999) because communities of people of different nationalities appear and become part, semi-permanently, of the consumer base in each tourist destination. During the period of time that they stay at the destination, they are in contact with the new culture and society, which in certain cases can lead to acculturation.

Nevertheless, there is little literature on acculturation and shopping behaviour of international residential tourists (hereinafter, IRT). Taking into consideration the current situation, the present study has the following objectives:

- 1) to examine the acculturation within the IRT group;
- 2) to analyse the IRT differences in the acculturation as a function of socio-demographic determinants;
- 3) to find out if IRT show shopping behaviours that are significantly different as a function of their acculturation;

### 2. Acculturation

Acculturation has been researched to find out what happens when individuals come into contact with a culture that is strange and new for them (Martin, 2005). Rather than a short-lived phenomenon, acculturation has been considered to be a process of cultural adaptation and adjustment (Ebin *et al.*, 2001) and has an influence on the behaviour of individuals when they act as consumers (Cornwell, Wamwara-Mbugua and Boller, 2008).

#### 2.1. Differences in acculturation as a function of socio-demographic variables

**Sex.** Yeh (2003) and Oh, Koeske, and Sales (2002) have not found differences in men vs. women acculturation. However, Ghuman (1997) has found that young females show higher levels of acculturation than young males. Gibson (2001) has argued that men may find it more difficult to acculturate than women. Contrarily, Tran (1990) maintained that Vietnamese women experienced

more problems than men in 'language acculturation'. But all these populations are permanent and IRT make up a semi-permanent group, and we have not found literature about it. Thus:

*H1.1. There are not differences in the acculturation of IRT with respect to the sex.*

**Age.** Gong *et al.* (2003) and Park *et al.* (2003) found that the younger immigrants are at the time they arrive in the host country, the lower level of ethnic identification with their country/ethnic of origin, showing higher levels of acculturation (e.g. Park *et al.*, 2003). Most of the research has focused on acculturation among young people because they adopt more rapidly the elements of the new culture (Schwartz, Montgomery and Briones, 2006). Moreover, Tran (1990) has found that 'older people' from Vietnam living in the USA, had more problems to acculturate, particularly regarding the language. However, IRT are mainly senior adults or retirees. Due to the lack of information about this population segment, we put forward:

*H1.2. There are no differences in the acculturation of IRT with respect to the age.*

**Nationality.** People from different countries of origin have differing propensities for acculturation. Kwak and Berry (2001) reported, for example, that students from eastern India living in Canada tend to assimilate more easily than individuals from other Asian countries. For their part, Gong *et al.* (2003) found that Filipinos living in the USA lose their sense of ethnic identity more easily. Citizens from countries with a more intense and cohesive cultural identity will tend to acculturate less, and thus, we are more likely to find differences between countries. Therefore:

*H1.3 IRT from different countries show differing acculturation levels.*

**Length of residence.** While Webster and Obert-Pittman (1993) found an association between acculturation and length of residence, other researchers have not obtained these results (Peñaloza, 1994). This lack of association may be the consequence of acculturation and does not show a linear progression. Later studies have found that such a relationship does exist, although Lee and Tse (1994) pointed out that the length of residence influence on consumption, and is positively related to the ethnic identity of the host society. Thus:

*H1.4. IRT who have spent a longer period in the host country are not more acculturated than those who have spent less time there.*

## *2.2. Acculturation and consumer behaviour*

According to Quester and Chong (2001), highly acculturated consumers make decisions similar to those made by consumers of the host country. Segev and Ruvio (2009) have found that Hispanics

that adapt to the host country show loyalty to shops and brands of the host country and disloyalty to the shops of their ethnic group.

The literature confirms the significant role played by the activities undertaken during that spare time regarding the adaptation of individuals to their host country (e.g. Stodolska and Yi, 2003). However, our literature review has not found studies that shed light on the consumption behaviour of semi-permanent tourists nor where they prefer to spend their leisure time. Bearing in mind all the above we put forward the following hypotheses:

- H2.1. IRT with lower levels of acculturation visit shops of their country of origin more often than highly acculturated IRT.
- H2.2. IRT with lower levels of acculturation purchase in shops of their country of origin more often than highly acculturated IRT.
- H2.3. IRT with lower levels of acculturation care more about the long-term success of shops of their country of origin than highly acculturated IRT.
- H2.4. Highly acculturated IRT prefer bars/pubs of the host country, as opposed to IRT with lower levels of acculturation, who prefer those of their country of origin.

### **3. Methods**

Data were collected through personal interviews on the island of Mallorca and in the province of Alicante in Spain. Both destinations show the highest percentage of foreign population in Spain. Germans make up the largest IRT community in Mallorca, and the same for British citizens in Alicante. We used a random route method to finally select 367 valid respondents, at home or in places where they usually go. The sample was quoted by age, sex (54.2 % of men), destination (Mallorca=46.9%) and country of origin (Germany =41.1%). We included the acculturation scale proposed by Lerman, Maldonado and Luna (2008) as well as a series of items about the shopping behaviours.

### **4. Data analysis and results**

#### *4.1. Objective 1: Level of acculturation*

Our basic conclusion is that IRT have very low levels of acculturation. The mean score was 0.16, when the scale was converted to range (from 0 to1 from the original scale ranged from 4 to 24).

43.6% of the respondents showed null acculturation and the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile reached a value of 0.25. These results suggest that very few IRT have high levels of acculturation while many IRT have low levels. We tested for the Pareto/Bradford distribution and found a very high goodness-of-fit with coefficient alpha ( $=2.561$ ) and beta ( $=4$ ). The Anderson-Darling goodness-of-fit test yielded a value of  $-12.764$  (for  $\alpha=0.05$ ,  $AD=2.502$ ).

#### *4.2. Objective 2: Socio-demographic differences in acculturation*

We performed a one-way ANOVA to test hypotheses 1.1 to 1.4, and used a bootstrap method to estimate standard errors for efficiency scores using 1000 subsamples. With respect to the variables age and length of residence, we followed the psychometric rule of comparing the first and the fourth quartiles of the distribution in question with the aim of obtaining maximum discrimination. Appendix shows the results of these tests.

Our conclusion is that there are no differences in the acculturation of men and women, nor between IRT with a longer or shorter length of residence. However, we found differences regarding age and country of origin. Younger IRT show slightly higher levels of acculturation than older ones. That difference, however, is statistical rather than real since the acculturation scale ranges from 0 to 24, so the value 8.24 (the upper value of the confidence interval for younger IRT) is at the lowest end of the scale. As for the country of origin, German IRT show significant higher levels of acculturation than those of British citizens, but both of them are low.

#### *4.3. Objective 3: Acculturation and consumer behaviours*

The appendix shows the descriptive statistics regarding the shopping behaviours obtained using again a bootstrap method with 1000 subsamples. As can be observed, German IRT shows higher sampling values in all variables for the standard deviation and means. Thus a significant t-test results for hypotheses H2.2 to H2.4 and not for H2.1 that is not supported.

Since our objective was to find out whether IRT with different levels of acculturation show different shopping behaviours we performed t-tests for independent samples. Given that the distribution of the acculturation of IRT follows a Pareto/Bradford distribution, we divided the sample into two groups (first quartile with the lowest acculturation values vs. last quartile with the highest acculturation values). Results are shown in the Appendix.

## 5. Conclusions e implications

Despite the importance of the IRT segment for many tourist destinations, there are limited studies about their acculturation and the commercial consequences of this. The literature has explored the acculturation phenomenon for permanent immigrants but not for IRT.

We have found that IRT acculturation is very low and show a typical Pareto-Bradford statistical distribution behaviour: few IRT have high levels of acculturation, while most IRT have very low levels of acculturation. Two main factors may contribute to this low acculturation: (a) their way of life and (b) their labour situation. The first one can be observed in Spanish tourist destinations. The social and urban system is based on housing developments that are located in the outskirts of towns. Furthermore, the urban and natural landscape has undergone a radical change (Aledo, Mazón and Mantecón, 2008). The second factor is related to the fact that most IRT are retirees or are not actively involved in the labour market of the tourist destination, which leads to low or null social integration.

From a commercial perspective, retailing in tourist destinations must adapt to the lifestyles and needs of IRT. Thus, department stores have introduced sections of ethnic products, and small convenience shops have appeared that sell only foreign products targeted at the IRT. From a business viewpoint, companies need to understand that their success depends on their ability to achieve the IRT segments, and must know how they develop adequate retail offerings. Consequently, they have to know how the way IRT behave and shop affects the purchase of specific products. From the perspective of operators in destinations, however, the development of very specific but unplanned offerings may lead to both the homogenisation of the commercial offering and the creation of ghettos for IRT, with a consequent risk for the destination of losing appeal to tourists.

From a socio-demographic perspective, we found that there are no differences in acculturation as function of the length of residence in destinations and younger IRT show higher levels of acculturation than older ones.

As for shopping behaviour, we found significant differences in shopping frequency: IRT with lower levels of acculturation purchase more often at shops of their country of origin, and show less preference for local bars and pubs. This contributes to the emergence of a population segment apart from the Spanish population, which reinforces their low acculturation.

Finally, we are aware of one limitation of our research. We have not included different types of IRT (summer holidays, intermittent holidays, semi-permanent residents) due to the fieldwork was

conducted during a short period of time. We believe that further research regarding those is required to improve the definition of IRT, as well as the measurement of their acculturation. Likewise, we think it is necessary to know the link between acculturation and the social and urban environment in which IRT live. Thus, they all appear as future lines of work.

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## APPENDIX

ANOVA and t-tests for differences in the acculturation of IRT

Variables	Mean	SD	SE	Levene's Test	F	Results
Men	6.45	3.16	.24	2.43	0.33	H1.1 accepted
Women	6.67	3.47	.29			
Younger (<39)	7.31	3.80	.45	6.04**	7.35***	H1.2 rejected
Older (>63)	5.74	2.99	.36			
British (GB)	5.51	2.28	.17	62.01***	50.06***	H1.3 accepted
Germans (DE)	8.02	3.93	.35			
Shortest LR	6.49	2.87	.33	2.19	.01	H1.4



ANOVA and t-tests for differences in the acculturation of IRT						
Variables	Mean	SD	SE	Levene's Test	F	Results
Longest LR	6.50	6.50	.22			accepted

T-tests for IRT shopping behaviours								
Behaviours	Quartiles	Mean		SD		Levene's Test	T-test	Results
		GB	DE	GB	DE			
SHOPCOO	Q1 = 0.70 Q4 = 0.48	1.51	1.54	0.81	1.22	2.189	1.611	H2.1 rejected
PURORD	Q1 = 3.00 Q4 = 2.73	3.26	3.49	0.89	1.14	0.128	1.722*	H2.2 accepted
CONCERN	Q1 = 3.77 Q4 = 3.29	3.65	4.04	0.95	1.59	0.006	2.286**	H2.3 accepted
LEISURE2	Q1=4.51 Q4=4.97	4.14	5.15	1.34	1.60	4.564**	-2.275**	H2.4 accepted

LR= length of residence; \* p<0.100; \*\* p<0.05; \*\*\* p<0.001

SHOPCOO: Frequency of shopping at country of origin (CO) shops

PURORD. How frequently do you purchase in your CO shops?

CONCERN: Concerned with long-term success CO shops

LEISURE2: In your free time, preference for Spanish bars/pubs instead of those of your country of origin