Tourist Typology in Social Contact: An Addition to Existing Theories.

Abstract: Tourist-host social contact, as a unique type of social contact, is not getting sufficient attention in tourism academia considering its remarkable impacts on tourists' travel attitudes, behaviors and long-term perceptions. The objectives of the current study are to explore the dimensions of tourist-host social contact and to contribute to the theory of tourist typology according to their dynamic nature in tourist-host social interaction. Forty-five in-depth interviews were conducted to generate insightful information. The software of NVivo 10 was applied to examine and code the transcripts. As a result, six dimensions were adopted to describe tourist-host social contact, which are purposes, determinants, activities, intensity, impacts and attitudes. Five types of tourists were pinpointed and theoretical and practical contributions of the study were discussed.

Keywords: social contact, tourist typology, interaction, tourist-host

1. Introduction

Tourists are surrounded by the social environment when entering a destination. They cannot avoid interactions with local residents, to various extents. Such kinds of contact were stated to have the power to influence tourists' travel attitudes, behavior and long-term perceptions toward the destination (Allport, 1954; Cohen, 1972). Intergroup contact can enhance the understanding of other groups, undermine bias and stereotypes, and further improve the intergroup relations (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998; Kawakami et al., 2000; Binder et al., 2009; Kirillova, Lehto, & Cai, 2015). Intergroup contact may reduce anxiety, distrust and cultural sensitivity toward other groups (Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Dovidio et al., 2002) and enhance the

empathy between them in order to positively affect the intergroup relations (Baston et al., 1997; Stephan & Finlay, 1999).

Given the importance of social contact, tourist-host social contact, as a unique type of general social contact, is not receiving sufficient attention in tourism academia. Furthermore, social contact has long been treated as a qualitative and abstract concept. Though some scholars attempted to quantify the concept of social contact (Rothman, 1978; Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Huang & Hsu, 2010), few studies have provided systematic and convincing dimensions. In addition, though there are numerous studies exploring tourist typology (Plog, 1974 & 2001; Cohen, 1972 & 1979; Smith, 1989; Pearce & Lee, 2005), few of them emphasized tourists' rich behavioral patterns of social contact. The assumption of homogeneity in social contact may mislead the investigations and result in incoherence among different studies (Nash, 1989; Binder et al., 2009; Huang & Hsu, 2010). The lack of grouping regarding social contact also creates difficulties for practitioners to draw effective marketing strategies for diverse segments and hence lower tourists' satisfaction and revisit intentions.

As one of the enlightening works of the tourist-host social contact in the early stage, Cohen (1972) specified the "extent" and "variety" of social contact to be the main indicators to assess the results of such interactions. However, what "extent" and "variety" stood for were not explained in detail. In addition, Cohen (1972) theoretically proposed a tourist typology based on their pursuit of novelty and familiarity in a destination. This typology provided a basis for understanding mass tourists' behavioral patterns with the hosts. Yet, the single criterion, "pursuit of novelty and familiarity" was too general to precisely describe the rich characteristics of different types of tourists' behavior. Consequently, a multi-dimensional tourist typology empirically unveiling tourists' contact patterns with the locals is needed to better understand this

interactive process. To fill in the aforementioned gaps, the objectives of the current study are to empirically explore the dimensions of tourist-host social contact and to further classify tourists according to their characteristics across those dimensions.

2. Literature review

2.1 Social contact

Cross-cultural social contact, interchangeably referred as cross-cultural social interaction, is defined as the face-to-face contacts between people from different cultural backgrounds (Cusher & Brislin, 1996; Yu & Lee, 2014). There are various branches of cross-cultural contact according to the different criteria of classification defined, such as on whose territory the contact occurs, the time span of the interaction, contact purpose, the type of involvement, the frequency of contact, the degree of intimacy between participants, relative status and power and numerical balance (Bochner, 1982).

In psychology and sociology studies, contact theory has been recognized as one of the best approaches to elucidate intergroup relations. Allport (1954) proposed that intergroup contact can be an effective way to reduce prejudice between group members under certain conditions, such as equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, support of authorities as well as personal interaction. Properly managed contact between group members should lead to better interactions because prejudice may be reduced as one learns more about other group members and one's perceptions can be modified by that contact person and subsequently modifying the perceptions of the group as a whole (Wright et al., 1997). As argued by Nash (1989), similar to

any other social relationship, the relationship between tourists and their hosts requires certain understandings that must be agreed and acted upon if it is to be maintained.

2.2 Tourist-host social contact

Tourist-host social contact is stated to be a special form of cross-cultural contact. Typically, tourists stay in a destination for a short and well-structured period of time. Their purpose of travel set them apart from other inter-cultural contacts, like immigrants and temporary sojourners (Pearce, 1982a). Tourists do not need to adapt to the local community and normally travel in a small cultural bubble of their home culture (Barthes, 1973). Though tourists may experience a culture shock to some extent, such shock may be stimulating and exciting to travelers as it can fulfill their sensation-seeking motivation (Mehrabian & Russel, 1974). In addition, the relative affluence of tourists locate them in a unique position in the host society, like strangers or adventurers. Thus, they have more opportunities to observe and scrutinize the host community from a tourist perspective (Simmel, 1950; Pearce, 1982a).

As a fundamental work of the tourist-host social contact studies, Cohen (1972) developed a fourfold tourist typology. According to the degree of familiarity and novelty in travel, tourists are categorized into four types: organized mass tourist, individual mass tourist, the explorer and the drifter. The first two tourist types are further named "institutionalized tourist roles" and the other two are called "non-institutionalized tourist roles". For the mass tourists, the environmental bubble of their native culture is quite strong. The environmental bubble is described as a protective wall which prevents risk, uncertainty, or novelty from the tourists. Thus, to a certain extent, mass tourists view the local society through the protective wall. Consequently, mass tourists are socially separated in the destination. On the contrary, non-institutionalized tourists would want to get involved in the local society and experience excitement in the trip. They seek

the complete strangeness and direct contact with new and different people. In such cases, due to their way of life and travel, they meet a wide variety of people and have a deep contact with the local society. This study sheds light on the relational exploration between social contact and tourists' attitude towards destinations. Besides Cohen's (1972) theory, a developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (Kirillova et al., 2015), acculturation theory (Rasmi et al., 2014), social exchange theory (Ap, 1992; Choo & Petrick, 2014; Madrigal, 1993) and social representation theory (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003) were also adopted to investigate the tourist-host social contact from diverse perspectives.

2.3 Dimensions of social contact

Some studies have explored the dimensions of social contact. Table 1 shows the summary of the existing literature investigating different aspects of social contact. Rothman (1978), Mo, Howard & Havitz (1993) and Reisinger & Turner (2002a, b) applied activities of social contact as the only measurement of social contact. Woosnam & Aleshinloye (2013) adopted contact frequency to measure the tourist-host interaction.

Some other research considered multiple dimensions to measure the social contact experience. Quality and frequency of tourist-host social contact were considered to evaluate the residents' attitude to tourism development (Akis, Peristianis & Warner, 1996). Islam and Hewstone (1993) tested how the number of contact points, contact frequency and contact quality were related to various dependent variables. Frequency, activity and strength of social contact were taken into consideration to assess the closeness of interpersonal relationships (Berscheid, Snyder & Omoto, 1989). As one of the most recent study, Huang and Hsu (2010), building on Berscheid et al. (1989) and Islam and Hewstone (1993)'s results, examined the activity, frequency, influence, valence, intensity, power and symmetry of customer-to-customer

interaction on cruises. Considering the existing studies, there is hardly any agreement on the selection of social contact dimensions, which made the development of this domain unsystematic and inconsistent.

Table 1. Literature Summary of Dimensions of Social Contact

Author(s)	Year	Dimensions of Social Contact									
		Activity	No. of contact points	Frequency	Quality	Strength	Influence	Valence	Intensity	Power	Symmetry
Rothman	1978	√									
Berscheid, Snyder & Omoto	1989	√	√			√					
Mo, Howard & Havitz	1993	√									
Islam & Hewstone	1993		√	√	√						
Akis, Peristianis & Warner	1996			√	√						
Reisinger & Turner	2002	√									
Huang & Hsu	2010	√	√				√	√	√	√	√
Woosnam & Aleshinloye	2013			√							

The functions of social contact have been well addressed in the socio-psychological realm along with the application of Allport's (1954) contact theory and other related studies (Bochner, 1982; Cusher & Brislin, 1996; Yu & Lee, 2014). Tourist-host social contact, as a unique type of social contact, is yet to be explored further. To date, some studies have applied social contact to assess the tourists' impact on the host community (Rothman, 1978; Pearce, 1982b; Islam & Hewetone, 1993; Reisinger & Turner, 2002a & b). Measurement items were simply brought from other disciplines without rigorous investigation. Existing research failed to explore the various dimensions of social contact per se, which led to an inconsistency of the application of social contact. Moreover, as a fundamental work, Cohen's (1972) tourist typology was not receiving sufficient attention regarding its contribution to understanding tourists' social

contact with locals. Thus, a systematic establishment of tourist-host social contact with comprehensive understanding of its diverse dimensions is in order.

3. Conceptual framework

To establish a sound investigation of social contact, different dimensions of such contact should be identified and refined. This section aims to develop a sound framework of social contact dimensions by reviewing, criticizing and consolidating the existing literature in this realm.

As one of the fundamental works of the tourist-host social contact study, Cohen emphasized in his work (1972, p177), "the degree to which and the way they affect each other depend largely on the extent and variety of social contacts the tourists have during their trips". According to Cohen's (1972) argument, the "extent" and "variety" of social contact between tourists and hosts can greatly determine the degree to which and the way both groups affect each other (Figure 1, Module 1). Based on the literature, as shown in Figure 1, Module 2, the "extent" of social contact can be explained by purposes of social contact, the determinants of contact extent, and the intensity of social contact (Kirillova et al., 2015; Huang & Hsu, 2010). "Variety" of social contact can be represented by contact activities between tourists and hosts (Rothman, 1978; Berscheid et al., 1989; Huang & Hsu, 2010). In addition, the impact of social contact can be interpreted by the contact impacts as well as the attitudes toward such interaction (Huang & Hsu, 2010). However, the graph in Figure 1, Module 2 ignored the sequence of those dimensions and the interrelationships among those dimensions (for instance, between contact purposes and contact activities). Consequently, based on Module 1 and Module 2 in Figure 1, the conceptual framework of the current research is illustrated in Module 3. As indicated, the study adopted the

aforementioned six dimensions to describe the social contact between tourists and hosts in the three phases, which are before contact, during contact and after contact. Different types of tourists were identified according to their characteristics across those six dimensions.

Module 1: Cohen's theory of social contact (1972) → Module 2: Development of social contact in existing studies → Module 3: Purified conceptual framework of the current study
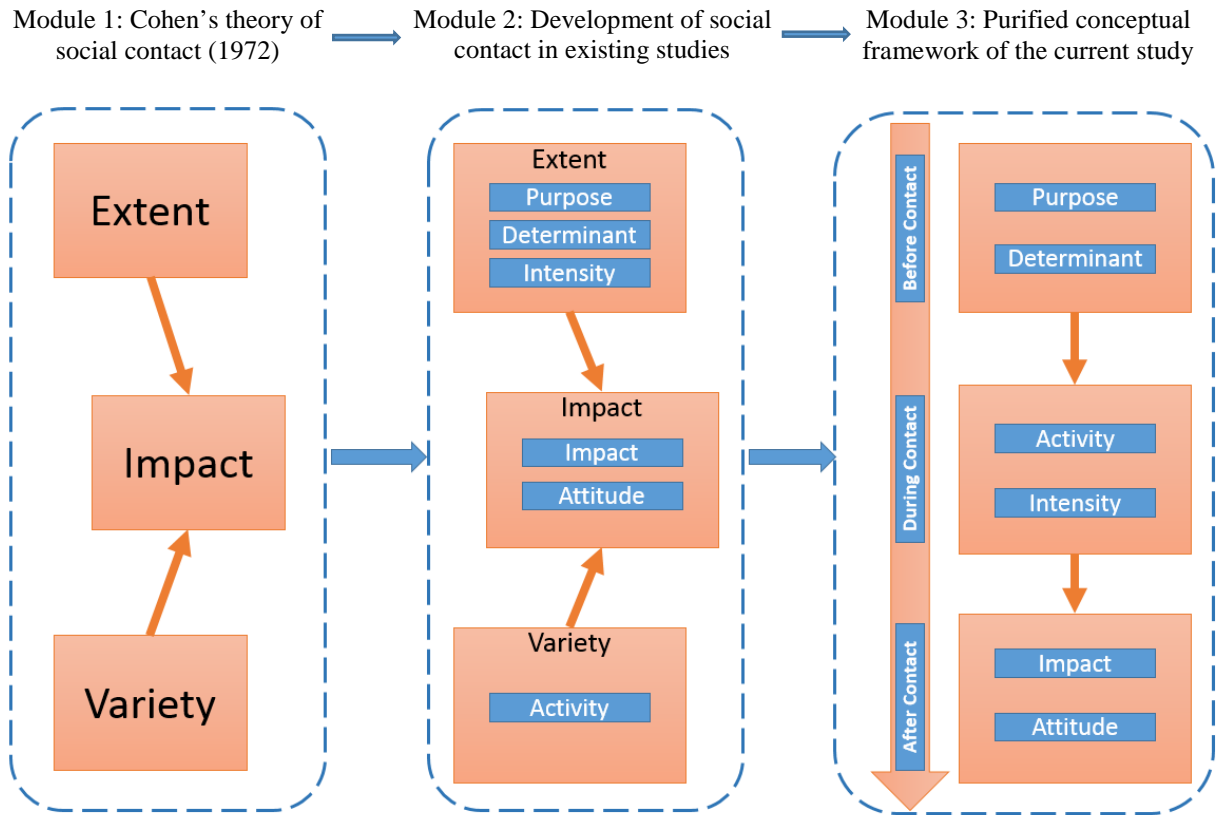
Figure 1. The Developing Process of Conceptual Framework

The research context for the current study is Hong Kong tourists traveling to mainland China. Mainland China has long been the most preferred outbound travel destination for Hong Kong residents. According to the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department (2015), the proportion of trips to mainland China in overall outbound trips for Hong Kong residents is 85% in 2014. From the perspective of mainland China inbound tourism, Hong Kong is the largest inbound tourism source market. Visitors from Hong Kong represent 60% of the total inbound

visitors in 2014 (China National Tourism Administration, 2015). The political and historical relationship between Hong Kong and mainland China has gained increasing attention from all over the world. The long-time colonization by the UK and separation from mainland China make Hong Kong and mainland China ethnically the same but ideologically different regions. Considering such a huge movement of visitors (in 2014, 71.6 million visitors from Hong Kong to mainland China) and the unique relationship, it is proposed, in the context of this study, to investigate the tourist-host social contact between the two parties.

4. Methodology

The current study adopted the interpretive paradigm, which believes that reality is created by individuals in a society (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Different from positivism, interpretive research aims to understand a phenomenon as it is from the perspective of individual experiences. In this case, for the sake of generating primary and rich data, an in-depth, face-to-face interview was adopted to be the main technique. According to the purpose of the study, all interviews were conducted in Hong Kong with Hong Kong permanent residents, who had recently traveled to mainland China. Consequently, two selection criteria were used to define the target group. Firstly, the target should be Hong Kong permanent residents, which represent those who were born in Hong Kong or have been in Hong Kong for at least seven years. Secondly, the informants should have traveled to mainland China for leisure purpose within the last two years.

The interviews went through three approaches. First, to get informants introduced to the topic, they were asked about their recent travel experiences to mainland China. Second, after the recall, informants were requested to evoke their memory about their contacts with the mainland Chinese hosts during visits. Last, informants were required to share their perceptions of the

purposes, impacts, determinants, intensity and attitude of contacts with their hosts. The interviewers stopped to invite new informants when information saturation was reached. In this study, the data analysis indicated that dimensions and patterns became stable at the 30th informant and the last 15 informants did not provide any substantive changes to the codebook. As a result, 45 interviews were conducted. Each session was between 26 and 88 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Interviews were conducted in informants' mother languages and then translated into English. To ensure the accuracy and credibility of the translation, two professional language editors (Cantonese and English) were assigned to be language consultants during the whole translation process.

Textual data from the transcripts were interpreted and analyzed with thematic analysis. It focuses on examining themes within data and emphasizes organization and rich description of the data set (Daly, Kellehear & Gliksman, 1997). The thematic analysis engaged a process of categorizing and grouping textual data to explore the emerging model (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The software of NVivo 10 was applied to technically code the transcripts. In line with aforementioned principles, during coding, meaningful units in participants' transcripts were captured and utilized to formulate key themes regarding the residents' full range of dimensions of social contact.

Following the naturalistic inquiry approach, and to ensure the trustworthiness of a qualitative study, principles suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were adopted to assess the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the current study. In particular, regarding credibility, techniques of triangulation, peer debriefing and member checks were applied. First, informants of the in-depth interviews were recruited from multiple sources. 22 of them were invited in the 30th Hong Kong International Travel Expo, which was held between Jun

16 and June 19, 2016. 23 of them were recruited by snowball sampling. Respondents' demographic information, such as income, education levels and different occupations were also considered to represent various populations. Besides the data source triangulation, investigators triangulation was also applied. All the authors conducted intra-team communication on a regular basis during the entire research process to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the results. In terms of peer debriefing, four faculty members with research expertise in tourist behavior and cross-cultural studies in a Hong Kong university were asked to be the disinterested peers and debate with the research team during the stages of interview protocol design, codebook structure build-up, and tourist typology discussion. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Member checks were established by randomly selecting five transcripts and their summarized characteristics and sending them back to the corresponding informants in order to ensure the correct interpretation. Transferability of the research was also considered by providing thick description, including all versions of the interview protocols (three drafts and one final version), informants' social-demographic information, all items identified in each dimension, and characteristics for each tourist type. This strategy is to enable potential users to make an empirical transfer of the current findings in some other context, or in the same context at some other time. Since there were two individual coders doing the coding separately and simultaneously, the dependency of the coding results was examined by two coders' interactive and iterative discussion. Finally, an audit trail, including minutes of research design discussion, all the interview audios, transcripts, Nvivo files, process notes as well as authors' reflexive journals were kept to audit and confirm the entire research process and procedures.

5. Findings

5.1 Demographic profile of informants

Table 2 shows the demographic information of the informants. In total, 45 Hong Kong permanent residents, 30 females and 15 males, participated in the in-depth interview session. Informants are generally well educated as 18 out of 45 hold university degree or above. 13 participants worked as professionals, and 14 were currently retired or hunting for jobs. One third of participants were in the income range of 20,000HKD to 39,999HKD. Over half of the participants were married (62%).

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Informants

Content	Numbers	Percentage
Age	**45**	**100%**
18-29	4	9%
30-39	12	27%
40-49	10	22%
50-59	13	29%
60 or above	6	13%
Gender	**45**	**100%**
Female	30	67%
Male	15	33%
Education	**45**	**100%**
Secondary school or below	11	24%
High school	5	11%
College diploma non-degree	8	18%
College diploma with degree	3	7%
University degree or above	18	40%
Occupation	**45**	**100%**
Professionals	13	29%
Managers and administrators	6	13%
Clerks	8	18%
Craft and related workers	3	7%
Students	1	2%
Retired or hunting for jobs	14	31%
Personal Monthly Income	**45**	**100%**
<10000	2	4%
10000-19999	8	18%
20000-29999	8	18%

30000-39999	7	17%
40000-49999	2	4%
50000-59999	1	2%
60000 or above	2	4%
N/A	15	33%
Marital status	**45**	**100%**
Married	28	62%
Single	16	36%
Others	1	2%

5.2 Typology of tourists: evidence from tourist-host social contact

To establish a systematic and convincing investigation of different types of tourists in social contact, the following depictions attempt to portray each tourist type by delineating each dimension identified in the framework, covering contact purposes, determinants, activities, intensity, impacts and attitudes. Items under each dimension are generated in the interviews and organized in Appendix 1 to provide rich evidence of the typology. They also answer a series of "why" and "how" questions: why do the tourists contact with the hosts; how do they contact with the hosts; and how do those contacts influence them afterwards? The analysis follows the three phases, which are labeled as before contact, during contact and after contact. Consequently, a tourist typology including five tourist types was established (Figure 2).

5.2.1 Dependents

The first type of tourists is named "Dependents". The most distinguishing characteristic of this group is their dependent nature. They normally travel with their friends or relatives who can accompany them for the whole trip or join a package tour which plans every detail in a trip. They have relatively few travel experiences, the majority of which are short haul. Tourists in this

type fully rely on their travel companions and have limited interactions (and little desire to contact) with the locals due to their limited language competence, age, personality or other constraints. Prior to any contact, perceptions or prejudices of mainland Chinese hosts generated from the media, word-of-mouth, or previous experiences may also restrain them from contacting the hosts. As a result, they have limited direct contacts with the locals, the intensity of which are very superficial. In that case, this group of tourists is socially separated from the host communities. As in Cohen's (1972) and Jaakson's (2004) description, the social separation is like an environmental bubble or tourist bubble, which creates a protective wall for the tourists from the host communities. Such kind of bubble can definitely affect tourists' travel experiences, perceptions and their attitudes toward the destinations. Here is an example from this type:

> *"Each time I traveled to mainland China, I joined package tours or traveled with my friends. If I travel by myself, I do not know where to go and what to eat. I heard many negative stories when people traveled in mainland China, so I was a little scared of traveling by myself. When I travel with my friends, they would arrange everything, so I don't need to contact the locals personally." (Informant 13, female, 50-59, professional).*

5.2.2 Conservatives

The second type of tourists is called "Conservatives". They contact with the locals to obtain information or to solve some problems. As shown in Figure 2, various elements are reported to determine the contacts with the hosts, including tourists' personality, language competence, perceptions towards the destinations, length of stay, perceived cultural distance between their original places and the destinations, and mode of travel (individual tourists v.s. group tourists). For instance, as a newly emerged determinant of this type, informants reported

that the longer they stayed in a destination, the more they would contact with the hosts because they got familiar with the hosts as the time went on. *"If I go to a place for only three days, I may not have enough time. I traveled like this when I was young. But now, I always stay in a destination for around two weeks, so I don't need to rush and have enough time to interact with the locals" (Informant 35, female, 50-59, clerk).* Prejudices or perceptions on mainland locals may also influence the tourist-host contacts. *"I heard lots of cases from the media and my friends, that travelers from Hong Kong were always cheated when traveling in mainland China"* *(Informant 18, female, 40-49, professional).* In addition, some other elements may also influence their actual contacts with the locals, for example, the types and development level of the destinations. Travel companions, including the size of the travel group and companions' communication competence may also affect individuals' contacts with the locals.

When traveling in a destination, their contacts with local residents are limited to inquiries or problem solving. Some of them also have casual communications with the hosts, but only to a limited extent. Their contact points were mostly the representatives of the tourist establishment (Cohen, 1972), for instance, hotel staff, tour guides, service staff in restaurants as well as taxi drivers. The service-oriented or issue-oriented interactions result in relatively shallow contacts. Those contacts can be helpful and useful for tourists' trips in the short run and may leave a positive impression for the tourists due to the favorable nature. Tourists in this group have limited travel experiences. Both group tour and individual travel are favored by this group. Here is an example:

> *"I talked to the locals when I needed to ask for the directions or information for the buses. That's it" (Informant 7, female, 30-39, manager/ administrator) "When we traveled in Shanghai, we were queuing in front of a very famous restaurant to buy the XiaoLongBao.*

A local person saw us and told us that, all the restaurants close by had the XiaoLongBao, and their tastes were similar. We didn't need to wait for a long time for this brand. We took his advice and finally we found that it was true and he was not cheating us" (Informant 15, female, 50-59, craft or related worker).

5.2.3 Criticizers

As the third type, "Criticizers" interact with local hosts not only for getting information, but also expecting to know more about the destinations. They have more travel experiences than "Dependents" and "Conservatives", both individually and with package tours. Regarding the contact determinants, this type of tourists reports less elements to influence their contacts with the hosts, among which previous travel experiences and political/cultural sensitivity are newly emerged in this group. As stated by one informants, *"Since the cultures are different between Hong Kong and mainland China, you don't know what kinds of topics are very sensitive to the locals. Sometimes, we are talking about an issue quite common in Hong Kong, but such kind of issue might unconsciously hurt the locals" (Informant 12, male, 40-49, professional).* They have some service-oriented conversations with the locals, and they also have some casual talks if possible. They perceive those contacts to be superficial as their exploration of the destination is very occasional and they easily shrink back if the novelty level is beyond their competence (Cohen, 1972; Jaakson, 2004; Mo et al., 1993). Although they contact with the hosts more than the previous two types, they are still detached from the local communities. After contacts with the locals, they express mixed attitudes towards the contact. As tourists in this type involve more in the tourist-host contacts, they report various impacts of such contacts. Criticizers know more about the destination and identify the differences between Hong Kong and mainland China.

Those contacts may reinforce criticizers' original culture and the prejudices of the host culture (Laxson, 1991). Alternatively, during traveling, they explore the destination through their own cultural lens, and make judgments according to their own standards. For example, as mentioned by one informant,

"I think we are different in mind set. Some mainland locals throw the rubbish on the ground due to the convenience. I do not mean that no one in Hong Kong will do so, but, at least, much better on average" (Informant 4, female, 30-39, professional).

5.2.4 Explorers

Compared with "Criticizers", "Explorers" have more social contacts with the locals. They are experienced travelers. They purposely interact with the local residents and seek to know more about the locals' life via casual and profound contacts. They report less contact determinants compared with the first three types. Besides the length of the stay, locals' characters and place of stay also play important roles. *"Once I traveled in Shandong and took a taxi to the airport. The driver was very talkative and friendly. People in Shandong province are very warm-hearted and nice" (Informant 26, female, 50-59, professional). "It depends on where you stay. I normally stay in brand chain hotels when traveling in mainland China, so I have fewer opportunities to communicate with the locals. Comparatively, if I stay in a hostel or home-stay, I will know more interesting things about the destinations and some unique customs of the residents" (Informant 1, male, 30-39, manager/ administrator).* They attend some local events, visit the non-tourism areas, and approach non-tourism related natives to experience something novel and exciting. After the contacts, they have mixed-attitudes towards the contacts with the locals. For "Explorers", contacts with the locals are perceived to have some impacts on their

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perceptions and understandings. The contacts may change their original images of the destinations or the hosts in the destinations, and enhance their cross-cultural competence. With their rich travel experiences in mainland China, tourists in this type may also be aware of the domestic cultural differences after the contacts with the locals. Here is an example of such kinds of tourists:

> *"I like to do sports in mainland China. Once I played golf with the locals, a 10 years old boy was also there to play. After knowing each other, we started to chat. He asked me in a very polite way that where to visit if he would like to visit Hong Kong in the future and how was our life like in Hong Kong. Why there were some news about the mainland Chinese tourists in Hong Kong and what actually happened etc.. I was so impressed that those questions were from such a young boy. He was very mature and polite. It changed the image of mainland Chinese in my mind"* (Informant 16, female, 50-59, retired).

5.2.5 Belonging Seekers

The last type of tourists is "Belonging Seekers". The most distinguishing feature of this tourist type is that they contact with natives for social purposes. As mentioned by one informant, *"I felt comfortable to chat with the locals. I did not need to hide anything from them and we did not have any conflicts of interest. I had no pressure to communicate with the locals when traveling. The contacts themselves made me feel happy"* (Informant 20, male, 40-49, early retired). Their determinants of contacts are similar to those of "Explorers". They would like to associate with the natives by deep communications and mutual sharing, participating in their daily life and making friends. Some of them mentioned that they have been invited to visit locals' homes and they viewed it as an authentic experience. After the contact, they mainly have

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a positive attitude. As to the impacts, they appreciate their culture and feel attached to the destination (Cohen, 1972; Cohen, 1979). Via contacts with the locals, "Belonging Seekers" make some local friends and feel that they are part of the hosts' social groups. The followings are examples of this type:

"Once I went to the Northeast during the Chinese New Year. I became very interested in their winter life. They explained to me about their unique beds-heatable brick beds (Kàng). They invited me to their homes and showed me. That's the first time I saw a real brick bed. They put charcoals under the bed to keep it warm. I stayed there overnight to experience. They were so nice" (Informant 20, male, 40-49, early retired).

"It depends on that if you would like to keep such friendship. I made some friends during my travel in the mainland, and they contacted me when they traveled in Hong Kong. I view it as a long-term relationship" (Informant 42, male, 30-39, manager/ administrator).

"My friend and I went to a community park in Beijing. We watched some senior people writing on the ground with the water-inked Chinese brush pen. We never saw that in Hong Kong. Those senior people noticed us and chatted with us. They asked for our names and wrote our names with the water-inked Chinese brush pen for us, which were very impressive to us. They were very friendly and nice.... I think this city is very internationalized and tolerant to the people from other countries, not like Hong Kong. I heard many negative news of mainland Chinese tourists in Hong Kong from some media in Hong Kong. What would we feel if we were treated the same in a destination? We need to think about it" (Informant 2, female, 30-39, hunting for jobs).
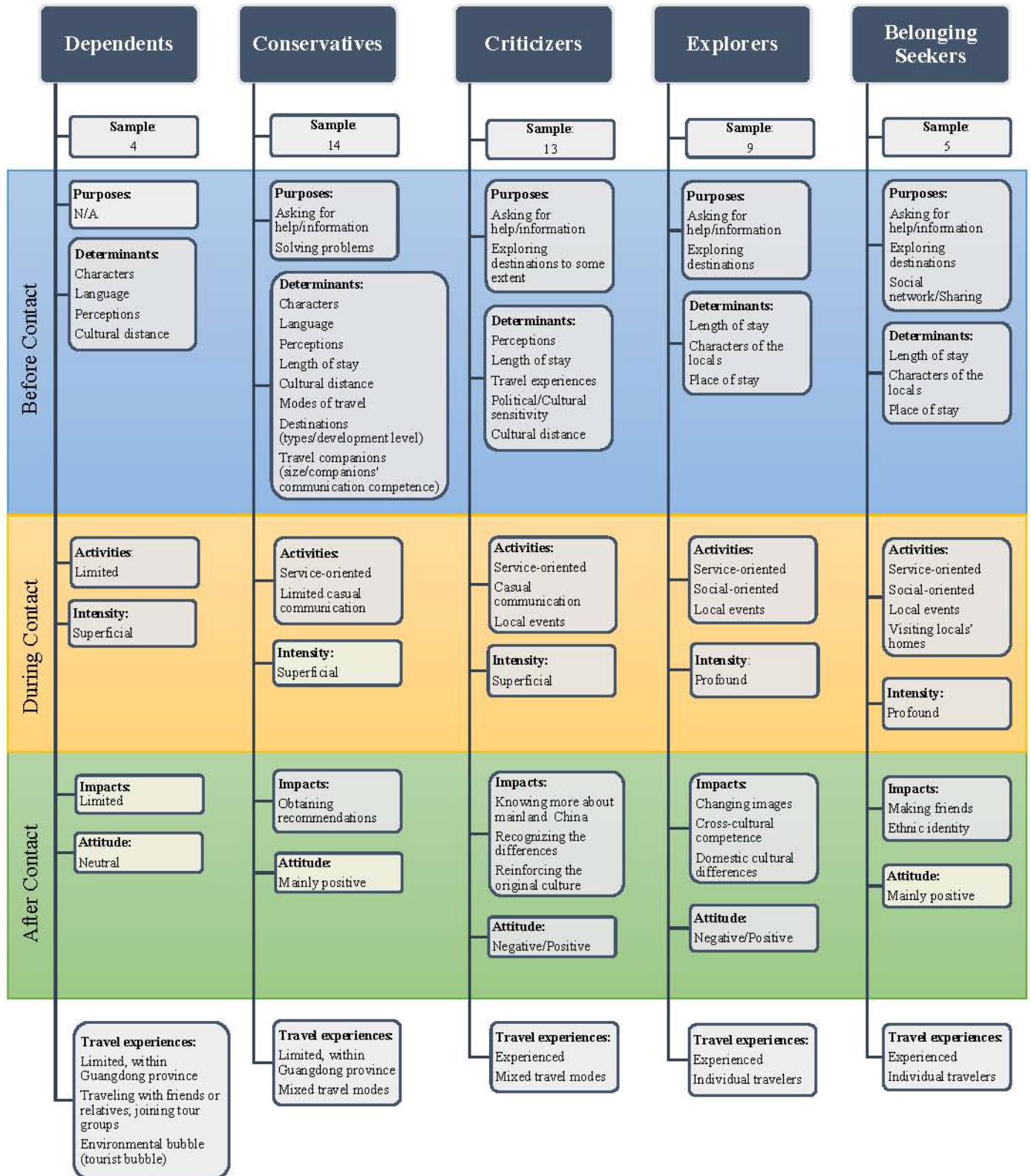
Dependents — Sample: 4

Conservatives — Sample: 14

Criticizers — Sample: 13

Explorers — Sample: 9

Belonging Seekers — Sample: 5

Before Contact

Dependents
Purposes:
N/A

Determinants:
Characters
Language
Perceptions
Cultural distance

Conservatives
Purposes:
Asking for help/information
Solving problems

Determinants:
Characters
Language
Perceptions
Length of stay
Cultural distance
Modes of travel
Destinations (types/development level)
Travel companions (size/companions' communication competence)

Criticizers
Purposes:
Asking for help/information
Exploring destinations to some extent

Determinants:
Perceptions
Length of stay
Travel experiences
Political/Cultural sensitivity
Cultural distance

Explorers
Purposes:
Asking for help/information
Exploring destinations

Determinants:
Length of stay
Characters of the locals
Place of stay

Belonging Seekers
Purposes:
Asking for help/information
Exploring destinations
Social network/Sharing

Determinants:
Length of stay
Characters of the locals
Place of stay

During Contact

Dependents
Activities:
Limited

Intensity:
Superficial

Conservatives
Activities:
Service-oriented
Limited casual communication

Intensity:
Superficial

Criticizers
Activities:
Service-oriented
Casual communication
Local events

Intensity:
Superficial

Explorers
Activities:
Service-oriented
Social-oriented
Local events

Intensity:
Profound

Belonging Seekers
Activities:
Service-oriented
Social-oriented
Local events
Visiting locals' homes

Intensity:
Profound

After Contact

Dependents
Impacts:
Limited

Attitude:
Neutral

Conservatives
Impacts:
Obtaining recommendations

Attitude:
Mainly positive

Criticizers
Impacts:
Knowing more about mainland China
Recognizing the differences
Reinforcing the original culture

Attitude:
Negative/Positive

Explorers
Impacts:
Changing images
Cross-cultural competence
Domestic cultural differences

Attitude:
Negative/Positive

Belonging Seekers
Impacts:
Making friends
Ethnic identity

Attitude:
Mainly positive

Dependents
Travel experiences:
Limited, within Guangdong province
Traveling with friends or relatives; joining tour groups
Environmental bubble (tourist bubble)

Conservatives
Travel experiences:
Limited, within Guangdong province
Mixed travel modes

Criticizers
Travel experiences:
Experienced
Mixed travel modes

Explorers
Travel experiences:
Experienced
Individual travelers

Belonging Seekers
Travel experiences:
Experienced
Individual travelers

Figure 2. Five Types of Tourists across Social Contact Dimensions

Note: "Travel experiences" is a supplement of the six dimensions.

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6. Discussion and implications

This study seeks to identify different dimensions of social contact between tourists and hosts and further explore a tourist typology according to their contact patterns across those dimensions. By adopting Cohen's (1972) theory and a qualitative approach, the present study revealed the underlying items in each of the identified dimensions of tourist-host social contact, namely purposes, determinants, activities, intensity, impacts and attitude of contact.

It is noticed that, the six dimensions of social contact vary significantly among the five tourist types. Purposes of contact act as motivators of interactions with the hosts. For "Dependents" who seldom contact with the locals in a destination are found to have no specific purposes whereas for "Conservatives", they communicate with the hosts because they have to obtain some information from them. For the other three types, besides getting information, they also interact with the hosts to explore the destinations and to gain knowledge. "Belonging seekers", positioning as the most active type, have an additional motive to contact with the locals, which distinguishes itself from all the others. They seek for social networking in the destination and like to exchange ideas with the locals. Regarding the determinants of contact, it is obvious that "Dependents" and "Conservative" reported more on the internal constraints, such as their introverted characters, poor language competence, prejudices towards mainland China and the perceived cultural differences between their home places and the destinations. On the contrary, more proactive tourist types emphasized more on the external factors, for instance, the length and the places of stay and characters of the hosts. In terms of contact activities, from "Dependents" to "Belonging Seekers", the activities involved gradually changed from service-oriented to social-oriented, from limited to various. The contact intensity also changes together with the participation of interactions, from superficial to profound. After the contacts, "Conservatives"

who have limited and service-oriented contacts with the hosts obtained some trip related information, which tends to be a short-term impact. Due to the favorable nature of those contacts, their attitudes toward the contacts are mostly positive. For "Criticizers" and "Explorers", interactions with the hosts may help them know more about the destinations, recognize the differences between their original places and the destinations, and then further reinforce their cultural identity with their home cultures, or change their original images toward the destinations. They tend to reflect after interacting with the locals and those contacts with the locals do affect their perceptions in various ways. As a result, the attitudes toward the contacts with the hosts can be either positive or negative. For the "Belonging Seekers", they make friends with the hosts and greatly immerse in the local culture. Their attitudes toward the contacts are positive. From "Dependents" to "Belonging Seekers", tourists have a tendency to be more experienced in traveling, from group and short-haul travelers to individual and long-haul travelers.

Tourists, as the essential component of the tourism system, has been discussed based on various disciplines and subjects. Tourists are not homogeneous and some scholars have discovered the heterogeneous nature of tourists and proposed diverse typologies rooting in fields such as psychology, sociology and anthropology (Cohen, 1972, 1979 & 1988; Plog, 1974 & 2001; Hamilton-Smith, 1987; Smith, 1989; Pearce & Lee, 2005). Building on six contact dimensions, a tourist typology was developed to better understand the patterns of tourist-host social contact. Compared with the original tourist typology by Cohen (1972), the current study contributes to the body of knowledge in the following realms. First, Cohen (1972), adopting a theoretical approach, proposed a general tourist typology according to tourists' pursuit of novelty and familiarity in a destination. The present study, using in-depth interviews as the technique, empirically investigated such typology with different contact dimensions as evidence. It acted as a primary

support for the theory and further developed the theory by enriching the contact patterns for each tourist type. Second, compared with the single criterion, which is the tourists' pursuit of novelty and familiarity in a destination (Cohen, 1972), this study used diverse dimensions to describe and analyze different tourists according to their contact patterns. Such kind of typology is able to provide a rich and holistic view of the social contact. Third, Cohen (1972) mentioned that, both the intensity in quality and the extensity in quantity were important indicators to assess the social contact. However, the quality and quantity aspects were not specified in the original study. The current study, adopting purposes, determinants and intensity as indicators of contact quality and activities as the indicator of contact quantity to simultaneously evaluate the "extent" and "variety" of social contact.

The trends and patterns across the five tourist types also show a great consistency with the existing taxonomies of tourists rooted in different fields. Specifically, the study reveals that, from the first type to the fifth type of classification, tourists have different motivations to interact with the hosts. For instance, "Conservatives" passively interact with the hosts since they need to get some information to continue their travel. Meanwhile, they tend to have intragroup communications if possible rather than with the hosts as they have a desire to keep the relationship with their companions. On the contrary, "Belonging Seekers" proactively interact with the locals. They contact with the locals not only because that they need some travel information, but also because that they would like to explore the destinations and to learn something new. The trend corresponds to the Travel Career Ladder (TCL) stated by Pearce and Lee (2005), which is a motivational model based upon Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Moreover, passive tourists in interactions with the hosts report more internal constraints to communicate, such as their introverted characters, poor language competence and perceptions towards the

destinations. Their travel experiences are quite limited, mostly of which are short-haul destinations. Proactive tourists are less influenced by the internal and personal constraints, which enable them to participate in the tourist-host interactions more than the others. They have rich travel experiences and prefer to travel individually. This pattern is consistent with the six psychographic groups of tourists, raised by Plog (1974 & 2001), which argued that, "Venturers" travel more than "Dependable" and different psychographic types pursue different activities during leisure travel due to their different inner desires. Regarding tourists' adaptation to local norms, "Dependents" are surrounded by their own environment bubbles and have limited adaptation to the destination. "Conservatives", "Criticizers", and "Explorers" gradually increase their degree of adaptation to the destination norms. Eventually, "Belonging Seekers" are able to fully accept the local norms during their travels. This kind of adaptation trend supports Smith's (1989) seven-type tourists, which claimed that, tourists can be classified into different types according to their adaptation levels to the local norms. However, due to the difference between social contact and adaptation level, the frequency of each types in her study cannot be a direct reference for the current one. In addition, "Dependents" report limited impacts from their trips; "Criticizers" gain knowledge from the destinations and reinforce their original cultures; "Explorers" change their original perceptions after their trips; "Belonging Seekers" fully immerse in the destination cultures. Those perceptional differences among different types is in accordance with Cohen's (1979) tourist typology, which claimed that various modes of tourists were presented in an ascending order from most superficial to most profound, with the most superficial type inclining to their original cultures and seeking experiences with little concern for their authenticity, and the most profound one being fully committed to an elective spiritual center.

Theoretically, the current study empirically examines and further develops Cohen's (1972) work by providing diverse dimensions of tourist-host social contact and refining tourist typology with rich contact patterns for each tourist type. The generated typology also shows consistency with other tourist taxonomies from various perspectives. In addition, this typology takes the sequence into consideration, which are before contact, during contact and after contact. Such a sequence reveals the causal relationship among the six dimensions. It was interesting to find that two types of activities emerge according to their natures, namely, service-oriented contact and social-oriented contact. The types may also reflect tourists' contact purposes prior to the actual contact. As a result, contact purposes, determinants, activities and intensity together, contribute to the impacts and attitude of the contact. It provides possibility for future research which emphases the antecedents and the consequences of the social contact. Not limited to the tourism field, the findings in the present study also shed light on the domain of social contact in general. When an individual enters a new physical environment, he or she will have the chance to contact with the locals. According to this study, different kinds of people may behave differently in a new environment with new people. Understanding their contact purposes, determinants, actual behaviors, intensity, impacts as well as their attitudes can facilitate a better understanding of human beings' socialization and acculturation processes.

The findings may also provide implications for practitioners during the planning, marketing and management stages of tourism development. Diverse dimensions of social contact may offer practitioners a holistic understanding of the tourists' behavioral preferences, which can formulate a clear picture of how the tourists think, what the tourists do and what their impacts are before the trip, during the trip and after the trip phases respectively. The tourist typology categorizes all the tourists into five groups, and each group holds its own characteristics in social

contact with the hosts. Such typology may serve as indicators for the tourism product planners, marketing teams and local operators to facilitate the formulation of tailor-made tour products to diverse tourist markets. For instance, for the "Dependents" who would like to have limited contact with the hosts, mature destinations with clear signage and well established tourism infrastructure are more attractive. Meanwhile, package tours with all service inclusive may also minimize their contact with the hosts. Those elements should be highlighted during the marketing to the "Dependents" in order to meet their particular needs. Contrarily, for the "Explorers" and "Belonging Seekers", exotic destinations with authentic experiences may be more appealing due to their exploratory nature. To develop effective marketing strategies, experiencing the destinations and close interactions with the hosts should be considered as the themes for those specific tourists. Due to their rich travel experiences and exploratory personalities, they travel not only to see the beautiful sceneries, historical heritages, and other tourist attractions, but also to encounter the hosts, experience their life as well as to satisfy their social needs. Keeping the above information in mind, the tour operators and destination managers may consistently and systematically monitor the tourists' satisfaction level and allocate diverse resources to cater to different kinds of tourists. The proposed classification may also allow destination managers to better inform different groups of tourists, and also to protect cultural integrity in the tourist-host interaction.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, building on Cohen's (1972) theory, the current study revealed the purpose, determinants, activities, intensity, impacts and attitudes of social contact between tourists and hosts via a qualitative approach. A tourist typology was established according to their

characteristics in those dimensions. The contributions of the current study is twofold. Theoretically, this study systematically investigated the dimensions of social contact in tourism and five types of tourists were identified. It can benefit future research by offering a primary way to measure social contact. The typology of tourists validates previous theories and provides new insights to the body of social contact research in tourism in general. Pragmatically, the result of the current research can provide a holistic view of tourist-host social contact, which can be used by tourism planners, operators and government officials to boost positive and favorable tourism experiences for different kinds of tourists.

As with any other research, some flaws need to be noted in the study. First, as a qualitative research, conclusions generated from the Hong Kong-mainland China case, may need further testing in other cultural contexts. Second, as mentioned in the literature, there might be some interrelationships among different dimensions of social contact, which were not investigated in the current study, for example, between contact purposes and contact activities. Future research is invited to test the dimensionality of social contact and the typology of tourists in a different context. The interrelationships among those dimensions of social contact are also worth investigating in the future. In addition, it will be of interest to investigate the role of tourist-host social contact in different kinds of niche segments, where more intensive interactions between tourists and hosts are required, such as bed and breakfast (home-stay), farm tourism as well as the voluntourism. Due to their different travel motivations and travel modes, the activities in social contact are expected to be nuanced and the tourist types in those segments may vary case by case. Taking the current research as a starting point, it will be meaningful to look into the above tourism markets and further refine the existing typology in order to provide a comprehensive view to both academia and the industry.

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