INTERGROUP IDENTITY CONFLICT IN TOURISM: THE VOICE OF THE TOURIST

Dr. Carol X. Zhang *
Associate Professor in Tourism Marketing and Management
Nottingham University Business School
University of Nottingham
Room B70, Business School North Building
Jubilee Campus
Wollaton Road
Nottingham, NG8 1BB
carol.zhang@nottingham.ac.uk

Dr Lawrence Fong
Associate Professor in Integrated Resort and Tourism Management
University of Macau, Macau SAR China
lawrencefong@um.edu.mo

Prof. Scott McCabe
Professor of Marketing and Tourism
Birmingham Business School
University of Brimingham
s.mccabe@bham.ac.uk

*Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT: Over the last decade, political tensions between Hong Kong and mainland China over the territory's status, culminating with the 2019/20 pro-democracy demonstrations, spilled over into tourism, with rising antagonism among "HongKongers" towards Chinese tourists. Central to these strained relationships are complex identity tensions that position HongKongers as distinct from mainland Chinese, despite being essentially "compatriots". The sense of belonging to a social group is derived from the interactions that distinguish "us" from "others", whilst the Chinese have been signified as "others" in this scenario, their perspectives on the issue are poorly understood. This study utilizes social identity theory to unpack these identity positions. Our results uncover changes in Chinese tourists' reflections on perceived othering they experienced by HongKongers and how identity plays a significant role in redefining relationships between hosts and guests.

Key words: Intergroup conflict, identity conflict, identity threat, social identity, resident-tourist relationship

INTRODUCTION

In 2019/20, the largest protests in the history of Hong Kong were staged against the introduction of new extradition and security legislation, which was perceived by demonstrators to dilute the region's autonomy from mainland China. A series of violent anti-government events dominated the international media and highlighted the high level of anti-mainland sentiment among Islanders, called *'HongKongers'* which had been increasing since 2010, partly attributed to the massive inflows of tourists placing pressure on services and infrastructure that were already stretched. These events were also, however, symptomatic of increasing incidences of tensions and conflicts between nations, ethnic and social groups. These conflicts over social identity have been attributed in part to an increased sense of cultural homogeneity, leading to a drive to re-establish unique identities and prompting calls for greater emphasis on individual voices, especially following the Covid-19 pandemic (Rosenfeld et al., 2021).

Theory in social psychology posits that an individual's self-concept builds heavily on social identity (Tajfel, 1978), and thus, by examining the individual (psychological) level we can gain a good understanding of social identity and intergroup behaviors. Identity involves continuous interaction between self, the groups with which we identify and others (Hogg, Abrams & Brewer, 2017; Tajfel, 1978). Notions of self and social identity play a critical role in most intergroup relations, including conflicts (Al Ramiah et al., 2011). Yet, despite much research in recent years that has examined changing dynamics of relationships between local people and tourists in the context of tourismphobia and overtourism, there remains a lack of understanding on how social identities come into play in debates over such changes in attitudes (Milano et al.,2019).

Within tourism, research on intergroup identity conflict has largely been undertaken through social-political perspectives at the macro level, which has focused on understanding the history, sources, and nature of such encounters (Ashmore et al.,2001). Studies have discussed identity conflicts and politics from heritage tourism and postcolonial perspectives (e.g., du Cros, 2004; Henderson, 2002; Pritchard & Morgan, 2001; Zhang et al., 2018) or on how tourists develop a sense of group identity in various tourism contexts (e.g., Fairley, 2003; Zhang et al., 2019). Others have analyzed how sense of belonging within host communities influences their attitudes and behaviors towards tourists (e.g., Palmer et al., 2013).

Few studies have examined ethnic related intergroup conflict at the individual level in tourism contexts, partially because research on intergroup relations between locals and tourists is still at an emergent stage within the field of tourism (Chien & Ritchie, 2018). While intergroup conflicts in tourism involves locals and tourists, we have little understanding of the perspectives of tourists about their sense of identity in relation to multi-layered social roles and how they perceive being "othered" by host populations. The aim of

this study is therefore to contribute to social identity theory in tourism through an exploration of the perceptions of Chinese mainland tourists on relations between themselves and HongKongers through the lens of their visits to the territories, thereby furthering our understanding of intergroup identity tensions and conflicts between locals and tourists and how they might be managed.

It has been over 25 years since the "handover" of Hong Kong from British colonial rule to China. As a Special Administrative Region under the "one country, two systems" doctrine, Hong Kong is a unique city-state within China, but which fundamentally remains a Chinese city. However, the recent demonstrations in the city intensified debates over Hong Kong's identity positions, when for many, "being HongKonger and being Chinese, which had long been complementary, suddenly came to feel exclusive" (Fisher, 2019). Studies on intergroup identity conflicts often assume intragroup homogeneity in comparison to intergroup cultural and social differentiation (Al Ramiah, et al., 2011; Chien & Ritchie, 2018). Here, the growing feeling of incompatibility between Hong Kong and mainland identity draws attention not only to the intergroup, but also, intragroup differentiations (Hogg, 1996, Myers, 1999). This is in stark contrast to policy by the Chinese government for mainland Chinese tourists to visit Hong Kong and vice versa, aiming to integrate Hong Kong through interactions among *fellow citizens*. However, incidents such as children urinating on the street, tourists driving through red traffic lights and being excessively noisy, entrenched a negative image of the mainlanders in Hong Kong. These negative images have often been utilized as key markers to define and differentiate HongKongers from 'other' Chinese (see Chen et al., 2018; Rowen, 2015).

It is this complexity of inter/intragroup conflict that offers rich context for this study, as we argue that the sense of group membership is not only created through the smooth transference from self to in-groups, but also in how in-group and out-group membership is constructed in relation to self-positions. The study applies the concept of social identity to

understand how Chinese tourists reflect on a sense of imposed "othering" to provide a comprehensive understanding of intergroup identity conflicts between hosts and guests.

SOCIAL IDENTITY AND INTERGROUP CONFLICT

Identity is implicated in a variety of intergroup conflicts from immigration to internal minority movements. For social psychologists, social identity is valuable in understanding intergroup relations and conflicts (Ashmore et al., 2001). Tajfel's definition of social identity is instrumental to the theory: "…that part of an individual's self-concept is derived from his [or her] knowledge of his [or her] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (1987:63). When people are cognitively aware and categorize themselves as "we" and "us" (social identity) as opposed to "I" and "me" (self or personal identity), the self is defined in terms of one's position in relation to either actual, imagined or implied presence of others (Hogg & Vaughan, 2009). Here, three interlinked components contribute to understanding social identity: the cognitive component (awareness of one's membership and self-categorization), the evaluative component (social comparisons with others), and the emotional component (affective commitment to group membership) (Tajfel, 1978; Hogg et al., 2017). Through social categorization, the individual self is substituted by a group membership-based identity (Ellemers et al., 2002).

In the context of intergroup relations, it is an incompatibility of goals, beliefs, attitudes, and/or behavior among involved parties through which the nature of intergroup conflict is defined (Myers, 1999). As intergroup behaviors and relations are often characterized by a process of competition for positive identity (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019), intergroup conflict is often an inherent aspect of social identity formation (Ashmore, et al., 2001). Here,

intergroup identity conflicts go beyond any competition for objective materials or resources, rather they lie in individuals' subjective perception and interactive evaluation of self, the in-group and others (Al Ramiah, et al., 2011). This subjectivity often occurs in the idea of relative status, due to the reflective nature of human cognition. The overall argument is that a perceived low group status position results in unfavorable evaluations among relevant groups (Ellemers et al., 1999; Fisher & Sakaluk, 2020). For example, the status of being 'Westerners' in Asia was perceived to bring more positive collective esteem for HongKongers compared to being categorized as Chinese prior to the handover (Mathews, 1997).

With the emergence of globalization and its associations with an increasing homogeneity of culture, researchers have turned to Freud's "narcissism of minor difference" to understand intergroup identity conflict (Ignatieff 1998). This refers to the small differences among people who are otherwise alike forming the basis of a feeling of strangeness and hostility between them. While globalization brings us all closer together, it also collapses the old boundaries of identity, producing a reaction whereby we cling to the margins of difference that remain. For Ignatieff, this (re)emphasis on minor differences, causes conflicts especially between groups who appeared highly similar. Therefore, contemporary social identity is often based on subtle distinctions that are emphasized, defended and reinforced against what is closest to us because that is what poses the greatest threat (Blok 1998). For Sarup (1996), it is those significant others or those who are distanced from *us* that defines the uniqueness of an identity and therefore creates the context for intergroup identity conflicts.

To form a unique social identity, we often assume the connections between self and our in-groups to be a smooth process. However, personal identity cannot simply be transferred from the individual to the collective level. Indeed, the interaction and competition between self and in-groups adds additional complications in understanding social identity in

intergroup conflicts (Ellemers et al., 2002). People desire positive self-esteem and certainty, which motivates group membership that we associate with a positive social identity. Paradoxically, individual self-perception tends to become depersonalized when shared social identity is salient, thus whether to compromise a personal identity for a social one becomes a source of internal identity conflict (Turner et al., 1994). As individuals often have a range of different identities (e.g., woman, mother, Chinese, artist), different opinions of self, in- and out groups may develop, contingent on which identity is most salient in various contexts. Social identity focuses on boundary-making, identifying what separates us from others; when boundaries between groups change, contradictory narratives may emerge and impact on both ourselves and others. Social interactions define identity boundaries through the recognition of similarities and differences, whereby inter/intragroup conflict depends on this process (Tilly, 2015). Here, identity is always context dependent since categorization processes are intrinsically comparative and inherently variable, fluid and relative to a frame of reference (Hogg et al., 2017; Turner et al., 1994).

Social identity conflict: tourism perspectives

Many social categories exist in tourism. In the current research, we focus on ethnic and national related social group-based identity tensions between residents and tourists. Resident-tourist relations has long been an important topic within the tourism literature, but intergroup conflict remains underdeveloped (Chien &Ritchie, 2018). Previous studies have mainly investigated resident-tourist relations as a function of tourism's impact on development; hence, analyses of conflicts focus largely on competition over resources (e.g., Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012); resident's attitudes towards tourists, more recently in respect to overtourism (Gossling et al., 2020), and resident's attitudes and stereotyping of tourists (e.g., Tse & Tung,

2022). Among these previous studies, conflicts that arise in destinations due to resident-tourist encounters have been conceptualized almost exclusively in relation to tourism impacts and resident's attitudes.

Additionally, intergroup conflict has been utilized as the background to explore the awareness and reaction of tourists to unfavorable and even hostile expressions against them. For example, a few studies implemented the concept of contact-hypothesis to examine tourists' attitude and behavioral change when encountering residents of countries that have been traditionally hostile to them (e.g., Anastasopoulos, 1992; Uriely et al., 2009; Unger et al., 2021). In social psychology, the basic premise of the contact hypothesis is that interactions between two different racial or ethnic groups should result in changing the attitudes and reducing prejudice among each group. For many, intergroup contact tends to produce better mutual understanding and relations (Amir, 1969). However, many argue that as social context is contextually sensitive, people might have various contact experiences. For example, negative contact can overwhelm the influence of any positive contact experience as McKeown and Dixon (2017) argued, the study of contact hypothesis should try to capture the variability by including negative experience . In tourism, only very few study has implicitly drawn attention to tourists' reaction to negative social contacts (e.g., Zhang et al., 2019). However, nearly all previous intergroup conflict tourism studies have assumed there is a clear identity boundary between tourists and hosts (e.g., Israel tourists and Egyptian residents), and discussions about conflicts have been embedded in intergroup relations rather than identity *per se*. Situated in Hong Kong's inter/intragroup identity debates, the current study aims to capture the relativity of contact experience and argues for the consideration for the role of tourists' identity in debates over identity relations.

Much research argues that the focus of identity conflict in destinations should be on residents, as tourists are generally outsiders to the community and therefore less 'relevant' to

identity debates in destinations. However, the interactive nature of both social identity and conflict as an ongoing process of evaluation of self, the in-group and others that forms intergroup identity conflicts (Ashmore, et al., 2001; Tilly, 2015) means thattourists' perceptions are also relevant and important to understand how identity positions play out through such conflicts. Some studies have examined this interactive nature of identity to assess how hosts' negative perceptions of tourists influences tourists experience through a focus on stigmatised identity (e.g., Moufakkir, 2015) and negative stereotypes (e.g., Zhang et al., 2019). While tourists may have similar or distinct identities with hosts, only a small number of studies have explored nebulous identity boundaries in tourists-host encounters. For example, Griffiths and Sharpley (2012) examined English tourist and Welsh host encounters, finding their experience to be largely dependent on their definition of the UK, the English and the Welsh. When identity boundaries between tourists and hosts are close and dynamic, tourists are not complete outsiders, but could also be considered significant others or distantly related to us. This is where the "narcissism of minor differences" becomes relevant. However, we are still a long way from fully understanding the perceptions of tourists as distanced in-group members or significant others and how this plays out in intergroup conflicts.

It should be noted that the boundaries between ourselves and others change in different social contexts (Tilly, 2015). Tourism settings and encounters are dynamic, such that identity positions are dependent on the context (e.g., Chen et al., 2020). However, previous tourism research has cast individuals as holding static identity positions (e.g., Palmer et al., 2013), in contrast to the notion that identity is variable, fluid and relative in nature (Tuner et al., 1994). A recent study found that tourists temporarily altered identity positions within the Covid-19 pandemic for example Zhang et al. (2021). However, continuous changes in contextual dynamics induce individuals' reflexive evaluation of available identities, which therefore

determines the ways that identities come into conflict in tourist-host encounters. Taking an in-depth, longer-term analysis of the contextual social processes underpinning dynamic, inter/intragroup identity relationships may enable a more nuanced and meaningful analysis of host-guest relations.

Identity conflict in Hong Kong: the role of Chinese tourists

The 2019/20 Hong Kong protests signified an intensification of simmering identity tensions, which had been building since well before the handover in 1997. The handover was indeed a watershed for Hong Kong's identity, yet the tradition among locals as defining themselves in contrast with their close other, mainland Chinese, developed long before the handover, which arguably plays a central role in the contemporary situation.

Hong Kong's Chinese identity was very strong and evidenced by anti-colonialism movements, especially during the Japanese invasion in the 1940s. The popular idea of HongKonger emerged after the riots of 1967, which were influenced by the Cultural Revolution on the mainland. During that period, extremely violent protests counteracting British rule created negative sentiments about both the communist and British governments, which stimulated a sense of attachment to the land/state. Cantonese replaced Mandarin as the local dialect in Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland was no longer considered the progenitor, but rather, the primogenitor ('old home'), of Hong Kong, creating a quasi-independent place identity for its people (Carroll, 2007). When Hong Kong emerged as a cosmopolitan city in Asia in the late 1960s, the mainland was relatively underdeveloped. To control the numbers of illegal immigrants from China, strict border controls were implemented, and pro-Beijing textbooks were prohibited (Carroll, 2007). As a result, HongKongers were described as superior Westerners in Asia, who were more educated and

sophisticated than the impoverished and uneducated illegal mainland immigrants (Mathews, 1997). Indeed, Hong Kong's Special Administrative Region title itself signifies its superior and special status compared to the 'underdeveloped' mainland cities.

Tourism was presumed to be one of the most effective ways to re-integrate Hong Kong back to its 'biological' mother (Chen, 2012). After the handover, visitors from the Chinese mainland accounted for around 80% of Hong Kong's tourist arrivals, before the protests (HKTB Partnernet, 2021). While growth in visitor numbers brought economic benefits and social integration, increased social conflict between residents and tourists often generated intense identity debates. The innumerable numbers of mainland tourists in Hong Kong have become visible reminders of the everyday connections between them, visitors are perceived to receive better treatment than HongKongers, especially in shopping centers and to be responsible for major social issues such as noise, congestion, and high prices (Rowen, 2015). Despite the speedy development of the mainland's economic status, HongKongers feel both superior and deprived when evaluating the identity of tourists from the mainland (Chen et al., 2018).

It is through the actual, imagined or implied presence of the others (mainlanders) that HongKongers create their sense of collective and individual self, therefore any study of identity conflict in this context should consider this process of othering (Hogg & Vaughan, 2009). On the one hand, a sense of superiority among HongKongers towards Chinese tourists is important for them to establish a positive self-concept and sense of collective esteem. However, on the other hand, this position of superiority is established through a continuous process of defining Chinese tourists as inferior, potentially distinguishing HongKongers from a Chinese identity. Meanwhile, rapid economic development of China could be considered a threat to Hong Kong's identity as superior, rich and sophisticated. Perceived threats to identity could result in moves to differentiate further from the notion of the others and

thereby strengthen the idea of us (Branscombe et al., 1999). This is evident through the positioning of mainland tourists as "*Qiangguoren*" (people from a powerful country), which ironically symbolizes uncivilized behavior and egotistical attitudes (Rowen, 2015). Since social identity is interactive, the othering processes outlined above which frames the Chinese visitors as occupying an inferior identity, could be considered as an important source for identity conflict in Hong Kong (Branscombe et al., 1999; Sanchez et al., 2018), particularly for the tourists who are on the receiving end of this process, which may have profound implications for Hong Kong's future success.

METHODS AND DATA

To explore the perceptions of Chinese mainland tourists on intergroup identities between themselves and HongKongers, the study adopted an interpretivist position with the aim of eliciting detailed narratives to gain insights into individuals' subjective experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). A relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology were deemed most appropriate to gain a deeper understanding of the variable, fluid and relative nature of social identity and its complexity within specific contexts (Alharahsheh, & Pius, 2020). Proceeding from this standpoint, we highlight the necessary condition of being, which is to differ from others. It is the relative comparison between ourselves and others that makes us unique (Killam, 2013). This social constructionism approach within qualitative psychology allows us to understand micro-social constructions and acknowledges the interactive nature of social identity between ingroups and outgroups (e.g., Burr, 2004). This approach allows tourism researchers to explore the fluid and interactive nature of identity in tourism (e.g., Zhang et al., 2019). Here, intergroup identity conflicts are socially and culturally embedded concepts. Understanding tourists perceptions of the identity tensions between themselves and

the host population is an important means of accessing the diverse perspectives required to inform practical strategic development in the future.

The majority of existing research on social identity has been developed within Western contexts, where a strong emphasis on independent self-identity has been prioritized (Ellemers et al., 2002). In collectivist societies such as in China, the individual self is seen as *interdependent* with social group membership. For the Chinese, an individuals' life can be meaningful only through coexistence with others (Hwang, 1998). Individuals' self and collective esteem are highly associated with others (both intergroup and intragroup members), which guides their behaviors, even in tourist settings (Zhang et al., 2021).

In order to fully explore relative identity positions among tourists and their perceptions of inter/intragroup relations, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with a sample of 31 tourists between January and August 2021. All questions were open-ended to encourage active dialogue between participants and researchers (Dey, 1993), beginning with enquiring about their travel experiences in Hong Kong, focusing not only on the most recent experience, but also on previous visits. The researcher was sensitive to potential cultural biases and avoided prompting to focus on encouraging participants to elaborate their travel experiences and how these experiences related to their understanding of social identity perceptions, for themselves and in terms of how they perceived to be positioned by locals on their visits to Hong Kong. The research design and interview protocol received ethical approval from the first author's institutional research ethics committee.

To acquire theoretically sensitive results, data collection and analysis followed an iterative process, helping the researchers to focus on theoretically relevant sampling (Coyne,1997). At the outset, the study aimed to recruit participants that had travelled to Hong Kong during the 2019/20 protests through convenience sampling. However, the political uncertainty and later the pandemic restricted participants' willingness to participate. It was

not until 2021 that both situations had settled and there was a greater willingness to engage in research. Frist, two Chinese authors recruited 6 participants via Wechat and Weibo (Chinese social media). Starting from this convenience sampling, participants shared their experiences openly. Later, two Chinese-born PhD candidates who have qualitative research experience were hired as research assistants for data collection. Interview training and detailed interview outlines were designed and explained. Two other interviews were conducted by research assistants. The two Chinese author(s) reviewed these interview transcripts and follow-up interviews were conducted to ensure that the research assistants captured the dynamics of the experiences of participants. During these earlier interviews (in total eight), it was found that tourists previous travel experience in Hong Kong also contributed significantly to how they negotiated and evaluated their social identities. Hence, two Chinese authors and two Chinese research assistants continued to search for possible research participants through the snowball sampling technique.

The sample was later extended to those who had travelled to Hong Kong in the past five years and specifically those who had had different travel experiences in the past. This iterative process helped the researchers to generate theoretically relevant data (Coyne,1997). To achieve a heterogeneous theoretical sample, a participant recruitment notice was posted on the authors' social media pages (Wechat & Weibo) offering a small incentive (equivalent to £10/$13 e-voucher). Those posts were shared and reshared among the authors' personal networks and groups. Interviews were transcribed immediately after the interview for reviewing and informing future data collection (Coyne, 1997). If transcripts showed insufficient data capture, the lead author conducted follow-up interviews. The lead author conducted the final 3 interviews and terminated the data collection when it was apparent that the information being gathered was highly repetitive and the material had reached the point of saturation (Denzin & Lincon, 1994). All 31 interviews were audio recorded with consent and

transcribed verbatim in Mandarin for data analysis. Due to the pandemic restrictions, all the interviews were conducted remotely online. As shown in Table 1, participants ranged in age from 21 to 66, reflecting diverse generational travel experiences in Hong Kong. The interviews varied in length from 40 mins to 85 mins.

(Table 1)

Data were analyzed thematically in three phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Dey, 1993). The first phase consisted of open coding, where the lead author immersed herself in the raw data and generated rich, fragmented codes from the data. This inductive approach allowed potential themes to be drawn from the data rather than from prior knowledge. Reflexive memos produced after each interview were reviewed in this phase (Dey, 1993). The second phase comprised an axial coding process, which aimed to make sense of and organize initial codes through purposive selection of theoretically relevant and rich data to generate higher order categories. Here, axial coding was done by moving back and forth between theories and codes generated using the constant comparative method to increase the level of abstraction (Braun & Clarke 2006). Finally, a selective coding phrase focused on developing theoretically sensitive themes that recurred in the codes in order to produce coherent narrative themes on Chinese tourists' reflections on social identity in relation to Hong Kong.

To enhance the trustworthiness of data analysis, member-checking was done in three phases by the authors. The lead author is a Chinese national who has lived in Hong Kong previously and now lives abroad, although she maintains regular contact with, and undertakes regular visits, to Hong Kong. The second author is a Cantonese native who previously lived in Hong Kong and currently resides in Macau, and who evaluated the themes from the perspectives of the others and us in relation to Chinese mainland tourists. These were then

checked and refined through discussion with the third author, a white, Western male with no connections to China or Hong Kong. Importantly, it should note that the authors of this paper could all be generically labelled as "tourism academics", they are indeed with diverse backgrounds in social psychology, sociology, marketing and hospitality, tourism and leisure studies. They are of Asian and European origins and affiliated with institutions close to and outside Hong Kong. Hence, their background, positionality and sensitivities to the issues under discussion should be reflexively considered. Notwithstanding this, these different positions facilitated a comparative and interactive analysis, which enhanced the credibility of the interpretation (Decrop, 1999).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

It is the interactive nature of identity as an ongoing evaluation of membership of groups in relation to others that explains intergroup identity conflicts. To explicate our analysis the first theme (conflict evolution) investigates the cognitive change of identity to trace the advent of tensions in identity positions. The second theme (conflict through change) explains how the identity group perceptions are constantly being re-evaluated and adjusted from the view of the Chinese tourists. The last theme (affective commitment in conflict) reveals how affective tensions influence Chinese tourists to reposition social identities in relation to themselves and HongKongers.

Conflict evolution: cognitive awareness of othering and identity change

The different cognitive perceptions and categorizations adopted by the respondents can be broadly categorized based on the period when they travelled to Hong Kong. Interestingly, the evolution in identity conflicts occurred when their understanding of the self and social identities changed through their interaction with residents. Broadly speaking, this identity conflict evaluation can be understood in three different stages (see Table 2). Here, travel

experiences reflect identity formations for Chinese tourists and exacerbates identity conflict (Ashmore et al., 2001).

(Table 2)

As shown in Table 2, in contrast with the current situation, Hong Kong was in harmony in the first stage, when few Chinese tourists were able to travel there and no intergroup conflicts were reported (Mathews, 1997; Okano & Wong, 2004). Those who travelled to Hong Kong before the handover and close to the Individual Travel Scheme in 2003 (mainland tourists can travel to Hong Kong individually) tended to have a relatively different understanding of Hong Kong, HongKongers, Chinese tourists and themselves, as illustrated by the following quote:

> *P2: I travelled to Hong Kong in 1993. You could not travel alone to Hong Kong during that time. It was my first time to apply my passport. I travelled with my colleagues as this trip was an award to us. At that time, Shenzhen was still in its early developing stage. I was attracted by all the tall buildings and colorful streets in Hong Kong. Everyone looks so smart. It was an amazing experience and you felt you were connected to the advanced world. I told my journey to Hong Kong to friends and families for many years.*

Like P2, all the participants who travelled in this harmonious stage described Hong Kong as a "*superior*" and "*advanced*" destination, which provided them with an opportunity to see the world and "*felt you were connected to the advanced world*". At the time, Hong Kong's perception of the Chinese was largely dependent on their understanding of illegal immigrants, who are uneducated and poor in comparison with the sophisticated superior HongKongers (Mathews, 1997). Surprisingly, Chinese tourists tended to confirm HongKongers' othering position for them as their understanding of Chinese tourists were undifferentiated with that perceived by HongKongers. Many tended to perceive HongKongers as superior others rather than us: "*they behave like Westerners not like us mainlanders*" (P1). This undifferentiated

boundary recognition between HongKongers and Chinese tourists thus contributed to harmonious relations (Ashmore et al., 2001). While they acknowledged their relatively underdeveloped status in comparison with the superior HongKongers, the positioning of Hong Kong as 'advanced' somehow granted them with a positive self-esteem as people who have experienced the developed city in contrast to those who have not (Hogg et al., 2017). P31 emphasized this, stating, "*my mum used to be very proud of me in my hometown as I can go to Hong Kong*".

When Chinese tourists had become the dominant tourist group in Hong Kong, identity conflicts began to emerge in the second stage. Here, their cognitive perceptions of HongKongers, general Chinese tourists and themselves have significantly changed. While some acknowledged the advancement of Hong Kong, an increasing number of Chinese tourists reflected on the sense of othering from the HongKongers.

> *P6: I am always amazed by Hong Kong, its special administrative status, its currency, its city flag. It's all different from the mainland. It is indeed a global city. But… an elderly person once said to my family 'go away locust.'…I do not want my little girl to hear these kinds of words.*

> *P23: the gaps between the poor and the rich are huge. You look at those villas around the Peak, then you look at those people who live on the streets. Most of them have jobs and worked day by day but can't afford a place to live. Even when they do, it is extremely small and old…I did meet a few friendly people, but most of them had arrogant attitudes and were narrow minded. I just do not understand how they can be so arrogant living in such a poor condition?*

From the above quotes, while the participants in the first stage shared a positive cognitive understanding of HongKongers and themselves, participants who reflected during the second stage had mixed attitudes towards HongKongers and themselves. Some participants acknowledged the metropolitan and developed nature of the destination, and many started to reflect on the increasing sense of othering towards Chinese tourists. As shown above, some younger participants (e.g., P23) who are highly educated and affluent critically reflected on this evolution of identity conflicts in comparison to their own standard

of living. Here, besides commenting on Hongkonger's "*arrogant attitudes*" like P6, P23 argued that "*how they can be so arrogant living in such a poor condition?*"

But many admitted that the negative images of mainlanders in Hong Kong have not progressed beyond those early stereotypes and attribute the intense conflicts between Chinese tourists and HongKongers to cheap package tourists, who mainly come to Hong Kong for shopping and therefore do not care much about the destination rules. For example, P1 recalled "*Hong Kong was so crowded and you could see several group package tourists jumping the queue and being extremely noisy.*" In doing so, participants differentiate themselves from the perceived negative images of Chinese tourists in Hong Kong, which aligns with many previous studies on tourist-tourist attitudes. Interestingly, while salient group features provided resources for individuals to build both collective esteem and self-esteem (Hogg & Vaughan, 2009), both cognitive awareness of negative images about Chinese tourists and high group commitment towards a Chinese self-identification, made it difficult for participants to adopt other social group memberships**.** However, they were impelled to self-categorize themselves into sub-groups for their positive self-esteem (Ellemers et al., 2002) as shown below:

> *P10: I have been to Hong Kong many times. Unlike those mainland (Dalu) shopping tourists who just want to see the Peak and experience the tall buildings, I always go to niche tourist attractions in the suburbs. Many mainland (Neidi) media say that Shanghai has replaced Hong Kong. But I still like the city, its diversity, it's not just a city with both Western and Eastern culture like some of the mainland (Neidi) cities, like Shanghai.*

As highlighted by P10, while both *Dalu* and *Neidi* signify mainland China, *Dalu* often denotes relatively negative images developed in the late colonial period in contrast to the superior HongKongers developed at the same time (Mathews, 1997). These subtle nuances were often used by our participants, showing a sense of distinctiveness between them and

Dalu tourists, but still maintaining their position as people from *Neidi (the mainland)* with relatively positive collective self-esteem.

In the third stage, the intensified identity conflict manifested through the 2019/20 Hong Kong protests. While Chinese visitors were still the dominant group of tourists, their cognitive perceptions of HongKongers, general Chinese tourists and themselves shifted significantly during the crisis. In response to their sense of being othered by HongKongers, most started to build their own boundaries and viewed HongKongers as others rather than in-group members. The crisis therefore enforced the incompatibility of intergroup identity conflicts between HongKongers and mainlanders by exposing intergroup differentiation for both parties (Hogg, 1996; Myers, 1999). As expected, many participants held relatively negative viewpoints towards the destination and host community, indicating the escalating sense of heightened identity conflict.

> *P15: Many roads were blocked, unorganized signs were everywhere. The Central was so empty. I saw many young people dressed in black. I was afraid but just kept quiet and walked away. I was thinking why those young people are protesting? Maybe their life is so hard…My friends and family said I was very brave.*

> *P31: Shenzhen is so close to Hong Kong. We never imagined this event was so big. Hong Kong was so safe. We saw them in the shopping mall. I can still hear HongKongers' loud voices and aggressive behaviors in the shop while we were hiding in the changing room. A young mum used her hand to cover her child's mouth …We quickly took the underground back home. A few young men were sitting next to the door just in case they came to the train. It was scary.*

The quotes indicate the unusual nature of the experience for all visitors during the 2019/20 protests, associated with their social identity as Chinese tourists. Hong Kong is now transformed from a busy and safe city to an "*empty*" and "*scary*" place for some. For many, the boundaries between their social identities, including self-perception, were continuously distinct from that of HongKongers. This is evidenced by the strong quote by P1, "*I never thought foreigners would be safer in a Chinese land compared with the Chinese*". Tourism encounters therefore influence identity boundary-making through change of self-perceptions

of us and others (Hogg et al., 2017). This change of boundaries will be further explained in the following section. Furthermore, signs like "*empty streets*", "*unorganized signs*" and the surprised feeling towards the aggressive protests imply a cognitive change in their understanding towards the destination. Those who undertook the journey therefore differ from other tourists as they have become lucky and brave: a journey for self-esteem enhancement.

Conflict through change: identity evaluation

Social interaction is often considered as an effective means to build strength of social identity and potentially reduce conflict (Al Ramiah et al., 2011). However, the above discussion shows that the increased number of tourists and a rise in conflicting interactions weakened the social identity of the Chinese and exacerbated the intra/intergroup tensions. As both conflict and identity are interactive and fluid (Tajfel,1978; Myers, 1999), this section reveals that it is the change of relative status between HongKongers and the Chinese as well as the perceived (expressed) identity threat for both parties that intensified the perceived identity conflict to a significant degree.

The changes that happened in the three stages, identified in Table 2, indicate the perceived loss of attractiveness and superiority of Hong Kong and HongKongers among Chinese tourists. Here, it is through the continuous evaluation of social group membership that shapes identity positions (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019) through points of conflict. The following quotes highlights these reflections:

> *P5: I went to Hong Kong in 2006. I was so proud. Opened my eyes. Not many people had opportunities for outbound travel. Many people come and ask me about this experience…Now I can go to the West to see the West… If you go to Hong Kong, nobody cares, unless it was during the protest period. My life in my hometown is much better. We have everything here. The city does not offer unique things.*

P31: Before I do business with HongKongers; they always looked down on us. Of course they will…later, the city became a supermarket. We went there for some quality goods... I have started to see the gaps between rich and poor. Some people actually live an extremely hard life including those with a good education...do not know why they still look down on us, we have a better life in Shenzhen. Now, I can say I look down you too …then you saw HongKongers driving crazy in Shenzhen…they have become loud and noisy …then the protests, I see it as a way to express their hard life or willingness to recall the loss of their superiority over us.

As shown in the above quotes, the rapid economic development of the mainland during the past two decades has undoubtedly closed the gap between it and Hong Kong and therefore changed the nature of their relative status. Here, it is the "narcissism of minor differences" that explains the emergence of conflicts between HongKongers and mainlanders when they are in fact very similar (Ignatieff, 1998). As a result, Hong Kong's position as being a Western city in Asia is no longer as attractive as it once was for many. Now Chinese tourists can "*go the West to see the West*" or they already have everything in their hometown.

Whereas previously, many accepted their own inferior status compared with the superior HongKongers e.g. *"they always look down on us. Of course they will."* However, more recently, the improved economic status and way of life has altered the relative positions "*I can say I look down you too*". The unpicking of "minor differences" is exemplified by the foregrounding of subtle distinctions between HongKongers and Chinese tourists that addresses the increasing intergroup conflicts between the two groups and that is what poses the greatest threat (Blok, 1998). Interestingly, none of participates who travelled during the third stage uses the word "superior" or "advanced" to describe Hong Kong and HongKongers as they had done previously. Indeed, while many felt the 2019/20 protests were intolerable, they often expressed their sympathy towards the relatively hard living and working environments in Hong Kong. Sympathetic feelings are often raised towards relatively inferior groups (Hogg et al., 2017). The quote "*some people actually live an extremely hard life*" implies the growing self and collective esteem of many Chinese tourists. Others added "*many*

lived in tiny and old apartment on narrow and dirty streets, is this a global city life? Then mine is much global." (P26).

Identities are indeed reflective and relative especially for the Chinese (Hogg et al., 2017; Hwang, 1998). While the Chinese have significantly changed their cognitive and evaluative understanding towards the destination and its residents, there is a constant desire among HongKongers to be superior to the mainland tourists (Mathews, 1997). As a result, while HongKongers and mainland tourists are supposed to be under the same broader Chinese social identity, this competition for positive identities over each other arguably puts a broader, more closely aligned identity position in danger (Sanchez et al., 2018; Ellemers et al., 2002). When individuals' positive self and collective esteem are in danger because of the others, an identity threat emerges to escalate the intergroup conflict (Blok, 1998; Myers, 1999). P1 addressed "*I am a decent person, I never expected to be called locust on street and viewed as uncivilized barbarian simply because I am Chinese travelling in a Chinese land.*" At the same time, participants attempted to rationalize the identity threat through favoritism towards in-group members (Chinese tourists) and by differentiating outgroup members (HongKongers).

> *P4: you will see mainland tourists jumping the queue, buying necessities with madness. But I did not see any Chinese peeing on the street. You may see some Westerners do such a thing around night clubs. You will see noisy HongKongers in restaurants…Every place has well-behaved and uncivilized people. Not just because we are Chinese, we should take the blame to make them [HongKongers] feel better.*

> *P27: We were learning from Hong Kong before, we know the gaps. …Now, we contribute a lot to its economy… Everywhere is talking about customer service even in Japan and Europe. But when you go to Hong Kong with your money, they look down on you. I live a better life, why do you look at me like a small fry? They do not know the world has changed.*

These findings concur with previous research, which has noted that massive improvements in living standards and education among mainland Chinese have threatened

HongKongers' collective esteem as being superior to mainlanders leading to HongKongers feelings of relative deprivation (e.g., Chen et al., 2018). To maintain such a unique superior identity, HongKongers have been noted to reposition Chinese tourists derogatorily as "*Qiangguoren*" (people from a powerful country). As mentioned, such repositioning threatens Chinese tourists' growing positive identity, whereby they challenge relative identity positions and status. Hence, defensive actions and expressed views by both parties seems to put further distance between each other and therefore intensified a significant aspect of conflicting identity in the region (Branscombe et al., 1999) via tourism encounters. This relative and interactive process is fundamentally about competition for positive identities through negotiated positioning between self and others in a changing world (Ellemers et al., 2002).

Affective commitment in conflict: compromise to the broader Chinese identity

For social psychologists, it is an affective commitment rather than cognitive understanding that has power in influencing self and group formation and behaviors (Ellemers et al, 1999; Hogg et al., 2017). This section explains how participants' emotional attachment to the broader Chinese identity leads them to protect the idea of an inclusive in-group identity, including HongKongers, and its implications for self and collective esteem, The dominant social group's views on intragroup identity (HongKongers) influence any intra/intergroup conflict (Ashmore et al., 2001; Al Ramiah et al., 2011). The recent 2019/20 protests have enforced the boundaries of division between mainlanders and HongKongers, and identity threats have been experienced by both parties. More importantly, the growing negative interactions and feelings appears to signify that their broader social identity as Chinese is in danger. While the tensions between mainlanders and HongKongers appears to be a debate about intragroup relations, most of the time it has been perceived or reflected by

participants as *intergroup* relations, focusing on the self and others rather than the idea of *us*, a collective in-group. It is thus important to understand how the intensified identity conflict influences Chinese tourists' perception of HongKongers under the boarder social identity category of 'Chinese'.

> *P18: ....everyone knows children will cry and be naughty, but you can see how HongKongers complain about our mainland kids time after time. There are naughty kids in Hong Kong they just want to put more requirements on outsiders like us. I will pay attention to my kids' behaviors when we are in Hong Kong... but we are definitely compatriots, we have the same roots and ancestors. They haven't got much knowledge about history, maybe they will in the future.*

Despite recognizing the sense of othering and conflicting interactions, especially during the 2019/20 protests, all the participants strongly believed that HongKongers are their compatriots, as P18 described. While they construct HongKongers as treating mainlanders as "*outsiders*" and in doing, potentially threaten their self and collective esteem in relation to their mainland identity, participants acknowledged them as compatriots with a shared ancestry and tended to rationalize HongKongers behavior as "*they haven't got much knowledge about history, maybe they will in the future*". This rationalization and inclination towards in-group inclusion imply a belief in the broader social identity of 'Chinese' between them (Hogg & Vaughan, 2009). For the participants, Chinese identity is deeply rooted in history and ethnicity and, therefore, included HongKongers as compatriots. A few elderly participants (P1, P2, & P31) added that "*politically, culturally and historically, Hong Kong is and always will be a part of China*". Meanwhile some of the younger participants had a slightly different perspective, including P4: "*they are compatriots, definitely, but do they think the same? Probably not*", and P26, "*Hong Kong is the less close family members...I do not feel good about myself when I travel there. But they do not feel good about me being in Hong Kong*". The interaction and competition between self and collective esteem is

complicated in the context. While individuals often desire positive self-esteem embedded within a positive social identity (Ellemers et al., 2002), the participants often seemed to compromise their self and collective esteem in relation to their mainland Chinese identity when discussing the broader Chinese social identity. Here, due to a strong affective commitment to the broader ethnic identity position, the perceived threat to their mainland identity from HongKongers has not yet motivated them to express a mutually exclusive identity from them.

This strong sense of affective commitment to protecting the broader Chinese social identity alongside their reflections of Hong Kong during the pandemic surprisingly lightened the negative feelings about Hong Kong as a destination linked to the 2019/20 protests, as shown below:

P17: Personally, I won't go to Hong Kong soon. But I will definitely go later. I want to see the changes that have happened there. Our government is so strong… they will lead China to a greater future… It would be great to see the city later.

Similar to previous findings (e.g., Zhang et al., 2021), a growing positive emotional commitment and cohesion towards the Chinese social identity has strongly emerged and many of the participants believed in a better future for the Chinese and China, as P17 indicated above. On the other hand, some participants do believe Hong Kong has lost its unique attractiveness for mainland tourists and expressed ambivalence regarding future travel intention, for example from P2, "*we have many shops here in Shenzhen, which could be good substitutes. I still live a good life even though I haven't been to Hong Kong for a while now…Not sure whether I will go as often as before*". On the other hand, others felt the 2019/20 protests potentially added another dimension of interest for mainland to visit Hong Kong, as shown by P17 above. Also, many feel that travel to Hong Kong will be safe in the future due to the overarching power of the central government, the 2019/20 protest was

clearly a sign of differing identity positions between them, but the broader social identity might play a significant role for mainlanders in decisions to visit Hong Kong in future.

Conclusions

Resident-tourist relations has long been an important topic in tourism, but perspectives from social identity theory and intergroup conflict remains underdeveloped (Chien &Ritchie, 2018). Situated in the intensification of such identity conflicts in Hong Kong following the large-scale 2019/20 demonstrations, the current study sought to explore the perceptions of Chinese mainland tourists on the intergroup identity relations between themselves and HongKongers.

Theoretical contribution

Theoretically speaking, the paper contributes to our understanding of the subject in the following ways. Firstly, the findings shift discussions of resident-tourist conflict from tourism impact studies and social exchange theories, which have prioritized residents' perspectives, to a social psychology perspective, which showed how identity boundary-making plays a critical role in these tensions, in line with existing theory on intergroup conflicts (Al Ramiah, et al., 2011). Additionally, the study responds to calls to adopt relativist ontologies to explore contact experience (McKewn &Dixon, 2017) in tourism, which previously have prioritized positive contact experience (Anastasopoulos, 1992; Uriely et al., 2009). Specifically, as social identities are interactive and fluid and linked to conflict between groups (Tajfel,1978; Myers, 1999), the study sought to understand resident-tourist identity conflict from the perspective of others (mainland Chinese tourists) rather than HongKongers.

Secondly, tourism studies have traditionally adopted social identity to understand group features and collective mentality (e.g., Chen et al., 2018). In doing so, previous studies often

assumed that there is a harmonious relationship between the self and social identity. We noted that self-perception or self-esteem cannot simply be transferred from the individual to the collective level, and that competition exists between the individual and collective self (Ellemers et al., 2002). The sense of othering perceived by Chinese tourists from HongKongers potentially influences their self and collective esteem. The study shows that while the sense of in-group/out-group positioning by Chinese tourists is dynamic, it is their strong emotional attachment to the broader Chinese social identity that motivates them to see HongKongers as part of a broader inclusive sense of 'us' and therefore to compromise their loss of self and collective esteem. Indeed, the strong emotional attachment to the broader Chinese social identity softened the negative intentions of Chinese mainland tourists towards future travel to Hong Kong following the 2019/20 protests, as they believe that the central government will make sure that Hong Kong is safe for all Chinese.

We argue that these ongoing evaluations of self, us and others forms the nexus of intergroup conflict in resident-tourist relations (Fig 1).

(Figure 1)

Figure 1 proposes that it is the change of these evaluations between residents and tourists that constituted a central aspect of intergroup identity conflict. Here, the conflicts go beyond any competition for objective materials or resources, rather they lie in individuals' subjective perception and ongoing evaluation of self, us and others (Al Ramiah, et al., 2011). It is the historical and contemporary differentiation from mainland China that defines Hong Kong's perceived superior identity and makes it a unique context for investigation.

However, the development of intergroup identity conflicts in destinations can be generalized along these lines to show that tourists perceptions are also relevant and important to understand identity conflicts. The inter/intragroup positioning by mainland Chinese tourists offers insights to nebulous identity boundaries in tourist-host encounters that are often overlooked by previous studies, which often assumes clear identity boundaries between them (e.g., Zhang et al., 2019). In the case of Hong Kong, during the harmonious stage this can be attributed to the perceived undifferentiated identity boundary recognition between HongKongers and the Chinese.

When identity conflicts began to emerge in the second stage, the "narcissism of minor difference" played a role in understanding how the intergroup identity differences began to be revealed (Ignatieff, 1998). On the one hand, the mainland Chinese should theoretically position themselves as in-group members, since they have the same political, cultural and ethnic background as HongKongers. Yet on the other, the events and surrounding debates on identities led to Chinese tourists sensing being positioned as significant others. Here, the increasing economic power of China reduced the gap between Hong Kong's historically superior economic status in relation to that of the mainland. Finding minor differences between mainlanders and HongKongers becomes important for both parties, resulting in a reinforcement and buttressing of positions towards more discrete identity formulations.

The Chinese government hoped that increasing interactions between HongKongers and Chinese visitors would increase mutual understanding and facilitate the integration of Hong Kong in the broader social identity of China. However, the 2019/20 protests in the third stage (intensified intergroup identity conflict stage) seems to indicate the growing feeling of incompatibility between HongKong and mainland identity (Myers, 1999). It is the continuous perceived othering (by HongKongers on mainland tourists) that threatens mainlanders' growing self and collective esteem. To respond, they have started to position themselves as

having a relative superior status in relation to HongKongers, especially during the 2019/20 period. The study argues that it is this incompatible boundary recognition resulting from inter/intra group dynamic renegotiation and differentiation that exacerbates a significant part of the growing identity conflict between hosts and tourists (Ellemers et al., 1999; Myers, 1999) and has long term implications of Hong Kong's competitiveness as a destination. Notably, the reason Chinese tourists still perceive HongKongers as "us" while compromising low self-esteem demonstrates a strong affective commitment to the broader Chinese social identity.

Practical implications

From a practical perspective, the discussion of group identities from the viewpoint of tourists, rather than locals provides empirical evidence of how the perceived othering process has a significant influence on identity issues for everyone. Tourism has traditionally been used as an effective tool to facilitate a mutual understanding and integration in destinations such as in Hong Kong. Our discussion shows the role negative experiences and encounters play as determinant factors in inter/intra group identity relations. The central and local governments should be aware that increasing tourism encounters between HongKongers and the mainland Chinese will not automatically generate mutual understanding and close relationships. Further, the paper argues that when looking at identity conflicts in destination, we cannot ignore the voice of tourists. Tourism operators, government-related departments and marketing agents should be alert to potential identity conflicts and consider their impacts on residents as well as to relevant tourist groups. In Hong Kong, when dealing with mainland tourists, tourism operators could also focus on designing welcoming messages to facilitate harmonious relationships between hosts and tourists through information campaigns, e.g. pre-trip training. Additionally, in integrating the idea of identity threats to understand the

intensified conflicts in the region, the study recommends that tourism industry practitioners recognize the social-psychological ramifications of potential identity threats and conflicts when designing marketing strategies.

Limitations and future directions

As is true for all research, the study has its limitations and suggestions for future research direction. Frist, while the author(s) tried to acquire a heterogenous sample, all data were collected remotely via convenience and snowball sampling due to Covid-19 restrictions. On-site interviews in Hong Kong during the 19/20 protests might have provided different insights. Second, while we tried to find both interview data and literature to justify our findings of Chinese tourists in the pre-handover period, there is always a question as to whether participants can accurately recollect experiences from such a long time ago, or whether their memories have been influenced by subsequent events. Readers of this paper should bear this in mind and future longitudinal studied should be prioritized when trying to understand experience across time. Third, the current research is largely developed based on social psychological perspectives on social identity. The area of social groups and their identification could be conceptualized and related to many other disciplines including social-political perspectives.

For example, future studies on intergroup identity conflicts could focus on the institutional order that structure's identity group membership categorizations and further work is needed on the politics of nationalism. Further, in contextualizing the discussion of categorizations of ourselves and others in Hong Kong, the study reveals different processes in terms of how Chinese mainland tourists modified their relative identities in relation to HongKongers over time. The Chinese could be understood as navigating a dynamic sense of their individual identities in relation to how they both perceive their othering by

HongKongers and their growing sense of confidence in a Chinese social identity. Future studies could therefore apply this to different contexts where the boundaries between us and others are clear to help understand the relationship between the self and collective identities. The Covid-19 pandemic and strict border controls in the region meant that travel was halted for a substantial period of time, and it will be interesting to see how these relationships have changed now that the borders are reopened to understand whether identity conflict positions have been modified as a consequence of perceived loss of connections.

Table 1. Profile of Research Participants

No.	Age	Gender	Usual place of residence	Occupation	Acquired Education	Travel frequency	Household monthly income (Yuan; RMB)	1st travel	Most recent travel
P1	66	Female	Kunming	Retired doctor	Master	3 times	20,000-29,999	2002	2019 June
P2	63	Female	Shenzhen	Retried Finance	Junior college	5-6 times a year	20,000-29,999	1993	2019 Sept
P3	25	Female	Zhuhai	PhD Student	Master	2 times	10,000	2017	2018 May
P4	34	Female	Shanghai	Finance	Bachelor	1 time	N/A		2018
P5	34	Male	Chengdu	University Lecturer	PhD	More than 10 times	30,000-39,999	2006	2019 June
P6	40	Male	Zhuhai	Food factory	Bachelor	5 times	30,000-59,999	2014	2018 Summer
P7	27	Female	Jiujiang	Middle school teacher	Bachelor	1 time	10,000		2019 April
P8	29	Female	Zhuhai	PhD student	Master	1 time	10,000		2018
P9	23	Female	Chengdu	Undergraduate Student	High School	More than 10 times	N/A	2012	2019 Aug
P10	29	Female	Shenzhen	Company employee	Master	More than 10 times	30,000-39,999	2014	2020 Jan
P11	21	Male	Tianjin	Undergraduate Student	High School	2 times	20,000	2012	2018
P12	31	Male	Fuzhou	Accounting	Bachelor	3 times	10,000	2017	2020 Jan
P13	25	Famale	Beijing	Marketing	Master	4 times	Under 10,000	2014	2019 Aug
P14	43	Male	Wuhan	Salesperson	Junior college	1 time	20,000		2019 Aug
P15	41	Female	Shanghai	Self-employee	Bachelor	1 time	30,000-50,000		2019 Aug
P16	35	Male	Guangzhou	Government employee	Bachelor	More than 10 times	Under 10,000	N/A	2019 July
P17	36	Male	Kunming	Architect	Master	More than 3 times	30,000-39,000	2004	2017 May
P18	35	Male	Nanjing	Travel agency	Master	4 times	40,000	2015	2019 Jan
P19	23	Male	Jiujiang	Kindergarten teacher	Junior college	1 time	3,000		2019 July
P20	43	Male	Shenyang	Energy company	Junior college	1 time	10,000-20,000	2019	2019 Feb
P21	26	Female	Shenyang	Property management	Bachelor	1 time	5,000	2019	2019 Nov
P22	45	Male	Shanghai	Sales manager	Bachelor	7 times	50,000	1999	2018 Dec
P23	24	Female	Jiujiang	Kindergarten teacher	Junior college	2 times	10,000	2018	2019 July
P24	30	Famale	Shenzhen	Cultural Company	Master	5 times	30,000-49,999	2008	2019
P25	38	Male	Zhuhai	Sales	Bachelor	2 time	30,000-49,999	2012	2018 June
P26	35	Female	Chuxiong	Finance	Bachelor	6 times	40,000-49,999	2010	2019 July
P27	50	Male	Beijing	Public servant	Bachelor	More than 10 times	50,000-59,999	2000	2018 May
P28	43	Female	Xinyang	Company employee	Junior college	1 time	20,000		2019 July
P29	30	Male	Shanghai	Travel agency	Bachelor	1 time	20,000		2020 Jan
P30	40	Male	Wuhan	Manufacturing	Bachelor	2 times	10,000	2013	2019 June
P31	57	Male	Shenzhen	Architect	Master	Many times, a year	50,000-60,000	1995	2019 Oct

Table 2: Emergence of conflicts: cognitive change on identities

| Conflict evolution stage	Cognitive change classification	Participant No.	Perceived Hongkongers	Chinese tourists in general	Self-categorization
1.Harmony	Before the handover & around Individual Travel Scheme	P1,P2,P17, P22,P27,P31	• Global citizens in well-developed city • Well-behaved, rich and educated	• Underdeveloped • But well-behaved	• Great social status • Positive self-esteem
2.Emerge of conflict	Chinese tourists become dominant	P1-P18,P20,P22-P31	• People lived in colony before • Diversity and well-educated • Citizens in metropolitan • Petite bourgeoisie • Overwork • Arrogant • Gaps between rich and poor • Live in small and poor condition	• Massive • Uncivilized behavior • Shopping tourists • Pay less attention on local customs • Noisy	• Well-educated • I looked down on you too • Niche tourists
3.Intensified conflict	Since 2019-2020 protesting	P1,P2,P5, P9,P10,P12-P16,P19,P21,P23, P24,P26,P28-P31	• Narrow minded • Live in a hard life • Nervous and stressful • Uncivilized behavior in the mainland	• Victims • Fear	• Brave • Lucky • Key contributor to HK's economy • Comfortable
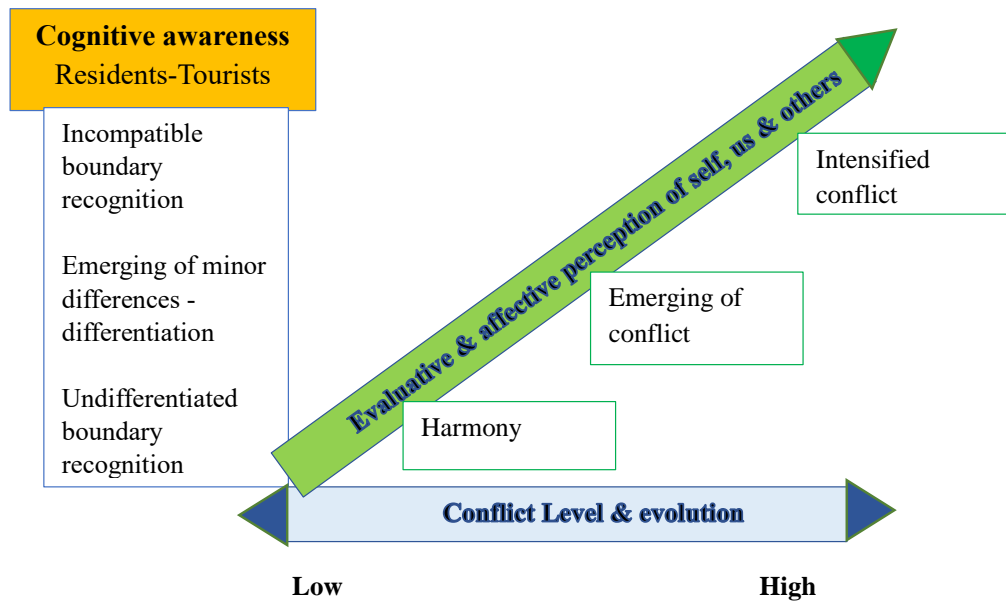
Figure 1: The role of self-other evaluations and awareness of boundaries in resident-tourist identity conflict.

Reference

Ashmore, R. D., Jussim, L. J., & Wilder, D. (Eds.). (2001). *Social identity, intergroup conflict, and conflict reduction* (Vol. 3). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Al Ramiah, A., Hewstone, M., & Schmid, K. (2011). Social identity and intergroup conflict. *Psychological Studies*, *56*(1), 44-52.

Alharahsheh, H. H., & Pius, A. (2020). A review of key paradigms: Positivism VS interpretivism. *Global Academic Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 2*(3), 39-43.

Amir, Y. (1969). Contact hypothesis in ethnic relations. *Psychological bulletin*, *71*(5), 319-342.

Anastasopoulos, P. G. (1992). Tourism and attitude change: Greek tourists visiting Turkey. *Annals of tourism research*, *19*(4), 629-642.

Blok, A. (1998). The narcissism of minor differences. *European Journal of Social Theory*, *1*(1), 33-56.

Branscombe, N. R., Ellemers, N., Spears, R., & Doosje, B. (1999). The context and content of social identity threat. *Social identity: Context, commitment, content*, 35-58.

Burr, V. (2003). *Social Constructionism*, 2nd Edition. London: Routledge

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.

Carroll, J. M. (2007). *A concise history of Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Chen, L. J. (2012). Integration of HK and Mainland: reasons behind conflicts. *Exploration and Free Views*,*11*, 74-77 (in Chinese).

Chen, N., Hsu, C. H., & Li, X. R. (2018). Feeling superior or deprived? Attitudes and

    underlying mentalities of residents towards Mainland Chinese tourists. *Tourism*

    Management, *66*, 94-107.

Chen, X., Zhang, C. X., Stone, T., & Lamb, J. (2020). Existentially understanding tourism in

    locale: A dwelling perspective. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 80, 102828.

Chien, P. M., & Ritchie, B. W. (2018). Understanding intergroup conflicts in tourism. *Annals*

    of Tourism Research, *72*(C), 177-179.

Coyne, I. T. (1997). Sampling in qualitative research. Purposeful and theoretical sampling;

    merging or clear boundaries? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *26*(3), 623–630

Dey, I. (1993). *Qualitative data analysis: A user friendly guide for social scientists*. London:

    Routledge

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). *The sage handbook of qualitative research.* London:

    Sage.

Decrop, A. (1999). Triangulation in qualitative tourism research. *Tourism*

    management, *20*(1), 157-161.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. London: Sage

    Publication

du Cros, H. (2004). Postcolonial conflict inherent in the involvement of cultural tourism in

    creating new national myths in Hong Kong. *Tourism and postcolonialism: Contested*

    discourses, identities and representations, 153-168.

Ellemers, N., Kortekaas, P., & Ouwerkerk, J. W. (1999). Self-categorisation, commitment to

    the group and group self-esteem as related but distinct aspects of social identity.

    European journal of social psychology, *29*(2-3), 371-389.

Ellemers, N., Spears, R., & Doosje, B. (2002). Self and social identity. *Annual review of*

    psychology, *53*(1), 161-186.

Fairley, S. (2003). In search of relived social experience: Group-based nostalgia sport

tourism. *Journal of Sport Management, 17*(3), 284–304.

Fisher, M. (2019). One Country, two Nationalisms': the identity crisis behind Hong Kong's

turmoil. *The New York Times*, Retrieved on 25th March, 2020 from

https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/27/world/asia/hong-kong-protests-identity.html

Gössling, S., McCabe, S., & Chen, N. C. (2020). A socio-psychological conceptualisation of

overtourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *84*, 102976.

Henderson, J. C. (2002). Heritage attractions and tourism development in Asia: a comparative

study of Hong Kong and Singapore. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 4(5),

337-344.

Hogg, M. A. (1996). Intragroup processes, group structure and social identity. InW. P.

Robinson (Ed.) *Social Groups and Identities: Developing the Legacy of Henri Tajfel*,

65-93. Oxford, England: Butterworth-Heinemann

Hogg, M. A., Abrams, D., & Brewer, M. B. (2017). Social identity: The role of self in group

processes and intergroup relations. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, *20*(5),

570-581.

Hogg, M., & Vaughan, G. (2009). *Essentials of social psychology.* London: Pearson

Education.

Hong Kong Tourism Board Partnernet (HKTB Partnenet) (2021). Hong Kong arrivals.

Retrieved on 1st October, 2021 from: https://partnernet.hktb.com/uk/en/home/index.html

Hwang, K. K. (1998). Guanxi and mientze: Conflict resolution in Chinese society.

Intercultural Communication Studies, *7*, 17–42.

Ignatieff, M. (1998). The warrior's honor: Ethnic war and the modern conscience. London：

Macmillan.

Griffiths, I., & Sharpley, R. (2012). Influences of nationalism on tourist-host relationships. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *39*(4), 2051-2072.

Killam, L. (2013). *Research terminology simplified: Paradigms, axiology, ontology, epistemology and methodology*. Sudbury

Luo, Q., & Zhai, X. (2017). "I will never go to Hong Kong again!" How the secondary crisis communication of "Occupy Central" on Weibo shifted to a tourism boycott. *Tourism Management*, *62*, 159-172.

Mathews, G. (1997). Heunggongyahn: On the past, present, and future of Hong Kong identity. *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, *29*(3), 3-13.

Milano, C., Novelli, M. & Cheer, J.M. (2019) Overtourism and Tourismphobia. Tourism Planning & Development, 16 (4) 353-357.

Moufakkir, O. (2015). The stigmatized tourist. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *53*, 17-30.

Myers, D. G. (1999). *Social psychology*. New York: McGraw-Hill

McKeown, S., & Dixon, J. (2017). The "contact hypothesis": Critical reflections and future directions. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *11*(1), 1-13.

Nunkoo, R., & Gursoy, D. (2012). Residents' support for tourism: An identity perspective. *Annals of tourism research*, *39*(1), 243-268.

Okano, M., & Wong, H. (2004). Hong Kong's guided tours: Contexts of tourism image construction before 1997. *Taiwan Journal of Anthropology*, *2*(2):115-153.

Public Opinion Research Institution Hong Kong (PORI) (2021), Hong Kong identity. Retrieved on 1st November, 2021 from: https://www.pori.hk/

Palmer, A., Koenig-Lewis, N., & Jones, L. E. M. (2013). The effects of residents' social identity and involvement on their advocacy of incoming tourism. *Tourism Management*, *38*, 142-151.

Pritchard, A., & Morgan, N. J. (2001). Culture, identity and tourism representation: marketing Cymru or Wales?. *Tourism management*, *22*(2), 167-179.

Rosenfeld, D. L., Balcetis, E., Bastian, B., Berkman, E. T., Bosson, J. K., Brannon, T. N., ... & Tomiyama, A. J. (2021). Psychological science in the wake of COVID-19: Social, methodological, and metascientific considerations. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *1*, 1-23.

Rowen, I., (2015). Why HKer and Taiwanese complain about Mainland tourists? *BBC News China*. Retrieved on 25th October,2021 From: https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/comments_on_china/2015/01/150128_feature_taiwan_tourism_mainland

Sanchez, D. T., Chaney, K. E., Manuel, S. K., & Remedios, J. D. (2018). Theory of prejudice and American identity threat transfer for Latino and Asian Americans. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *44*(7), 972-983.

Scheepers, D., & Ellemers, N. (2019). Social identity theory. In Social psychology in action (pp. 129-143). London: Springer.

Sarup, M. (1996). *Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Tajfel, H. E. (1978). *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations.* Academic Press.

Turner, J. C., Oakes, P. J., Haslam, S. A., & McGarty, C. (1994). Self and collective: Cognition and social context. *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, *20*(5), 454-463.

Tilly, C. (2015). *Identities, boundaries and social ties*. Routledge.

Tse, S., & Tung, V. W. S. (2022). Understanding residents' attitudes towards tourists: Connecting stereotypes, emotions and behaviours. *Tourism Management*, 89, 104435.

Uriely, N., Maoz, D., & Reichel, A. (2009). Israeli guests and Egyptian hosts in Sinai: A

bubble of serenity. *Journal of Travel Research*, *47*(4), 508-522.

Unger, O., Uriely, N., & Fuchs, G. (2021). On-site animosity and national identity: Business

travelers on stage. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *88*, 103181.

Zhang, C. X., Pearce, P., & Chen, G. (2019). Not losing our collective face: Social identity

and Chinese tourists' reflections on uncivilised behaviour. *Tourism Management*, *73*, 71-

82.

Zhang, C. X., Wang, L., & Rickly, J. M. (2021). Non-interaction and identity change in

Covid-19 tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *89*, 103211.

Zhang, C. X., Xiao, H., Morgan, N., & Ly, T. P. (2018). Politics of memories: Identity

construction in museums. *Annals of Tourism Research, 73*, 116-130.