Tourists’ strategies: An acculturation approach

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HIGHLIGHTS

• We applied Berry’s (1997) bidimensional acculturation model to a tourist context.
• We examined recent tourists from China, Germany, and the United States.
• Tourists were found to assimilate, integrate, separate, or marginalize.
• Ethnocentrism and uncertainty avoidant differs between tourist subgroups.

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ABSTRACT

Acculturation theory has been widely used to understand and explain migrant and sojourner adaptation. However, it has yet to be examined in a tourist context. We extended the literature by evaluating the applicability of Berry’s (1997) bidimensional acculturation model to a sample of 668 recent and prospective international travelers from China (n = 205), Germany (n = 201), and the United States (n = 262). Our results suggested that the acculturation model can be extended to tourist contexts and used for segmentation purposes. Specifically, tourists’ acculturation strategies were associated with their preferences for home culture maintenance and host culture immersion, as well as behavioral, holiday, and activity preferences. Ethnocentrism and uncertainty avoidance differ as a function of tourists’ acculturation strategy.

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1. Introduction

Acculturation is the process of adjusting to a new cultural environment and can involve changes to an individual’s attitudes, behaviors, and cognitions (Tsai, Chentsova-Dutton, & Wong, 2002). Most acculturation research has examined how these changes relate to the psychological and socio-cultural adaptation of immigrants (e.g., Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006) and sojourners, including international students (e.g., Rasmi, Safdar, & Lewis, 2010) and expatriate workers (e.g., Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). Interestingly, although tourism is the most common form of face-to-face intercultural contact (Berno & Ward, 2005), there have been few applications of acculturation theory in tourism contexts (Ward, 2008).

This is surprising, as acculturation has direct relevance to tourism because it focuses on the degree to which people wish to immerse themselves in a host culture and/or maintain their home culture in intercultural contact situations (Berry, 2003). Interestingly, a number of tourism studies have identified subgroups of tourists who appear to vary in their preferences for host culture immersion and home culture maintenance. For example, Cohen (1972) categorized tourists based on their desire for familiarity (aligned with their home culture) versus strangeness (aligned with the host culture) and argued that these classifications were relevant to holiday activity and destination preferences. Although some tourism studies have considered home culture maintenance and host culture immersion, most have been descriptive rather than based on theoretical frameworks. Indeed, Berry’s (1997) bidimensional acculturation theory, which is the most widely used acculturation model, has been largely overlooked by tourism researchers, despite being extremely influential in explaining and predicting immigrant and sojourners’ behaviors and adaptation (Huynh, Howell, & Benet-Martinez, 2009).
In this paper, we posed three research questions that address gaps in the literature to provide useful information for tourism researchers and practitioners who are interested in segmenting tourist markets. First, we examined the applicability of Berry’s (1997) acculturation model to a tourism context. Second, we investigated whether tourists’ acculturation strategies were related to their behavioral, holiday activity, and destination preferences. Third, we explored whether individual difference factors, such as perceived cultural similarity, ethnocentrism and uncertainty avoidance, were related to tourists’ acculturation strategies. We examined these issues by asking a sample of recent international travelers and prospective tourists from China, Germany, and the United States (US) to indicate their acculturation preferences as potential tourists to Australia.

### 1.1. The research context

Australia is a major tourist destination that had more than five million visitors in 2011. During this time, Australia hosted large numbers of tourists from Asian, European and North American countries (e.g., 154,000 Germans, 438,000 Americans and 463,000 Chinese). These and other tourists made substantial contributions to the Australian economy, as they spent almost two billion dollars in Australia (Tourism Research Australia, 2012). It is clear that tourism has a major impact on the Australian economy and that international visitors have widely varying backgrounds that should be taken into account.

China, Germany, and the US were chosen for the current study as they vary in cultural distance from Australia and are important source markets for this and other destinations. For example, Ng, Lee, and Souitar (2007) found China to be the most culturally distant and the US to be the least culturally distant of these three countries on five reported measures, including individual (i.e., perceived cultural distance) and country indicators (i.e., Clark and Pugh’s (2001) cultural cluster distance index; Jackson’s (2001) cultural diversity index; Kogut and Singh’s (1988) cultural distance index; and West and Graham’s (2004) linguistic distance). Further, more than 20% of Australia’s inbound tourists come from these countries and all were in Australia’s top ten source countries in 2011, ranking third, tenth, and fourth, respectively. However, less than 1% of the tourists from these countries came to Australia (Tourism Australia, 2012), suggesting tourism from these countries can be increased.

However, there are at least two challenges for long-haul destinations such as Australia (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2003). First, there is a changing international tourist trend toward shorter holidays spent in closer destinations. This shift is likely to affect Australia and other long-haul destinations more negatively than most. Thus, long-haul destinations will need to effectively position their offerings to overcome their distance from most home markets. Second, international tourists today seek different experiences, products, and activities. To maximize revenue, it is imperative to retain tourists who are already interested in visiting Australia, but to also attract those who may be less inclined to visit. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to identify subgroups, predict their behavioral preferences and attitudes toward holiday destinations and activities and understand the backgrounds of the various subgroups, so as to market to them more effectively. Here, subgroups of tourists were identified through Berry’s (1997) bidimensional acculturation theory and these differences were examined.

### 2. Theoretical background

#### 2.1. Acculturation theory

The most influential and widely established acculturation theory is Berry’s (1997) bidimensional model (e.g., Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000). Previous conceptualizations treated acculturation as a unidimensional continuum, suggesting that as an individual acquired a host culture, they simultaneously abandoned their home culture. In contrast, Berry argued that psychological acculturation centers around two choices: The extent to which people wish to interact with and adopt aspects of their host culture and the extent to which they wish to preserve elements of their home culture. Choices along these two dimensions result in one of four acculturation strategies, as can be seen in Fig. 1. People who adopt an assimilation strategy embrace the host culture, while forsaking their home culture. In contrast, people who adopt a separation strategy prefer to preserve their home culture and are not interested in interacting with or acquiring aspects of the host culture. People who adopt an integration strategy embrace the host culture by interacting with and adopting it, while also maintaining their home culture. Lastly, people who adopt a marginalization strategy are not motivated to interact with, adopt, or maintain either culture.

Some previous research viewed tourists as a subset of sojourners (e.g., Bochner, 2006). However, the nature and size of this group merits their consideration as a distinct acculturating group (Ward, 2008). Tourists have shorter, more transitory stays than other sojourners and migrants, which may reduce their commitment to adaptation, as well as their learning opportunities (Berno & Ward, 2005; Mathieson & Wall, 1982). In addition, tourists have spatially-contained contact options and buffers (e.g., tour guides, information center support staff, and translators), which can be used to constrain their interactions to observation rather than adaptation (Graburn, 1989). Although the motivations and consequences of host culture immersion versus home culture retention may differ for tourists when compared to other sojourners and migrants, some tourism studies suggest that these issues are still salient and can be used to differentiate tourists (e.g., Cohen, 1972; Goelder & Ritchie, 2003; Yiannakis & Gibson, 1992).

#### 2.2. Tourist subgroups

Prior research has identified a range of tourist types who are compatible with Berry’s (1997) acculturation strategies. As noted earlier, Cohen (1972) classified tourists into groups based on their preference for familiarity—novelty, which appears to be consistent with acculturation theory. According to Cohen, organized mass tourists are those who maximize familiarity and minimize novelty, which is consistent with a separation strategy, as they tend to confine themselves to a familiar environmental bubble with protective walls that allows them to function and live as they do in their home environment. Typically, these tourists have no direct contact with the host culture and live as they do in their home environment. Individual mass tourists are those who prefer less
familiarity and more novelty, which is consistent with an integration strategy, as they tend to interact with host nationals and travel individually on flexible routes and schedules that allow them an opportunity to explore outside their environmental bubble if they wish. Drifters are those who maximize novelty and minimize familiarity, which is consistent with an assimilation strategy, as they immerse themselves in the host culture while on holiday. They tend to travel on their own and try to live the way the locals live (e.g., sharing host nationals' shelter, food, and habits). Interestingly, none of Cohen's categories were consistent with a marginalization strategy, although other research has described groups that fit this description.

Yiamnalis and Gibson (1992) identified fourteen tourist roles and activities, most of which were consistent with a marginalization strategy. For example, sun lovers are tourists who spend their vacation by the sea or ocean, thrill seekers prioritize activities that are risky and exhilarating (e.g., skydiving), sport lovers actively engage in their favorite sporting activities, and escapist want peaceful and solitary vacations. All of these types of tourists prioritize activities over a desire for home culture maintenance and host culture immersion.

Across typologies, it is clear that tourist subgroups relate to acculturation theory by emphasizing host culture immersion and home culture retention to varying degrees. However, none of these tourism typologies consider Berry's (1997) bidimensional model. The advantage of using Berry's well-established model lies in the rich and substantial literature that identifies antecedents and consequences of these strategies that are likely to translate to tourism. It seems likely that tourists' preferences for home culture maintenance and host culture immersion can be used to classify them into assimilation, integration, marginalization, and separation subgroups. Further, Berry's bidimensional model suggests that those who prefer to acquire the host culture (i.e., those who assimilate or integrate) will interact with and adopt more aspects of the host culture than those who do not (i.e., those who separate or marginalize). Similarly, those who prefer to maintain their home culture (i.e., those who separate or integrate) will be more likely to maintain relations with and preserve their home culture more than those who do not (i.e., those who assimilate or marginalize).

2.3. Individual difference variables associated with acculturation strategies

The acculturation literature suggests a number of factors that are likely to affect tourists' choice of strategy, such as the perceived cultural similarity/distance of a host society (e.g., Berry, 1997; Suuane & van de Vijver, 2009) and ethnocentrism (Berry, 2006), which were considered in this study. In addition, we also examined uncertainty avoidance as it relates to travel behaviors consistent with acculturation theory (Money & Crotts, 2003).

2.3.1. Perceived cultural similarity

Perceived cultural similarity refers to how similar individuals perceive their cultural background to be to a host culture, based on the objective and subjective elements of the culture that they consider salient to their evaluation. Most tourism studies examining perceived cultural similarity have focused on its relation to destination choices (e.g., Collins & Tisdell, 2000), rather than preferences for host culture immersion and/or home culture maintenance. For example, Ng et al. (2007) found people who perceive a potential host culture to be similar to their own culture were more likely to visit that destination. The acculturation literature, on the other hand, has extensively examined the relation between perceived cultural similarity (and/or distance) and host culture immersion and adaptation. Generally, migrants and sojourners who perceive greater similarity are more immersed in the host culture and have better adaptive outcomes (Nesdale & Mak, 2003).

2.3.2. Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is a tendency to perceive your own group as a superior reference group against which other groups are evaluated. In the acculturation literature, ethnocentrism is thought to indirectly affect acculturation strategies in two ways. At a societal level, high ethnocentrism makes it impossible for minority members (i.e., migrants and sojourners) to pursue an integration strategy (Berry, 2006). At an individual level, majority members who are high on ethnocentrism prefer minority members to forsake their home culture and adopt the host culture. These ‘exclusionist’ attitudes, in turn, lead to conflictual intergroup relations between majority and minority members across all acculturation strategies (Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997). The few studies that examined ethnocentrism from the perspective of the minority member found that highly ethnocentric individuals perceive members of their ingroup to be superior and try to maintain social distance from outgroup members (Gudykunst, 1991). As a result, highly ethnocentric individuals are likely to view other countries more negatively and may be less likely to immerse themselves in the host culture. Although few studies have examined how ethnocentrism relates to tourists’ preferences and choices, there is evidence that ethnocentric tourists are more likely to prefer heritage culture maintenance as opposed to host culture immersion. For example, Chang and Cheng (2011) found that more ethnocentric Chinese tourists had lower preferences for foreign airlines.

2.3.3. Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance is the extent to which an individual feels society is threatened by uncertainty about the future (Hofstede, 2001). Although Hofstede measured this at a cultural level, it can be measured at an individual level, as individuals within cultures differ on their internalization of uncertainty avoidance. Individuals who are low on uncertainty avoidance are more likely to accept uncertainty and tolerate dissimilar ideas, while those who are high on uncertainty avoidance are more likely to appreciate standards and norms that enable them to control their environment (Yoo & Donthu, 2002). Although there have been few studies on uncertainty avoidance at an individual level, Money and Crots (2003) found people who are high on uncertainty avoidance used more uncertainty-reducing travel behaviors, such as pre-packaged tours, taking shorter trips, and visiting fewer destinations. Such tourists tended to prefer a predictable and structured environment and were more likely to feel comfortable and immerse themselves in a host culture when they were able to better predict and control their environment. These findings suggest uncertainty avoidant tourists will be most responsive to travel experiences that allow them to maintain their home culture.

2.4. Hypotheses

We addressed existing gaps in the literature by classifying tourists into subgroups based on Berry's (1997) acculturation theory. Using a sample of recent international travelers and prospective tourists to Australia from China, Germany, and the US, a number of hypotheses, noted subsequently, were examined to assess the relations between tourists’ acculturation strategies and their behavioral, holiday activity, and destination preferences, as well as individual difference factors.

**Hypothesis 1:** Tourists who prefer to acquire the host culture (i.e., those who assimilate or integrate) will be more likely than those who do not (i.e., those who separate or marginalize) to:
a) Socialize with members of the host culture;
b) Identify with the host culture; and
c) Engage in activities alongside members of the host culture (i.e., eat and drink with local people; stay with local people).

**Hypothesis 1**: Tourists who prefer to maintain their home culture (i.e., those who separate or integrate) will be more likely than those who do not (i.e., those who assimilate or marginalize) to:
a) Socialize with members of the host culture;
b) Identify with the host culture; and
c) Travel to known rather than unknown holiday destinations.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

Recent international travelers and prospective tourists to Australia from China, Germany, and the US were purposefully selected for the present study for two reasons. First, the three countries have significantly different cultures (Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 2006), which increased generalizability. Second, as noted earlier, these three countries are important source markets for Australia and had the highest global tourism expenditures in 2011. Taken together, it is important for the Australian tourism industry to identify the factors that may attract new and return visitors from these countries.

Data were collected from 668 permanent residents of the three countries [China (n = 205), Germany (n = 201), and the US (n = 262)]. Most participants were also born in their country of residency (99% of the Chinese sample, 93% of the German sample, and 86% of the US sample) and spoke their country’s official language “very fluently” (90% of the Chinese sample, 93% of the German sample, and 96% of the US sample). The average age of the American and German participants was 26 years (SDs = 15.62, 12.10, respectively), while the mean age of the Chinese participants was 29 years old (SD = 8.04). This was expected for China, as the company providing the consumer panel in China had a much smaller number of older consumers. In addition, the American sample had more females (74%), while the German and Chinese samples had approximately equal numbers (females = 48% and 53%, respectively). The median household income for the participants was above the median household income for the US and China, and slightly below for Germany.

Participants were recruited from an online panel as part of a larger study and were selected to be representative of their countries in terms of age, gender, and socioeconomic status. Samples were drawn from the three main cities of Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou in China, throughout Germany, and California in the US. In addition, participants were screened to be recent and potential tourists, as indicated by having traveled internationally within the previous five years or intending to do so in the next two years. Participants were asked to answer the questionnaire as potential tourists to Australia.

3.2. Measures

3.2.1. Acculturation strategies

Tourists’ acculturation strategies were measured using Berry, Kim, Minde, and Mok’s (1987) *Acculturation Strategy Scale*. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Dona & Berry, 1994; Pham & Harris, 2001; Sam, 2000; Tang & Dion, 1999), the present study used the four-question approach, with a single item representing assimilation (“American/Chinese/German people traveling in Australia should adapt to Australian cultural traditions [e.g., food, habits and customs] but they should maintain their own cultural traditions while they are in Australia”), integration (“American/Chinese/German people traveling in Australia should adapt to Australian cultural traditions [e.g., food, habits and customs] and also maintain their own while they are in Australia”), separation (“American/Chinese/German people traveling in Australia should not adapt to Australian cultural traditions [e.g., food, habits and customs] but they should maintain their own cultural traditions while they are in Australia”) and marginalization (“American/Chinese/German people traveling in Australia should neither maintain their own cultural traditions [e.g., food, habits and customs] nor adapt those of Australians while they are in Australia”). As some strategies are related (i.e., integration has high host culture immersion and high home culture maintenance, scores on this measure were mean-centered to indicate the relative importance of each strategy to tourists).

3.2.2. Tourist behavioral preferences

Four items were used to assess tourists’ behavioral preferences on two dimensions (social interaction and cultural identification). Items were rated on scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree): **Hypothesis 2**: Tourists who prefer identifying with the host culture more than prospective travelers. How-ever, the interaction between travel status (i.e., recent versus prospective) and acculturation was not significant. Therefore, the two groups were combined.
3.2.5. Ethnocentrism

Neuliep and McCroskey's (1997) 22-item Generalized Ethnocentrism Scale was used to measure general ethnocentrism. Items included “Most other cultures are backward compared to my culture” and “Lifestyles in other cultures are not as valid as those in my culture”, and were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A total ethnocentrism score was computed by averaging responses for each item. The Cronbach’s α coefficient for this scale was .84.

3.2.6. Uncertainty avoidance

Donthu and Yoo's (1998) 8-item scale was used to measure uncertainty avoidance. Sample items included, “It is important to closely follow instructions and procedures” and “Rules and regulations are important because they inform of what is expected of me”. Items were again rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A total uncertainty avoidance score was computed by averaging responses for each item. The Cronbach’s α coefficient for this scale was .87.

4. Results

Descriptive statistics for all of the constructs can be seen in Table 1. The presence of subgroups was tested by using the two-step clustering procedure contained in the SPSS program to group participants based on their responses to the acculturation strategies items, while differences between the clusters were assessed by using discriminant analysis (Wood, 2005). This approach is consistent with recent research that has derived acculturation strategies through cluster analysis (e.g., Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008), rather than using continuous scales (e.g., Pham & Harris, 2001) or median-splits on home culture maintenance and host culture immersion scales (e.g., Vinokurov, Trickett, & Birmann, 2002).

As indicated previously, prospective tourists and recent international travelers from China, Germany, and the US were chosen for this study in part because they represent significantly different country cultures (Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 2006). For this reason, however, it is possible that acculturation strategies, tourist behavioral preferences, destination, and activity preferences, as well as individual difference factors, may differ between countries. To account for these differences, the proportions of Chinese, German, and American tourists in each cluster were examined. For hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, a 3 (Country) × 4 (Acculturation Strategy) MANOVA was estimated, which allowed us to test the hypothesized main effects for acculturation strategy across the three countries and to check for differences between countries when the two-way interaction with country was significant.

4.1. Does acculturation apply to tourism?

The cluster analysis suggested four interpretable groups, each of which was defined uniquely, as the univariate tests of the equality of the group means suggested that each of the four variables (integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization) differed significantly across the groups. As would be expected in any examination of the groups obtained from a cluster analysis, the F statistics based on the Mahalanobis distances between the groups (Johnson, 1977) were very large (ranging from 247.10 to 390.23) and significant well beyond the one percent level, suggesting that the groups were very different from one another.

The discriminant analysis used to examine these differences found three statistically significant functions. However, 88% of the explained variation across the groups was found in the first two functions. Consequently, only these functions were used in the
subsequent analysis, which allowed the results to be shown graphically, with the two discriminant functions making up the space’s axes (Soutar, Grainger, & Hedges, 1999). Structural correlations can be used to interpret the nature of these axes and, hence, the nature of the differences between groups. As in an exploratory factor analysis, these correlations can be varimax-rotated to obtain a simple structure, so as to improve interpretation. The correlations can be shown graphically as vectors radiating from the space’s origin, as can be seen in Fig. 2, with the amount of variance explained reflected in the relative lengths of the vectors (Soutar & Clarke, 1981).

The various groups (in this case the four clusters) can be placed onto the map using their centroid values (Soutar et al., 1999) and their positions on the map provide the information needed to label the clusters. As can be seen in Fig. 2, the four clusters were distinctly different from one another. In order from largest to smallest groups, the clusters were:

1. **The Integration Group**: Scores were above the mean for integration, but below the mean for assimilation, separation, and marginalization (36% of the sample; \( n = 238 \)).
2. **The Marginalization Group**: Scores were above the mean for marginalization, at the mean for separation, but below the mean for assimilation and integration (32% of the sample; \( n = 213 \)).
3. **The Assimilation Group**: Scores were above the mean for assimilation, but below the mean for separation, marginalization, and integration (21% of the sample; \( n = 140 \)).
4. **The Separation Group**: Scores were above the mean for separation, but below the mean for assimilation, marginalization, and integration (11% of the sample; \( n = 77 \)).

The results of the cluster and multivariate discriminant analyses provided support for Berry’s (1997) bidimensional acculturation theory in a tourist context, as an assimilation, integration, marginalization and separation group were found.

There were some interesting similarities and differences in the group proportions across the three country samples. Integration was equally common for American (32%), German (40%), and Chinese (35%) tourists. Marginalization was more common for American (34%) and Chinese (38%) than German (23%) tourists (\( z = 2.48, p < .01 \); \( z = 3.31, p = .02 \), respectively). Separation was more common for Chinese (22%) than American (9%); \( z = 3.88, p < .001 \) and German (5%); \( z = 4.89, p < .001 \) tourists. Assimilation was more common for American (25%) and German (31%) than Chinese (6%); \( z = 5.48, p < .001 \); \( z = 6.62, p < .001 \), respectively) tourists.

4.2. Factors related to tourists’ acculturation strategies

As previously mentioned, a 3 (Country) × 4 (Acculturation Strategy) MANOVA was estimated to test hypotheses 1, 2 and 3, focusing on the acculturation strategy main effect and the two-way interaction to determine if country related to the main effect. A significant main effect was found for acculturation strategy (F[30, 1900] = 4.80, \( p < .001 \)). Overall, tourist behavioral, holiday, and activity preferences were all found to differ as a function of acculturation strategy, as were ethnocentrism and uncertainty avoidance. Specific acculturation strategy and country differences were examined using independent sample t-tests (see Table 1 for the mean differences between the groups).

4.2.1. Behavioral, holiday activity, and destination preferences

Consistent with hypothesis 1a, tourists who preferred assimilation (\( M = 5.96 \)) and integration (\( M = 5.25 \)) wanted more social interaction with the host culture than those who preferred separation (\( M = 4.84; t[215] = -6.03, p < .001 \); and \( t[313] = -2.23, p = .026 \), respectively) or marginalization (\( M = 4.78; t[321] = -8.14, p < .001 \); and \( t[449] = -3.54, p < .001 \), respectively). In partial support of hypothesis 1b, tourists who preferred assimilation (\( M = 3.69 \)) wanted to identify with the host culture more than those who preferred separation (\( M = 2.94; t[215] = -3.38, p = .001 \), but not more than those who preferred marginalization (\( M = 3.52; t[264] = -0.99, p = .32 \)). Tourists who preferred integration (\( M = 2.94 \)) wanted to identify more with the host culture than those who preferred marginalization (\( t[449] = -4.28, p < .001 \), but not separation (\( t[313] = -0.3, p = .974 \)). Consistent with hypothesis 1c, tourists who immersed themselves in the host culture preferred engaging in activities alongside members of the host culture. Specifically, tourists who preferred assimilation (\( M = 3.77 \)) rated home stays more favorably than those who preferred separation (\( M = 3.34; t[215] = -2.29, p = .023 \)) or marginalization (\( M = 3.15; t[313] = -4.24, p < .001 \), as did those tourists who preferred integration (\( M = 3.57 \)) compared to marginalization (\( t[449] = -3.39, p < .001 \)). Further, tourists who preferred assimilation (\( M = 3.84 \)) wanted to eat and drink with the local people on holiday more than those who preferred marginalization (\( M = 3.46; t[313] = -3.33, p < .001 \).

Consistent with hypothesis 2a, tourists who preferred separation (\( M = 4.56 \)) desired social interaction with members of the heritage culture more than those who preferred marginalization (\( M = 3.84; t[288] = -3.24, p < .001 \), integration (\( M = 3.41; t[313] = 5.33, p < .001 \)), or assimilation (\( M = 2.52; t[215] = 8.76, p < .001 \), in partial support of hypothesis 2b, tourists who preferred separation (\( M = 4.14 \)) identified with the home culture more than those who assimilated (\( M = 2.65; t[215] = 6.16, p < .001 \)). In partial support of hypothesis 2c, tourists who preferred separation (\( M = 3.56 \)) were less confident traveling to unknown holiday destinations than those who preferred assimilation (\( M = 4.11; t[135] = -3.42, p < .001 \).

4.2.2. Individual difference factors

As can be seen in Table 1, hypothesis 3a was not supported. In support of hypothesis 3b, separated tourists were more ethnocentric (\( M = 3.68 \)) than integrated (\( M = 2.96; t[313] = 6.29, p < .001 \)) and assimilated (\( M = 2.68; t[215] = 8.46, p < .001 \)) tourists. There was also a significant acculturation strategy × country interaction for ethnocentrism (\( F[6, 656] = 2.34, p = .03 \), which indicated differences in this relationship across countries. Specifically, American tourists who preferred separation (\( M = 3.48 \)) were more ethnocentric than those who preferred assimilation (\( M = 2.83; t[86] = 3.38, p < .001 \)). Chinese tourists who preferred separation (\( M = 3.99 \)) were more ethnocentric than those who preferred integration (\( M = 3.54; t[114] = 5.15, p < .001 \)). German tourists who preferred separation (\( M = 3.01 \)) were more ethnocentric than those who preferred integration (\( M = 2.24; t[89] = 2.02, p = .046 \).

Consistent with hypothesis 3c, tourists who preferred separation (\( M = 5.20 \)) were more uncertainty avoidant than those who preferred marginalization (\( M = 4.79; t[288] = -3.02, p = .003 \)) and assimilation (\( M = 4.63; t[215] = 3.77, p < .001 \)). Tourists who preferred integration (\( M = 4.93 \)) were more uncertainty avoidant than those who preferred assimilation (\( t[376] = 2.67, p = .008 \)) but not marginalization (\( t[449] = -1.49, p = .14 \)). A significant acculturation strategy × country interaction emerged (\( F[6, 656] = 2.79, p = .01 \), but this only indicated differences in the level of uncertainty avoidance for tourists who preferred integration. For this group, Chinese (\( M = 5.31 \)) were more uncertainty avoidant than
Americans ($M = 4.70$; $t[155] = -4.19, p < .001$) and Germans ($M = 4.84; t[151] = -3.01, p = .003$).

5. Discussion

The present study extended previous research by identifying and confirming the applicability of Berry's (1997) acculturation model in a tourism context. Despite extensive research on immigrants' and other sojourners' acculturation strategies, past studies have not examined tourists' acculturation strategies in foreign destinations. Like other sojourners, tourists confront the task of maintaining aspects of their home culture while adapting to a host culture during their international travel. However, tourists' acculturation strategies may differ from those of other sojourners because of the length of their stay, the type of contact they have and the extent to which they need to adapt (Berno & Ward, 2005; Graburn, 1989; Hottola, 2004; Mathieson & Wall, 1982).

This study's findings are consistent with previous research identifying tourist subgroups that center on preferences for home culture maintenance and host culture immersion. For example, Lepp and Gibson (2003) described tourists who try to "blend in" with the locals by dressing more casually and not identifying themselves with other foreigners, a strategy consistent with assimilation. Similarly, Russell (2003) described the development of separate facilities and services, such as resorts and convention centers, which many tourists never leave, a strategy consistent with separation. Henderson (2003) described Muslim travelers' need for halal food and access to a mosque, which can represent separation or integration, depending on whether it occurs in the context of some host culture involvement. Finally, Yiannakis and Gibson (1992) described several types of tourists, including explorers who prioritize adventure and action seekers who are primarily interested in partying, whose strategies are consistent with marginalization. In contrast to the anecdotal evidence provided in these studies, the present study grounded tourists' acculturation strategies and preferences in a widely accepted and influential bidimensional acculturation model.

Although we found that Berry's (1997) acculturation theory was applicable in a tourist context, one key difference emerged. Consistent with most acculturation studies, integration was the preferred strategy for tourists from China, Germany, and the US. However, contrary to most acculturation studies, marginalization was the second most preferred strategy. In the acculturation literature, marginalization is considered to be a maladaptive strategy, as it represents psychological detachment from the home and host societies. For this reason, it is the least endorsed strategy by immigrants and other sojourners (Berry, 2003).

However, differences between the experiences and motivations of tourists and migrants and other (longer-term) sojourning groups may account for why this strategy was preferred by a large number of tourists. Tourists who preferred to marginalize were more interested in experiences and independent activities than interacting and identifying with members of either their home or host culture. This is consistent with the idea that migrants and other sojourners have longer stays and are more invested in adapting to the new host culture, whereas tourists have fewer opportunities and decreased commitment for learning about mainstream society (Berno & Ward, 2005).

In addition to identifying a relevant theoretical framework, the present study suggests that tourists' acculturation strategies are related to their behavioral, holiday activity, and destination preferences. These findings have important implications for the tourism industry, as they identify opportunities for unique package designs. For example, tourists who prefer assimilation are more open to new experiences and would be most likely to enjoy experiences that involve host culture immersion (i.e., social interaction with host nationals and experiencing host culture traditions). Alternatively, tourists who prefer integration are open to host culture involvement, but also want to retain salient aspects of their home culture. These tourists may enjoy a package that is less immersive, but incorporates experiences in which they can sample the host culture (e.g., food and some social interaction) while having access to some home/ethnic food and social contact with others from their country of origin.

Contrary to some hypothesized relationships, the present study did not find that the greater a tourist's perception of cultural similarity between their home country and the travel destination, the more likely they were to immerse themselves in the host culture (i.e., assimilate or integrate). However, there was directional support for this hypothesis, as tourists who preferred to assimilate had the highest mean for perceived cultural similarity, followed by marginalization, integration, and separation. Future research should further examine this relation.

Although previous studies have found that tourists who perceive cultural similarity are more likely to visit a destination (e.g., Ng et al., 2007), there is also evidence to suggest that the degree of cultural similarity between home and destination countries attracts different types of tourists. For example, it has been argued that culturally different destinations may be more appealing to sensation and novelty seekers or experienced travelers (Goelder & Ritchie, 2003), whereas culturally similar destinations may be more attractive to those who wish to avoid risk or uncertainty (Crompton, 1992) and prefer familiarity (Plog, 1991). To explore these complex relations, future research should examine the associations between perceived cultural similarity, novelty, familiarity, and acculturation strategies in a tourism context.

5.1. Implications for practitioners

The present study has a number of implications for practitioners. First, the findings suggest that emphasizing opportunities for tourists to immerse themselves in a host culture and/or maintain their home culture may increase the effectiveness of tourism destination promotions. Tourists who prefer to maintain their home culture (i.e., separate or integrate) may be more receptive to messages that include similar looking people and food. This can act as a pull factor in encouraging people to visit a destination. For example, stressing an ability to maintain religious commitments while on holiday might be a strong marketing message for Muslims, as it facilitates their religious practices, which include eating halal food and praying at a mosque five times a day. In addition, stressing the presence of a “multi-ethnic” culture might make potential tourists feel more comfortable and secure, due to the presence of their ethnocultural group at the destination. Finally, stressing food similarity or the availability of home foods might increase the level of comfort with a potential destination. For example, Korean tourists prefer to include their ethnic accommodations, such as kimchi, with their meals (Ahmed & Chon, 1994). These types of messages are likely to appeal to tourists who prefer integration or separation strategies.

Second, tourism itineraries that involve more interaction with a host culture are likely to be more effective for tourists who prefer integration or assimilation strategies. To attract these tourists, organizations should emphasize host culture immersion, such as opportunities for social interaction with locals and eating local food. For example, these tourists may desire packages that include bed and breakfasts, farm stays, or even home stays with mainstream host families, as these types of holidays allow more interaction with a host culture.
Third, tourists who prefer marginalization are less interested in immersing themselves in a host culture and do not need to maintain their home culture while on holiday. These types of tourists prioritize independent activities that fulfill their own needs. For these tourists, it is less important to provide opportunities to interact with the host culture and members of the mainstream society and also unnecessary to emphasize the availability of home culture and culturally similar goods. Instead, practitioners should provide specialized packages that allow maximum enjoyment of independent activities. For example, in an Australian context, an explorer would respond positively to a package that takes them to Uluru (Ayers’ Rock) using various methods of transportation, such as a 4 × 4 motor vehicle, that allows them independence and adventure.

The results also indicated that it is important for practitioners to consider country of origin as well as acculturation strategy when segmenting tourist groups. Although recent and prospective travelers from China, Germany, and the US preferred integration to a similar degree, there were larger differences with respect to separation, assimilation, and marginalization. For example, Chinese tourists preferred separation more and assimilation less than their American and German counterparts. As China has a large and growing outbound tourist market, it is imperative that practitioners consider and cater to this group’s desire to maintain their home culture while on holiday. Therefore and similar to our suggestions for tourists who separate more generally, travel packages should stress the ability for these tourists to maintain salient aspects of their home culture, including speaking their language and interacting with members of their cultural background.

Germans and Americans may be more likely to both assimilate and marginalize for two reasons. The first is that these countries are more culturally similar to Australia — particularly the US, as it shares the same language — which facilitates the ability of tourists from these countries to immerse themselves in Australian society. Conversely, the process of cultural learning and adaptation would be more challenging for tourists from more culturally distant societies, such as China, particularly in a short-term tourist interaction. The second related point is that, because it is easier for American and German tourists to immerse themselves in the mainstream Australian society than Chinese tourists, they may feel more comfortable marginalizing. In this study, tourists who preferred marginalization tended to focus on activities and experiences that include elements of uncertainty, including the degree of confidence traveling to unknown rather than known destinations. Even among integrated tourists, Chinese were more uncertainty avoidant than Americans or Germans, a finding that may be related to why marginalization was least preferred by this group.

The results of the present study can also be used to further segment Australia’s current three key tourist markets: the Cruise Industry, the Experience Seeker, and the Youth Segment (Tourism Australia, 2013). Currently, North Americans are the main target market for the Cruise Industry, as they make up the largest number of cruise passengers in the world. Tourism Australia does not appear to segment this market beyond country of origin, although it is possible that these tourists differ in the degree to which they wish to acquire the host culture and/or maintain their home culture while on holiday. The other two segments are very similar in that their travel is experientially-motivated, with tourists wishing to interact with and learn about Australia. This suggests that acculturation theory has direct relevance to these segments, as they desire some degree of host culture immersion. However, it is unclear whether the Experience Seeker and the Youth Segment differ in their preferences for home culture maintenance. It is possible that some tourists in these groups prefer to fully immerse themselves in a host culture and forsake their home culture while on holidays, whereas others prefer to strike a balance between their home and host cultures. Identifying subgroups based on acculturation theory may allow the Australian tourism industry to better segment the current Australian tourist market, particularly as this study found that these subgroups can be used to predict behavioral, holiday activity, and destination preferences.

Finally, the present study found that the four-item measure of acculturation is sufficient to determine a tourists’ preferred acculturation strategy. Practitioners can use this very short diagnostic tool to identify tourists’ acculturation strategies and recommend packages that are likely to appeal to their preferences for home culture maintenance and host culture immersion. The present study also suggested that individual difference factors, including ethnocentrism and uncertainty avoidance, are related to acculturation strategies. Practitioners could include these constructs as diagnostic tools, either independent of or in conjunction with acculturation measures.

5.2. Limitations

Like all research, this study has limitations. One relates to the sample’s representativeness. Although the sample was drawn to be representative in terms of gender, age, and location, the sample may differ on characteristics relating to computer use. Thus, future studies on tourists’ acculturation strategies should include potential tourists who do not have access to internet to further validate these results. This is of increasing importance as the number of outbound tourists in some countries, including China, is growing rapidly.

Despite these limitations, it is important to note some strengths of the sample. First, it is an adult multi-country sample. Second, it focused on potential tourists, who have traveled internationally in the past five years or who intend to travel in the next two years, from countries with different cultures, which meant that there was considerable cultural heterogeneity in the sample.

5.3. Future directions

The present findings add to the bidimensional acculturation model’s applicability and provide a foundation for further tourism studies. The many relations found in the acculturation literature should be examined, with some modifications, to assess their salience in the tourism domain (e.g., psychological well-being, life satisfaction, cultural competence, and psycho-physical symptoms, including stress). For example, research should compare tourists’ satisfaction to see whether integration leads to greater satisfaction, as integration is often associated with greater life satisfaction (Suinn, 2010) and adaptation (Berry et al., 2006) among immigrant populations. The association between travel motivation and acculturation strategy also needs to be examined to validate our conjecture that tourists who prefer marginalization are motivated by fulfilling relaxation and adventure goals, which have minimal cultural components, and more specific tourism purposes, such as enjoying the sun, sports, or shopping. Finally, although this study found that travel practitioners can segment tourists according to their acculturation strategy, meaningful differences also occurred as a result of country of origin. It is possible, if not likely, that there are further differences to be disentangled with respect to intra-cultural variation with these countries that future research should address.

5.4. Conclusions

The applicability of Berry’s (1997) acculturation model to tourist contexts and the development of tourism packages that take
account of these strategies may help overcome some of the recent challenges faced by tourism operators. The present study offered insights into four kinds of potential visitors, their behavioral preferences and preferences for holiday destination and activities, and the individual difference factors that relate to these strategies. Importantly, such information can be used by practitioners to develop segmentation strategies that are likely to attract these different groups to a tourism destination.

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