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## TOURIST AND TOUR GUIDE PERCEPTIONS OF TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN SINGAPORE

Tourists and guides are among the more visible human components of tourist attractions. Sites become attraction either as a direct result of tourist interest or through the promotion and the cultivation of such interests. Guides, on the other hand, are information appendages of attractions. Guides convey the meaning and significance of attractions to tourists [3, 5, 9, pp.109-33, 12]. Thus, there is an almost symbiotic relationship between tourist, guide and attraction. Attractions come into existence for tourists. Attractions are given value by guides. Guides communicate an attraction's value to tourists. Tourists come to know attractions through guides. Attractions, tourists and guides would not exist if any one were absent.

This study examines the differences in tourist and tour guide perceptions of attractions. Although guides can also be in the form of a book, map or brochure, this study will focus only on human tour guides. The research examines the cognitive and behavioral factors in the relationship between attractions, tourists and guides. The results of a survey of English speaking tourists and guides in Singapore indicates considerable difference in perception of both the overall destination of Singapore and selected attractions within the city-state. These differences can be directly attributed to differences in the social roles of tourists and guides, and in the behavioral space associated with these roles.

In this paper, the differences between tourists and tour guide perceptions of tourist attractions in Singapore are examined from three perspectives. First, is the nature of tourist attractions and differences between the role of a tourist and that of a guide. Second is a discussion of how these differences influence tourist and tour guide behavior and perceptions of Singapore. Third, is a review and comparison of the results of surveys administered to tourists and tour guides on their perceptions of attractions in Singapore.

### Tourist Attractions and Tourist and Tour Guide Roles

Tourist attractions can be vague, changing, faddish, ephemeral and capricious. They are manipulated by advertisers and tour companies, and sought out by tourists. Tourist attractions are frequently described as "other-directed" elements on the landscape [7, 11, p.93-5]. They are criticized for their emphasis on the values and interests of the "outsider" over those of the "insider" [11, pp.79-109]. The Singapore government has, itself used this argument against "outsider" (i.e., non-Singaporean) criticisms of its urban renewal program, which has leveled large sections of the old Malay and Chinese quarters of the city, replacing them with high rise office towers, hotels, shopping complexes and new towns.

An alternative perspective views the origin of a tourist attraction as a process of "sight sacralization", through which a worthy sight is (1) identified, (2) elevated to a special status, and (3) ultimately comes to symbolize the identity of a place [9, pp.44-5]. This perspective is largely an "insider's" affair, with the residents in a place taking an active part in identifying, elevating and identifying with the attraction [5]. Tour guides, in particular, are active characters in this process.

The actual selection of landscape elements as tourist attractions most likely involves a combination of both insider and outsider interests and perspectives. The truly best attractions are those that are enjoyed by residents and tourists alike. It is within the context of the identification of tourist attractions, and the perspective of insider residents and outsider tourists that the role and behavior of tour guides and tourists can be understood.

Tour guides are in the position of being a culture broker [3]. They facilitate the introduction of a tourist to a place. They have a unique perspective in that they are at once familiar with both the insider perspective and the outsider perspective. And yet, they are beyond both of these. Although they live in a place, their role as a guide places them outside the everyday existential activities.

Relph refers to this type of role as that of an "Empathetic Insider" [11, pp.54-5]. Although guides have considerable more information about a place than do tourists, they still view it from an objective perspective. They usually have a much keener eye for tourist attractions than do other insiders. As one Singapore tour guide stated: I find that a Singaporean's interests and activities are very different from ours as guides. The things I point out to tourists which most interest them, very often a local will not realize is of any importance or interest--especially the things you might see and watch just driving along a street. Guides have to be an authority on all the 'little things' which enrich Singapore.

In addition to their professional role, guides have a non-work role which they return to at the end of each day. This is often a distinctly separate realm from that of their professional role. The degree to which the professional role intrudes into the home role will vary among individuals. For the purpose of this study the two roles are treated as completely distinct and separate [6. pp.85-152].

The tourist role is always that of an outsider. Tourist roles are also distinguished by their short, temporary time span and their discretionary nature. Touring is a leisure activity, the primary purpose of which is to rejuvenate the mind, body and soul. As an eternal outsider, tourists are unable to fully cognize the insider's "true" experience of an attraction. The greater the gap between the tourist outsider and the resident insider experiences, the greater is the tourist's dependency on culture brokers, such as guides or guidebooks. These sources of information shape the tourist's selection and experience of attractions. This is not to deny that tourists are unable to "discover" attractions on their own. Every tourist carries a set of values and interests, formed by their cultural which helps them to identify certain types of attractions on their own. These considerations, however, are often already accommodated into the repertoire of the tour guides and guidebooks which tourists will consult.

Beyond these universal characteristics, there have been numerous attempts at classifying the motivations and roles of different types of tourists [1, 2, 10. pp.26-40]. In general, the typologies tend to divide tourists into categories ranging from the frivolous recreation-only oriented types to the more serious, risk-taking or education-oriented "travelers". Researchers and theorists, however, have not adequately dealt with the reality of many tourists who experience moments of both frivolous recreation and serious travel during the course of their journey.

## Tourist and Tour Guide Behavior

Tour guide and tourist roles have a significant impact on touring behavior and perceptions. One behavioral aspect that has a major influence on guide perceptions of attractions is the regimentation of their jobs. In Singapore, most of the tour routes are well established. Some guides have tried to break out of this established routine, with varying degrees of success. For most, however, the routine tours give them a spatially

constrained view of a place, but a detailed knowledge within these spatial constraints.

The home is a distinctly separate spatial sphere which exposes the guides to aspects of a place which are seen by few tourists. In Singapore, most guides live in modern, high-rise new town apartment buildings which tourists only get glimpses of from afar. The home sphere also exposes guides to popular local images of, and possible controversies over, attractions. Tourists are limited to the promoted images of attractions as provided in guidebooks and on guided tours, although frequent and more knowledgeable tourists may be exposed to the deeper, complex perspective of guides.

One result of the behavioral space of tour guides is that they are more likely to perceive a place's attractions as "touristy". This is due to the guide's constant exposure to the principle tourist attractions of a place. The guide's greater familiarity with the promoted images, popular images and real experiences of attractions are likely to make them more critical, particularly where there is a discrepancy between any two of these three impressions.

Tourists, on the other hand, have considerable freedom to express their interests beyond that of the established tour routes. They are primarily constrained by their lack of knowledge about places beyond the established tourist areas. Guided tours are viewed as an important step in overcoming this constraint, although once a place has been placed on the tour route, it is no longer of the mysterious region beyond. The tourist's lack of knowledge also gives them a simpler and more esthetic experience of attractions than that of insiders [16, pp.63-6].

As spurious recreationists, tourists are most interested in entertainment, relaxation and sports. Their impact on tourist attractions is, therefore, greatest on these "leisure" attractions. Often, tourists are only in need of directional information to locate these types of attractions, and little else. In their more serious mode, tourists are more in what Lew [8] has referred to as "fascination" attractions. These include ethnic districts, such as Chinatown and Little India in Singapore, and historic sites. Considerable information is often provided by tour guides and guidebooks who introduce tourists to these attractions. Tourists have some degree of freedom to expand upon these introductions to pursue their own interests. For tourists, therefore, there is no distinction between guided or unguided experiences of attractions; each serves a function as part of their overall experience. Thus, despite the distinctions between guided and unguided touring, and between recreation and serious travel, the tourist experience of a place is more holistic than is the guide experience which is divided into work and home realms.

#### Tourist and Tour Guide Perceptions of Singapore

Surveys were sent to all the English-speaking tour guides in Singapore [13]. Tour guides who speak English as either a first or second language comprise 77% of the 496 licensed guides in Singapore. However, very few licensed guides work full-time at their profession, while a large number have not guided in several years, if ever. A total of 61 valid survey responses were returned.

A survey similar to the one sent to tour guides was made available to tourists in a number of hotels in Singapore. The survey was only available in English. This introduced a clear bias in the results in favor of visitors from English speaking countries. In 1984, the year of the survey, Singapore received 2.9 million visitors, of whom 26% came from English speaking countries [14, p.12]. However, 66% of the survey respondents came from Australia, the U.K., the U.S. and New Zealand alone. The response rate on the tourist surveys was 2.5%, with a total of 150 valid returned surveys. While all the respondents provided information

on their image of Singapore overall, a modification in the survey resulted in only 49 respondents including information on tourist perceptions of selected attractions in Singapore.

## Singapore Overall

Tourists and Guides were asked to indicate their impression of Singapore from a list of 15 images (Table 1). The images were listed to encourage a choice between antipodal opposites, such as "modern" and "traditional". Respondents were permitted to indicate one or both of the antipodal images.

The strongest perception of Singapore among both tourists and guides alike is that it is easy to tour and modern. Tourists, however, are more likely than guides to find Singapore difficult to tour, as well. Singapore's main tourist hotel and shopping belt and many major attractions, i.e. those places which guides are most likely to take tourists, tend to be very modern and easy to tour. This is a shared experience among guides and tourists, both of whom are centered in their social roles on the core tourist hotel area and the peripheral attractions accessed by tour busses. But, beyond these core attractions, tourists must make considerable more effort to gain access or information. The tourists' image of Singapore as an effort to tour comes out of the frustration which this effort entails. In their open-ended comments, several tourists expressed a desire for public bus guides and other directional aids to explore the island on their own. New towns, rural areas and outer islands are some of the areas which tourists have been shown to express a higher interest in visiting than is currently made available to them through tour companies [8, p.166].

Tourists are apparently more cognizant of the traditionalness of Singapore than are guides. This is a reflection of the greater awareness that guides have of changes in the traditional areas of Singapore. For most tourists, Singapore is a new experience, with which they have only travel brochure images to compare against. Guides, on the other hand, have been exposed, for the past decade, to the debate over urban renewal and the future of old Singapore. They have strongly felt opinions on this subject, particularly when traditional attractions comprise an important aspect of their work. This familiarity, and the criticalness of the loss of old, traditional Singapore, is also exhibited in the lower guide ratings of Singapore as exotic and authentic.

Tourists are much more likely to perceive Singapore as unique than are guides. While guides have greater detailed knowledge of the attractions in Singapore, tourists are in a greater position to view Singapore from a broad perspective, particularly in comparison to the other places they have visited. In addition, tourists are less critical of their experiences because the purpose of their travel is enjoyment, and they are, therefore, more likely to ignore minor criticisms in favor of an overall good experience.

Both tourists and guides perceive Singapore more as a relaxation and leisure experience, rather than an exciting or stimulating one. These images appear to be the least affected by the divergent social roles of the two groups.

## Selected Singapore Attractions

The tourists and guides surveyed were given a list of nine attractions found in Singapore. For each attraction they were to indicate the associated image they perceived based on the antipodal categories of (1) unique, rare or special, (2) ordinary or commonplace, (3) excitement, adventure or stimulating, and (4) relaxation or leisure. Again they were allowed to indicate any or all of these four impressions. The responses were then tabulated as ratios and plotted on a two-dimensional diagram with the x-axis representing the "excitement-relaxation" ratio and the y-axis representing the "unique-ordinary" ratio (Figures 1 and 2).

The overall pattern of the plotting shows the tourist responses to be more clustered around the center of the diagram than those of the guides. This appears to indicate a greater uncertainty or contradiction in images among tourists. High agreement over the image of an attraction would result in a high value on either the x or y axis, or both, as is the case of guide impressions of Little India. Nine times as many guides perceived Little India as unique as perceived it as ordinary, while eight times as many perceived it as exciting rather than relaxing.

Tourist impressions of attractions are also more predictable than are those of guides. They are more likely to follow the standard and expected images that one would hold of different attraction types. For example, the ethnic districts of Chinatown and Little India are considered exciting and unique, while the various parks and specialty gardens and the rural areas are all indicated as relaxing. Orchard Road (the hotel and shopping district), the Raffles Place financial district and Sentosa (a recreation island) are all perceived as ordinary. These three attractions are the most modern in character, and are, therefore, the most readily identified with the values and experiences of the countries from which the tourist respondents come.

The overall pattern plotted for guides is more dispersed than that of tourists, particularly for the ethnic districts and Sentosa. Guides appear to be in considerable agreement over the image of these attractions. The two ethnic districts received high ratings as being exciting and unique.

These areas are popular among Singaporeans as well as tourists because of the cultural heritage which the districts represent. Despite the overall loss of old Singapore, these districts still exhibit traditional values which guides are aware of due to the nature of their job. Tourist responses to these attractions may also influence which guides are aware of due to the nature of their job. Tourist responses to these attractions may also influence guide perceptions.

Two other attractions, the Orchard Road hotel and shopping core and the rural areas are also perceived by guides as being exciting and unique. The more complex attitude of the insider results in the large difference between guide and tourist images of these attractions. In the case of Orchard Road, the impression of uniqueness comes more out of comparisons with other Southeast Asian destinations, rather than comparisons with cities in developed countries. For South and Southeast Asian tourists Orchard Road is the most important attraction in Singapore [15. p.80]. They find it unique and exciting in its modernity. Singaporean tour guides, most of whom are Southeast Asians, also feel this sense of Orchard Road as a special place. A second factor which may account for the guides' greater excitement perception of Orchard Road is that guides are primarily cognizant of the shopping value of the district, due to their overwhelming emphasis on this aspect.

Tourists, meanwhile, perceive both its shopping and accommodation facilities and rate them of equal value. The shopping aspect offers excitement, while the accommodation aspect offers a comfort and relaxation experience.

The high image of uniqueness given to the rural areas by guides reflects the influence of their home sphere on their professional sphere. Rural areas are not promoted as tourist attractions in Singapore and few tourists have a very clear impression of what these areas have to offer [8, p.53]. Many Singaporeans lack such an awareness, as well. As least some guides, however, are expressing a belief that the rural areas of their island are unique and can potentially be of interest to tourists.

Guides perceive the old British colonial government center, the financial district and downtown, and

Sentosa as leisure and ordinary tourist attraction. Again, these are essentially modern and Western in their orientation. The guides' impression of Sentosa as a very ordinary attraction is another indication of the influence of popular local images on their professional role. The development of Sentosa Island as a recreation playground has been controversial since its inception in the 1960s. It has yet to achieve the level of popularity which the government envisioned. Guide familiarity with these issues results in the somewhat ambivalent image they hold of the island. Also, guides are less likely to classify Sentosa as primarily a leisure excitement attraction. This reflects their greater knowledge of the diversity of attractions which the island has to offer, such as traditional food stalls and an old military fort, in addition to the leisure and recreation attractions of museums and outdoor sports.

Guides perceive the Singapore Zoological Gardens as more unique than do tourists. Again, this is likely to be largely in comparison to other Southeast Asian zoos. The images of the Chinese and Japanese Gardens are the only ones over which guides and tourists generally agree.

The ranking of Singapore overall, derived from Table 1, is also shown on Figures 1 and 2. Tourists view Singapore as being more unique than any of its separate attractions. They appear to view Singapore overall as more than just a collection of attraction. Their more holistic experience enables them to see beyond the attractions themselves. Indeed, the entire city, and the experience of the entire city, is the attraction for the tourist.

Guides, on the other hand, place Singapore's overall image at the near center of the various attraction examined here. It would appear that they perceive "tourist Singapore" as the sum of its attractions. Guides tend to distinguish between the tourist's Singapore and the resident insider's Singapore. This is a reflection of their own reality which distinguishes between their separate roles as guide and resident.

## Summary and Conclusions

The comparison of tourist and tour guide perceptions of Singapore found that the tourists' lack of detailed knowledge, especially of changes over time, made them more likely to perceive traditionalness, authenticity, and exoticness in what guides would view as modernizing trends. Tourists were found to have a less clear image of attractions than guides and tended to correlate perception with attraction type. The outsider perspective did allow tourists to have a more comparative knowledge, gained from touring other cities, which guides generally lacked. This enabled them to see uniqueness in what guides would view as commonplace and ordinary.

Guides are influenced by the split between their work and home behavioral spheres. Their working sphere exposes them to the touristy and easy to tour aspects of Singapore. Their greater detailed knowledge also makes them more critical of attractions than are tourists, who are essentially motivated by pleasure interests.

Guides appeared less cognizant of tourist comfort interests and more likely to perceive Singapore's attractions as exciting and unique than were tourists. This, however, contradicted the guide's perception of Singapore overall.

Guides were found to have a stronger consensus over the image of most attractions than tourists. The perception of an attraction's image as excitement or leisure appears to be somewhat less influenced by one's role as a tourist or guide than are the other perceptions measured in this study.

The major factors influencing tourist and guide perceptions of a destination place were found to include:

- 1 - The degree and type of knowledge held. Knowledge is of both the detailed type, which guides specialize in, and the broad perspective, which tourists bring.
- 2 - The behavioral space of the role of the guide and the tourist. A professional role, such as a tour guide, tends to bring greater distinctions between home and work spheres. Tourists have a more singular and holistic role which does not distinguish between tourist and non-tourist aspects of place.

The case study of Singapore demonstrated the complex ways in which behavioral roles and knowledge affect the perception of place among tourists and tour guides. If one assumes that guides influence the tourist perception and experience of attractions in a positive way, then there is considerable potential significance in the differences discussed above. This is particularly true for Fascination-type attractions, which most require guiding of some form.

Because the surveys were generally answered near the end of the tourists' visit to Singapore, it is possible that their pre-visit images and initial impressions of Singapore and Singapore's attractions would be even more divergent from that of guides than seen here. Also, tourists who take more tours might come closer to the perception of Singapore expressed by guides, while those who take fewer tours might move away from the guide evaluations. These aspects, however, were not assessed in the present study.

Other factors that were not taken into consideration here, but are potentially of importance include:

#### 1-Personality Influences

- Tourist Motivations (recreation, education, escape, etc.)
- Guide Typology ("mentor", "pathfinder") [3]
- Guide Professionalism
- Demographic Characteristics (sex, age, income, nationality, etc.)

#### 2-Time Factors

- Past visits; Length of visit
- Length of time as a guide; Frequency of tours given

#### 3-Types of tours taken or given

- Group, Bus, Auto, Walking, None
- Specialty tours (by topic or special client group)

As an increasingly important spatial phenomenon, tourist experience and tourism development deserves more attention from geographers. Further study into the topics outlined in this paper would shed greater light on the complex influence of tourism and the influences of insider and outsider perspectives on human experience and behavior in the creation of place.

Table 1. Tourist and Tour Guide Images of Singapore.

TOURISTS	GUIDES		IMAGE	
	%	R	%	Rank
-----	-----		-----	
Easy to Tour	59	1	49	1
Effort to Tour	21	11	4	13
Modern	51	2	49	1
Traditional	27	8	10	12
Unique	51	2	27	5
Ordinary	13	12	12	9
Exotic	47	4	29	4
Familiar	27	8	22	7
Touristy	46	5	43	3
Authentic	22	10	12	9
Relaxation	40	6	24	6
Excitement	31	7	16	8
Partake in Activities	10	13	12	9

R = rank

Tourists = 150

Guides = 61

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Table 2. Tourist and Tour Guide perceptions of Selected Tourist Attractions and Districts in Singapore.

E = Exciting, stimulating  
(R) = Relaxing, leisure

U = Unique, exceptional  
(O) = Ordinary, commonplace

ATTRACTION -----	E (R) -----	U (O) -----
<b>Orchard Road</b>		
Tourist	(1.2)*	(3.2)
Guide	2.4	3.5
<b>Chinatown, Singapore River &amp; Hawker Food Stalls</b>		
Tourist	3.4	1.8
Guide	7.2	6.8
<b>Sentosa</b>		
Tourist	(1.8)	(4.0)
Guide	(4.9)	(1.3)
<b>Government Center &amp; National Museum Area</b>		
Tourist	(2.7)	1.2
Guide	(2.2)	(1.3)
<b>Downtown &amp; Raffles Pl</b>		
Tourist	2.0	(2.5)
Guide	(1.6)	(2.5)
<b>Jurong Parks</b>		
Tourist	(3.8)	2.0
Guide	(4.0)	1.9
<b>Little India</b>		
Tourist	3.6	1.5
Guide	7.8	9.0
<b>Zoological Gardens</b>		
Tourist	(3.3)	2.0
Guide	(2.0)	2.3
<b>Pungol/Rural Areas</b>		
Tourist	(3.0)	1.0
Guide	1.5	2.8

Surveys: Tourists = 49, Guides = 61

\* Notes: - No tourists indicated the rural areas as Exciting. - For Orchard Road, tourists found shopping quite Exciting [1.8], while the hotels were very Relaxing [ (2.9) ].