Trouble in paradise?

– An ethnographic study of the relationship between tourists and local residents in a developing country

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is today the world's largest industry and an important economic development tool in many developing countries. However tourism sometimes causes social complications, often due to social- and economic gaps that lead to tensions between tourists and local residents. At small island destinations spatial confinement and isolation contribute to the risk of these tensions to occur, which may then ruin the destination's image. This study examines the relationship between tourists and local residents at the small island Koh Tao, which is a popular tourist destination in Thailand. The aim is to identify possible tensions and to examine why these tensions may occur. The research material is collected through an ethnographic study, including participant observations and informal interviews. The result of the study shows an overall positive relationship between the tourists and local residents, where the tourism industry's economic contribution to the host community is an important factor for their positive attitude towards tourism. A few social- and economic gaps are identified, however these do not seem to be the cause of any notable tensions. Yet, sometimes tensions do occur and are then most often related to cultural- and linguistic misunderstandings. The essay discusses how these misunderstandings could be prevented through increased knowledge and also proposes an illustrating model. Finally, suggestions for future research regarding the usage of tourism as a development tool are proposed.

PREFACE

Many thanks to you all.

Elisabeth Rothoff   Emma Lindström
2015-05-28   2015-05-28
Koh Tao   Koh Tao

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Tourism is today one of the world's largest and still growing industries.[1] In many developing countries, such as Thailand, tourism is an incredibly important economic source.[2] The main economic advantage of the tourism industry is that it generates many job opportunities, including low-skilled jobs which are important in developing countries where high education might be rare.[3] Also, tourists bring new money to the country, which is also important in countries where poverty is a common problem. In fact, the positive advantages of the tourism industry are important enough to be considered by The United Nations as a means to combat world poverty.[4] However, tourism is also problematical, and in order for the industry to be used as a way of reducing poverty, the disadvantages need to be examined in-depth. One of the problems is the fact that tourism may generate negative environmental impacts as well as negative social effects.[5] Especially at destinations in developing countries, there is often a big economic gap between the tourists and the local residents, which creates imbalance that can have a damaging effect on the local residents' attitude towards the tourists. This can cause the destination a bad image.[6] Imbalance could potentially lead to violence and criminal acts. This can be due to a lot of different factors, such as economic, social, political and in some cases personal elements. The economic- and the social factors go h   and in hand, and they could potentially cause gaps, that leads to the local residents justifying their negative attitude towards the tourists because they are feeling unfairly treated.[7]

Tensions between local residents and tourists are especially likely to occur at tourist destinations on islands, due to the spatial confinement and isolation of the interactions.[8] Even if frictions in the interaction between local residents and tourists do not lead to violence, it may still cause an uncomfortable atmosphere at the destination[9] which might affect the

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[1] Khairat, G., Maher, A.,Integrating sustainability into tour operator business: an innovative approach in sustainable tourism, 2012

[2] Bhaopichitr K.; Thitisakmongkol C., *Thailand Economic Monitor*, 2014, p. 13

[3] Wijk, J. & Person, W., A Long Haul Destination: Sustainability reporting among tour operators, 2006

[4] Ibid

[5] Khairat, G., Maher, A.,Integrating sustainability into tour operator business: an innovative approach in sustainable tourism, 2012

[6] Pizam, A., A comprehensive approach to classifying acts of crime and violence at tourism destinations, 1999

[7] Ibid

[8] Moyle, B., Croy, G.,Weiler, B., Tourism interaction on islands: the community and visitor social exchange, 2010

[9] Moyle, B., Croy, G.,Weiler, B., Tourism interaction on islands: the community and visitor social exchange, 2010

destination image. The image of a destination is based on people's perception and also the media.[10] If the media portrays a destination in a negative way, this will most likely decrease the tourist inflow. A destination's image is very important and an effective marketing tool.[11] Furthermore, island destinations usually depend a great deal on tourism, which makes understanding interactions between tourists and local residents a key factor when it comes to tourism management.

1.2 Discussion of problem

Previous studies regarding the relationship between local residents and tourists have been performed. For example a study regarding interactions between tourists and local residents on an island destination has been carried out in Australia, which had a comparative approach based on interviews and focused on social-exchange theory.[12] However, further research regarding the relationship between tourists and local residents in countries struggling with poverty are still needed.[13] In this essay both the perspective of the local residents and the tourists will be taken into account. Most previous researches have been performed with the perception of one of these groups in focus, why studies that include the perceiving and behavior of both groups are still needed.[14]

As mentioned previously the advantages of tourism are many. Therefore, if disadvantages - such as social complications - are identified and minimized, tourism development may also be used as a means for economic- and social development. Examples of social complications are cultural and economic gaps, which are often particularly notable in low-income countries. Hence, in order for developing countries to use tourism as a tool to accomplish social- and economic development it is necessary to understand and preserve this relationship.

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[10] Moyo, B., Ziramba, E., The impact of crime on inbound tourism to South Africa, 2013

[11] Pizam, A., A comprehensive approach to classifying acts of crime and violence at tourism destinations, 1999

[12] Moyle, B., Croy, G.,Weiler, B., Tourism interaction on islands: the community and visitor social exchange, 2010

[13] Sharpley, R., Naidoo, P., Tourism and Poverty Reduction: The Case of Mauritius, 2010

[14] Oom do Valle, P., Mendes, J., Guerreiro, M., Albino Silva, J. Can welcoming residents increase tourist satisfaction?, 2011

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this essay is to study the relationship between tourists and local residents in a developing country in order to examine what kind of tensions are visible between the two parties. Also the aim is to understand why tensions may occur and if they are linked to social- or economic gaps.

Based on the purpose a few questions are in focus:
- *What kind of behavior between tourists and local residents are observable?*
- *During what kind of situations do tensions between tourists and local residents occur?*
- *Are any kind of indications of social- and economic gaps between tourists and local residents visible?*

1.4 Delimitations

This study will not include an observation of interactions between local residents and domestic tourists, but will focus only on the relationship between foreign tourists and the local residents. Since this will be a case study, the observations are limited to one single tourist destination.

1.5 Definitions

In this study formal- and informal encounters are distinguished. The definition of formal encounters in this essay is encounters where the local resident acts in the role as an employee within the tourist industry, while informal encounters are interactions outside of these formal situations.

2. METHOD

This chapter describes the study's approach and motivates the method of choice. Ethical problems are discussed at the end of the chapter. A critical reflection regarding the study, including the methodological approach, will be presented in the last chapter of the essay.

The ethnographic observation of this study will take place in Thailand, motivated by the tourism industry's important part in the country's economic development. Since part of the purpose is to examine tensions between tourists and local residents, the observations will be situated at a small island where these tensions are more likely to occur[15] as explained earlier. The island of choice is Koh Tao, which is a small island with 3 500 residents and of about 21 square kilometers[16] that receives over 100 000 visitors every year.[17] There are different groups of tourists visiting Koh Tao, such as families, couples and older people. However the island mainly attracts divers and backpackers, as explained further on. The intention of the field study is to examine one single destination in-depth and from different angles. Even though this study observes one specific tourist destination, the prospect is that the essay will also contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between tourists and local residents on a more general level.

2.1 Preparation course held by Sida

In the beginning of March 2015 the authors attended a preparation course held by Sida, a Swedish organisation working on behalf of the Swedish parliament and government in order to reduce world poverty[18]. At the course the authors received practical information regarding field studies in developing countries, as well as useful information about ethics, encounter with new cultures and general information about developing countries. This has helped the authors understand the importance of a relevant study in a developing country. During the preparation course the authors were also provided with research material, including suggestions for sources of information about different countries.

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[15] Moyle, B., Croy, G.,Weiler, B., Tourism interaction on islands: the community and visitor social exchange, 2010

[16] Black Tip Diving http://www.blacktipdiving.com/koh_tao.html Obtained 16-04-2015

[17] Tourism Authority of Thailand http://www.tourismthailand.org/Where-to-Go/Koh-Tao Obtained 13-01-2015

[18] Sida, http://www.sida.se/English/About-us/Our-mission/ Obtained 2015-05-10

2.2 Participant Observation

The collection and analysis of data will proceed through a qualitative approach through an ethnographic study. The aim is to collect in-depth data regarding the relationship between tourists and local residents, which means that participant observations are highly suitable.[19] Through ethnographic studies it is possible to study people's everyday lives and their world-views. Participant observations are a way to be a part of people's lives and study their way of living and behaving.[20] Since the field study will be situated at Koh Tao during eight weeks the authors will be able to study the interactions between tourists and local residents over time.

Reliability is a problem regarding participant observation, since the observer is always a part of the collected data.[21] One way of extracting the level of reliability is if there are a number of authors carrying out the same research at the same time.[22] For this thesis two authors will be part of the study, which means that there will be two different sets of field notes to analyze. This will help broadening the perspective and lower the risk of subjective inputs to the data. A highly important part of the research, which will also increase the level of reliability, is careful and detailed recording of data.

Participant observation will also open up for the opportunity of interviews by everyday conversation. This technique will be used when talking to tourists and local tourist actors in order to receive a deeper contact at an informal basis. In preparation for these interviews different ways of including relevant questions in everyday conversations will be discussed.

2.2.1 Preparations

To be able to carry out a rewarding field study it is essential to be well prepared and informed about the subject, wherefore literature studies will be performed before departure. This will help the authors to get an overview of the subject in question. The literature study is also used as a tool to collect relevant theories, which will serve as the theoretical framework. The literature study will be focused on research articles from peer reviewed journals, in order to collect current standpoints among the research field. In addition, some methodological references will be collected from books with in-depth facts regarding ethnographic observations.

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[19] Hammersley, M., Atkinson, P., *Ethnography : Principles in Practice*, 2007, p.4

[20] Crang, M., Cook, I., *Doing Ethnographies*, 2007, p. 37

[21] Hammersley, M., Atkinson, P., *Ethnography : Principles in Practice*, 2007, p.19

[22] DeWalt, K.M., DeWalt, B. R., *Participant observation: a Guide for fieldworkers*, 2011

In order to perform a participant observation there is a three-stage process to use.[23] First, the authors decide to study a small island destination in Thailand, Koh Tao, to observe the relationship between the local residents and the tourists. Second, the authors spend eight weeks at Koh Tao and observe the local residents and the tourists in order to receive useful information. Third, the authors leave the observation site to go through the field notes and to get a grasp of their culture. However, it is important to understand the complexity with a participant observation.[24] Ethnographic studies consist of unexpected events, social interactions and also problems that the authors will not be able to foresee.[25] This does not mean that there is no use for pre-field preparation, on the contrary this is a fundamental part of the ethnographic study.[26] Therefore, by studying existing theories on the subject and by identifying foreshadowed problems the authors will be better prepared for the field study.[27] These foreshadowed problems may then be developed into questions and research problems.[28]

Sometimes access is a problem in participant observations.[29] For this study though, as described below the setting will be public, which means that this problem is minimized. An important part of being a participant observer is sociability and to be able to make contact with the informants without seeming "abnormal".[30] For this study this part will be essential, since some of the data will be based on informal interviews. During these interviews and encounters it is important for the authors to be sensitive to current situations and to determine what kind of behaviour is suitable.[31]

As an novice ethnographer to suddenly get thrown into an unfamiliar environment may cause an "culture-shock" and the feeling of being lost.[32] This means that the initial part of the field work may be influenced by somewhat of incompetence, which is acceptable, during the first period of fieldwork.[33] Therefore the observations and conversations with the participants will be considered as lessons, especially during the initial part of the field study but also as a process throughout the study. Hence, evaluation of the field work will be made continuously, to enable improvements and to increase competence.

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[23] Crang, M., Cook, I., *Doing Ethnographies*, 2007, p. 37

[24] Ibid

[25] Hammersley, M., Atkinson, P., *Ethnography : Principles in Practice*, 2007, p.20

[26] Ibid p.21

[27] Ibid p.21

[28] Ibid p.24

[29] Ibid p.70

[30] Ibid p.71

[31] Ibid p.72

[32] Ibid p.81

[33] Ibid p.79

An element to consider during the observation is also if the observer is an outsider or an insider in the observed group.[34] The insider role means that the observer is part of the group being observed, while the role as an outsider means that the observer is not part of the group being observed.[35] In the case of this study, the participants of the study are divided into two groups; tourists and local residents. The authors will take on the role as tourists, which mean that the group of tourists may see the authors as insiders, while the local residents may see the authors as outsiders.

2.2.2 Informal interviews

A key factor in this study will be the oral accounts from informal interviews. This is a way of collecting information about subjective opinions and different perspectives that may be hard to identify by direct observation.[36] This type of knowledge is often a central part in order to bring in different perspectives in the analysis and also to receive a better understanding of the context.[37] Selecting informants for the interviews is complex and it may be hard to establish contact with some of the participants. Nevertheless, it will be of high significance to be careful about the selection of informants, otherwise the data may be misleading.[38] The questions that will be asked during the informal interviews will not be structured in advance, nor will the same questions be asked to every informant. However, during the interviews the authors will try to lead the conversations into the issues regarding the relationship between local residents and tourists that this study is focused on. These types of flexible interview techniques are also the most common in ethnographic research.[39] Opinions and other oral accounts do not always need to be received through interviews; by observing a group of people unsolicited accounts might also be taken part of.[40] These expressions may be exchanged between participants or even directed towards the ethnographer and are often of high value in an ethnographic study.[41] For the authors in this study it is therefore important to identify sites where these types of oral exchanges are most likely to occur.[42]

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[34] Hammersley, M., Atkinson, P., *Ethnography : Principles in Practice*, 2007, p.86

[35] Ibid

[36] Ibid p.98

[37] Ibid p.98

[38] Ibid p.104

[39] Ibid p.117

[40] Ibid p.99

[41] Ibid p.99

[42] Ibid

2.2.3 Field notes

The process of recording data from observations regarding social interactions together with accounts of the participants is time consuming and often complicated.[43] The researcher must take field notes, drawings or any type of material evidence, while trying to keep an objective view of the matter.[44] In this study, the recording of data will be by field notes, either handwritten or written on laptop or a mobile phone, depending on the situation. It is not possible to write down everything that happens during an observation, which leads to the fact that the field notes are always selective.[45] Depending on the issues in focus and the authors' perceptions of the situation, the field notes will be somewhat subjective. It is of most importance for the authors to be aware of this and in order to be able to be as self-conscious as possible while recording the field notes.[46] During the informal interviews in this study it will not be possible to take notes while talking to the participant, since this is supposed to be a covert observation.[47] Neither will this be possible in some of the settings for observation. Hence, in these cases the field notes will be written down as soon as possible afterwards. Previous researches show that time is precious in order to get detailed field notes and valuable data, since details are otherwise soon forgotten.[48] During participant observation there will most likely be times when note-taking is possible during the actual observation, for example if the setting is a cafe or a restaurant. This is the ultimate way of collecting rewarding field notes.[49] It is important for the researcher to leave with detailed information of what has been witnessed.[50] Because it is crucial not to rely on memory, everything that is of importance need to be written down.[51] Analytic ideas that may arise during the observations or while taking notes will also be written down, but it will then be important to distinguish these notes from the field notes.[52]

In the initial part of the fieldwork the notes may be quite wide and unstructured, this will probably change over time as the authors get more practice and gain more competence.[53] The authors will during the beginning of the participant observation describe the situations in broader terms. This is to get an overview of the present situation, as well as get a grasp of regularities, rhythms and routines. Thereafter focus will be on the information that is most

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[43] Hammersley, M., Atkinson, P., *Ethnography : Principles in Practice*, 2007, p.140

[44] Crang, M., Cook, I., *Doing Ethnographies*, 2007, p. 37

[45] Hammersley, M., Atkinson, P., *Ethnography : Principles in Practice*, 2007, p.142

[46] Ibid

[47] Ibid

[48] Ibid

[49] Ibid

[50] Crang, M., Cook, I., *Doing Ethnographies*, 2007, p. 50

[51] Hammersley, M., Atkinson, P., *Ethnography : Principles in Practice*, 2007, p.145

[52] Ibid p.151

[53] Ibid p.146

important for the study.[54] Sometimes it may be important to note the actual words used by participants, since they may have a special meaning in the observed environment.[55] In the field notes there will also be information about the context; the setting, the time and the persons involved.[56] Although, since the participants in this study will be anonymous, there will be no mentioning of names in the notes.

2.2.4 Data analysis

During the fieldwork, reflections regarding the field notes will be made continuously, laying the groundwork for the analysis. This will help to avoid collecting too much irrelevant data, as well as elaborate the research issues and improve the observations.[57] Even though the aim is that the authors keep themselves objective and detached from the observation, field notes often also includes some kind of analysis from the observation.[58] This will be taken into careful consideration while structuring and analyzing the data.

After every observation the field notes and observations will be discussed between the authors. The initial aim will be to discern patterns in the data, which is the approach recommended by Hammersley and Atkinson.[59] The field notes will be thoroughly studied, so that the authors are well versed in the data. Also the theoretical framework of the thesis will be used as a means to interpret and structure the data. However, these previous researches will be critically reviewed, so that they do not lead to hasty conclusions.[60]

2.3 Research ethics

The main advantage of using covert participant observation as a way of collecting in-depth data is that it opens up the possibility to observe phenomenon that might be sensitive or hard to explain in words. Also, observations entail an understanding of the context of the phenomenon.[61] Therefore, covert participant observations have the ability to realise observation and comprehension of behaviour and circumstances in the collection of data that no other research method would allow.[62] However, covert participant observations is also

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[54] Crang, M., Cook, I., *Doing Ethnographies*, 2007, p. 55

[55] Hammersley, M., Atkinson, P., *Ethnography : Principles in Practice*, 2007, p.146

[56] Ibid p.148

[57] Ibid p.151

[58] DeWalt, K.M., DeWalt, B. R., *Participant observation: a Guide for fieldworkers*, 2011

[59] Hammersley, M., Atkinson, P., *Ethnography : Principles in Practice*, 2007, p.163

[60] Ibid p.163

[61] Lauder, M., Covert Participant Observation of a Deviant Community: Justifying the Use of Deception, 2003

[62] Jun, L., Ethical Challenges in Participant Observation: A Reflection on Ethnographic Fieldwork, 2008

morally questioned and sometimes strongly criticized.[63] Criticism of covert observations is for example the fact that it is in some way deceiving; the participants are misled and their privacy is disregarded.[64] Some researchers even consider covert observations as being a violation against human rights.[65]

Since covert observations are a controversial and contentious subject, the choice of this method has been thoroughly considered. In order to justify the ethical problems a cost-benefit analysis[66] of the expected research benefits versus the potential harm was performed. The possibility to obtain authentic information through formal interviews and overt observations regarding the relationship between local residents and tourists is considered as minimal. Most likely the informants would then, consciously or unconsciously, be adapting their stories. This could be either to put themselves in a better light, or just because they perceive situations from their own standpoint. Hence, participant observations indeed seem to be a better way of collecting valuable data. Furthermore, taking into consideration that it is probable that the participants would also change their behaviour if they knew that they were being observed, an overt observation would probably not be appropriate for drawing validate conclusions about the relationship in reality. In addition, the aim of the study is not to study certain individuals, but to observe the interaction between the participants. Therefore the participants will be anonymous in the study, which reduces the intrusion of the individual's privacy. Still, the deception that covert observations involve is a problem and it is unavoidable that the integrity of the participants will somehow be affected.[67] Hence, it is supposed that the ability to gather important information about social gaps and tensions at the destination will be significantly higher by covert observations than by any other method. Weighing the intrusion of integrity against the fact that the participants will be anonymous, the potential harm is considered as limited. Regarding previous mentioned statement about covert observation being a violation of human rights, the long-term aim of this study is that better knowledge in this field will create groundwork for developing countries to use tourism as a tool for both social- and economic development. Therefore the cost-benefit analysis indicates that the research benefits will outweigh the costs of potential harm, whereas the authors consider the application of covert observations in order to gather valuable information ethically justified.

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[63] Lauder, M., Covert Participant Observation of a Deviant Community: Justifying the Use of Deception, 2003
[64] Ibid
[65] Baumrind, D.; Gersoni, C., Principles of ethical conduct in the treatment of subjects: Reaction to the draft report of the Committee on Ethical Standards in Psychological Research, 1971
[66] Lauder, M., Covert Participant Observation of a Deviant Community: Justifying the Use of Deception, 2003
[67] Baumrind, D.; Gersoni, C, Principles of ethical conduct in the treatment of subjects: Reaction to the draft report of the Committee on Ethical Standards in Psychological Research, 1971

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter describes previous theories and researches regarding the relationship between tourists and local residents. The aim of the theoretical framework is to address various perspectives in order to achieve an understanding regarding the perceptions of both local residents and tourists. More general and established theories that can be linked to tourism are presented; Social exchange theory, Theory of planned behaviour, Intergroup contact theory and Identity theory. Also, a few in-depth research areas are described, including recently published research regarding island destinations and prejudice related to tourism.

For many small islands tourism has been a key component for the development strategies. During the last two decades tourism has proved to be the main engine for growth and source of exports, for the smaller island destinations. The link between economic growth and exports has proved to be a justification for smaller island destinations to use tourism as a tool for development. In addition, it is also possible for the host country to sell their products to tourists at a higher price. Despite all the benefits coming from tourism in smaller islands, there are also costs to be recognised with. Dependency has proven to be a condition to bear in mind for some small islands.[68] Many problems are associated with dependency on tourism, such as economic, social and cultural factors. Examples of such impacts could be cultural estrangement, negative impacts on the environment and a loss of social identity. It has also been said that culture change might occur as a result of interaction with tourists. In addition, some researchers argue that the development of the tourism industry contributes to many social problems in the host community such as changes in individual behaviour, lifestyles and traditional ceremonies.[69]. Apart from this, negative perceptions of the local residents might occur, due to fear of crimes and overcrowding. By using the "Social exchange theory" it is possible to measure attitudes between different social groups. According to the theory local residents who believe they will personally benefit from tourism, are the ones that have a positive attitude and vice versa.[70]

According to social exchange theory, local residents attitude toward tourism is a result of their perception of whether the total economic-, sociocultural- and environmental benefits associated with tourism outweigh the disadvantages or vice versa.[71] This means that if the local residents believe that the arriving tourists bring them more value than problems, they will engage in the tourism industry. The economic factor is previously shown to be the most

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[68] Nunkoo, R. ; Gursoy, D. ; Juwaheer T. D., Island residents´identities and their support for tourism: an integration of two theories, 2010

[69] Lacher, R. G. ; Nepal, S. K., Dependency and development in Northern Thailand, 2010

[70] Nunkoo, R. ; Gursoy, D. ; Juwaheer T. D., Island residents´identities and their support for tourism: an integration of two theories, 2010

[71] Látková, P.; Vogt, C. A., Residents' Attitudes toward Existing and Future Tourism Development in Rural Communities. 2012

significant for developing a positive attitude towards tourism.[72] A factor that is also of high importance for the local resident's attitude towards tourists is the level of exploitation. The more exploited a destination is, the more likely are the residents to develop a negative attitude towards tourists.[73] On this basis, the social exchange theory can be related to Butler's tourism area life cycle (TALC).[74]

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) is also a valuable approach in tourism research for understanding the relationship between tourists and local residents, since it may explain the attitudes of an individual and his or her subjective perceptions of behavioural control and norms.[75] If these factors are identified and understood, it opens the possibility to influence the local residents' behaviour towards tourists.[76] According to TPB the behavioural-, normative- and control believes are the factors that determines the behaviour of an individual.[77] The behavioural belief drives the attitudes, which means that if an individual perceives a behaviour as positive, he or she will encourage the behaviour. The normative belief is affected by the encouragement of the significant others of the individual, which drives the subjective norms. If the individual believes that these persons would support the behaviour, he or she will most likely engage in it. Furthermore, the perceived control over the behaviour is an important factor. The more control the individual believe he or she has, the more the behaviour will be supported.[78] Taken these three factors in account on an individual level, the TPB is well suited for determining local residents' attitude towards tourists and tourism development.[79] Furthermore, the level of educations has been shown to affect the individual's attitude towards tourism. Individuals with high education are often more positive towards tourism.[80]

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[72] Látková, P.; Vogt, C. A., Residents' Attitudes toward Existing and Future Tourism Development in Rural Communities. 2012

[73] Ibid

[74] Diedrich, A. ; García-Buades, E.. Local perceptions of tourism as indicators of destination decline. 2009

[75] Nunkoo, R. ; Ramkissoon, H. Gendered theory of planned behavior and resident support for tourism, 2010

[76] Ibid

[77] R. Nunkoo, H. Ramkissoon, Gendered theory of planned behavior and resident support for tourism, 2010

[78] Ibid

[79] Ibid

[80] Nunkoo, R. ; Ramkissoon, H. Gendered theory of planned behavior and resident support for tourism, 2010
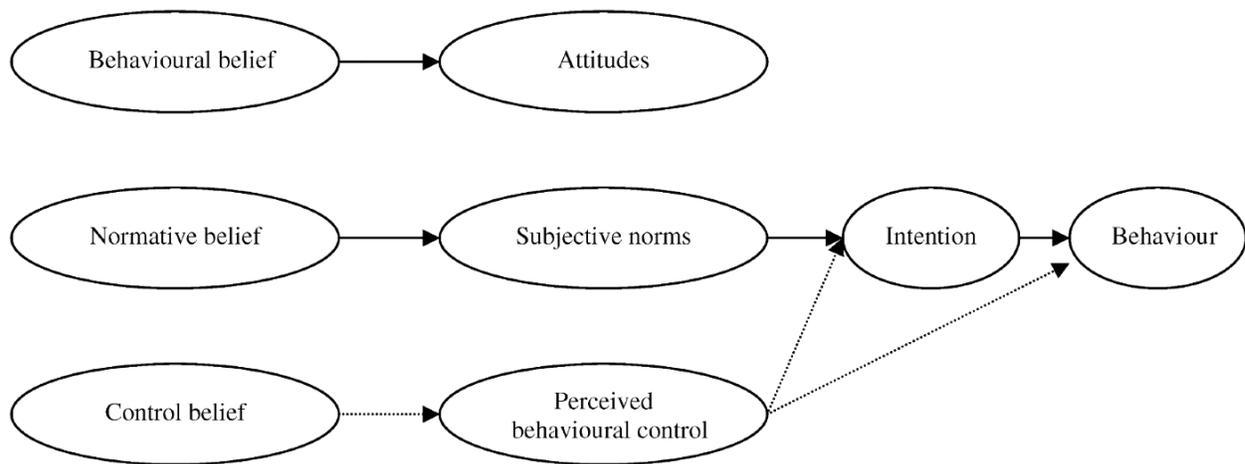
Figure 1. *A model of theory of planned behaviour presented by Nunkoo and Ramkinssoon, Gendered theory of planned behavior and resident support for tourism, 2010*

Four factors that are also essential for the host community's attitude towards tourists are the perceived economic-, social-, cultural- and environmental impacts.[81] If the community is dependent on the economic advantage of tourism, the local residents are most likely to support the tourism with a positive attitude.[82] Among the social impacts, development and improvement of services provided at the destination is often viewed as a positive effect that tourism entails.[83] Negative social impacts that are usually mentioned are heavy traffic as well as increasing crime rate, such as vandalism and drug abuse. Tourism increases the interest of preserving culture and historical buildings, which may clarify cultural identity among residents. The interest of preservation may also apply for the environment, which is often of great value to the host community. A negative effect though is littering and also overcrowding.[84]

In order to understand the interactions between different groups of people, such as tourists and local residents, Gordon W. Allport constructed an intergroup contact theory back in the 1950's. He stated that in order to achieve a positive and optimal intergroup contact four conditions needed to be fulfilled. The four conditions were the following: equal status within a certain situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation and authority support. Several studies have been performed using this theory, which has led to many authors supporting this idea.[85] The idea of the intergroup contact theory was that it is believed that interaction between

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[81] Nunkoo, R. ; Ramkissoon, H. Gendered theory of planned behavior and resident support for tourism, 2010
[82] Almeida García, F. ; Balbuena Vázquez, A. ; Cortés Macías, R., Resident's attitudes towards the impacts of tourism, 2015
[83] Ibid
[84] Ibid
[85] Pettigrew, T. F., Intergroup Contact Theory, 1998 8

cultures can lead to mutual acquaintance and understanding, as well as reduce intergroup prejudice, tensions and conflicts.[86] This study has now been developed and consists of much more, making it an even more complex theory. The opinion about this matter is split, with some believing that intergroup interaction is essential in order to reduce prejudice, while others believe that contact between different groups causes nothing but conflicts.[87] A meta-analytic study was carried out by T. Pettigrew and L. Tropp and stated that intergroup contact does help reduce intergroup prejudice, which corresponds with previous research.[88] It is said that positive interactions between different culture groups could possibly lead to a decrease in people's prejudice and reducing stereotyping as well as increasing acceptance and tolerance. Tourism could possibly be a way to reduce the factors mentioned above, due to the fact that people from different cultures meet and interact on a daily basis. This way people learn about different cultures which therefore opens up for acceptance, understanding and perhaps even reconciliation.[89] Furthermore, another study has shown that tourism is a driving force when it comes to the development of intercultural relationships between different countries. People's cultural backgrounds play an important role in the sociocultural interactions as well as post trip satisfaction.[90] A study by Ward and Berno showed that those who work within the tourism industry as well as those who reside in a developed country, have a more positive attitude towards tourists. The findings also revealed that more consistent and satisfying encounter with tourists leads to more positive attitudes towards them.[91] The genuine or authentic perception of a destination and local culture is today part of a positive tourist experience.[92] Tourists are overall well-traveled and knowing, and will probably recognize fictitious cultural experiences.[93]

In order to explain one's behavior towards others, it is also necessary to understand the individuals' subjective identity, according to The Identity Theory. The Identity theory is used to describe one's behaviour in relation to one's identity, meaning, how one's identity affect the way a person behaves.[94] Tourism can be seen as a platform in which there is a space where people can become closer or more distant, therefore the identity-related attributes cannot be ignored. Self-identity has proven to be an important factor when studying behavior. The identity affects one's behaviour, making a person act a certain way due to his or her identity.

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[86] Thyne, M., Lawson, R., Todd, S., The use of conjoint analysis to assess the impact of the cross-cultural exchange between hosts and guests, 2006

[87] Pettigrew, T. F ; Tropp, L ; Wagner, R. U. ; Christ, O., Recent advances in intergroup contact theory, 2011

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Unlike theories about attitudes, which only consider the way a person behaves in a certain situation, identity theories also consider in which way people are versatile and how they are affected by the social structure and thereafter behaves a certain way. In addition, a person has many different identities, due to different social relationships. Moreover, a person also has different roles that are in some way connected to the social relationships. Therefore, the identity theory adds a new link that connects individuals with the social structure of the society, a factor that has not been considered in the attitude theories. In other words, it is possible by using the Identity theory to describe the relationship between behaviour and self-identity. In addition, the identity theory is more of a general theory, unlike the attitude theories, due to the fact that it is possible, by using the identity theory, to explain a range of behaviours during different situations.[95] A study about this matter was performed by Sirakaya-Turk, Nyaupane and Uysal in Turkey, following a group of German tourists travelling to Turkey, in order to find out whether tourism has a positive impact in helping reduce prejudice. The majority of the tourists travelling to Turkey are Germans and the all-inclusive resorts are a major attraction for them. However, this has proved to have a negative impact on the tourism industry and policymakers, due to the fact that there are negative perceptions of all-inclusive German tourists. When interviewing the tourists post trip, the results showed that the trip had a negative impact on them and their attitudes towards their host had not improved positively. The results did not support the assumption that tourism help reduce prejudice in all cases.[96]

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4. RESULTS

This chapter begins with an account of interactions between tourists and local residents that were observed during the field study. Thereafter descriptions of social- and economic gaps and finally tourist- and local resident behaviour are presented. The descriptions are mostly kept brief, since some of the observations will be discussed more in detail in the next analysis chapter.

4.1 Interactions between tourists and local residents

The most basic rule for positive interactions, that is apparent both through observations and informal interviews, is that if the tourists are showing a positive attitude and a mannerly behaviour towards the local residents, the local residents will show a positive attitude back at the tourists, and the other way around. As one of the tourists said during an informal interview: *"Most of the Thai people are very nice. As long as you are nice to them they will be nice to you.* The tourist then continues by stating that "*Although if you behave rude or violently they will gather up against you and then you are lucky if you get out alive..."* However no violent actions were observed to prove this last statement.

4.1.1 Interactions between tourists and taxi drivers

A pattern has been shown observing the taxi drivers in Koh Tao. By the pier and around the central area of Mae Haad, the taxi drivers are working hard in order to receive customers. During the time when the boats arrive from other islands, the taxi drivers are standing by the pier and trying to get the tourists to pick their taxi. The phrases "*Taxi hello?! Taxi car?! Taxi boat?!"* are continuously repeated. In addition, when the tourists are walking around the central area of Mae Haad, the taxi drivers once again try to get the tourists to take a taxi. This has led to the tourists ignoring the taxi drivers, due to the fact that that is the only way to be left alone. This causes some tensions between the tourists and the taxi drivers, making the tourists feel annoyed. For example at one time a driver was trying to convince two tourists to take his taxi and they started to shout back and doing big gestures to show that they were really not interested. These tourists were clearly annoyed by the driver, but their behaviour may still be perceived as rude. The same pattern can be seen in the small shops and in some restaurants, which will be explained in further detail later on.

4.1.2 Interactions at restaurants

One pattern emerging rather early during the observations is that the foreign tourists seems to be preferring restaurants with focus on Italian and French food. Those restaurants seem to be more popular and crowded than restaurants specialised on Thai food. However, there seem to be no pattern regarding the service quality at the western restaurants as compared to the Thai restaurant. The service vary quite a lot among all of the restaurants, for example at one of the western restaurants the personnel is very friendly and service minded, while at a Thai restaurant near by, the personnel is not so service minded. This also accounts for the two French restaurants at Mae Haad, at one of them the service is excellent, while at the other one it is non-existent. For example, at the French restaurant where the service is quite poor, the customers have to wait for quite a long time to receive the menu. It was observed when visiting this French restaurant, that two tourists had been waiting for a long time to place an order and they were looking around for the waitress and seemed to be quite annoyed. In addition, some of the waitresses working in this French restaurant rarely smiles and seem to believe that there is no need to hurry. At the restaurants with good service there is a nice atmosphere and both the tourists and the service personnel seem to have a positive attitude towards each other, while at the restaurants with poorer service there are often signs of irritation among the tourists. The causing factor for irritation seems to be mostly long waiting time.

4.1.3 Communication

It has been quite obvious that there is a communication problem between the tourists and the local residents. This can be observed in restaurants and shops for example. The local residents do not speak English very well, making it a problem especially when the tourists need to ask them something. For example, when placing an order in restaurants it has proved to be difficult to ask them about the menu, due to the fact that they do not speak that much English. Furthermore, regarding the communication between tourists and local residents, it has been obvious that the local residents do not always understand what the tourists are saying, but this has not proven to be a major problem. However, sometimes the local residents respond even when not understanding what the tourist has said. An example of that happened to one tourist at a Thai restaurant. When the tourist asked the waiter *"What is in the spring rolls?"* The waiter simply answered *"Yes"*, which seemed to make the tourist feel a bit awkward and tried to ask the question in another way. Another waiter at the restaurant noticed the situation and came up to the table and was able to answer the tourist's question. In addition, when a problem in a restaurant regarding an order occurs it has been observed that the tourists often tell the waiter or waitress that it is okay even though they received the wrong dish for example. This is causing some annoyance and awkward situations among the tourists.

4.1.4 Informal encounters

During informal encounters the atmosphere seems a bit different than during formal encounters. In formal situations the local residents are often very service minded and accommodating, while the informal situations show that the local residents seems to think that they should be prioritised over the tourists. For example at 7 Eleven, where both local residents and tourists are frequent customers, local residents do in several cases penetrate the queue to get service before the tourists. This causes some tensions since this is obviously irritating some tourists. At one time a tourist tells the local resident that it was her turn and that she was in a hurry and then the local resident apologises and says that she did not mean to be rude and let the tourist pay for her articles first. However, a few times when there are only local residents waiting to pay they still do not queue. For example at one time a local lady is waiting for the customer before her to finish the payment when another local lady steps forward and starts to put her articles on the desk. However the other lady does not seem particularly annoyed, but lets the other lady pay first.

One observed informal situation is at Sairee Beach at night. This is an area with a lot of bars and nightclubs, where a few of the local residents are partying together with the tourists. The crowd seems to be in the ages of 18 to 30. In the club the atmosphere is very relaxed and informal and it seems as if everybody is drinking quite a lot.

Another example of an informal encounter is at the sport bar near Mae Haad pier, where both local residents and tourists gather to watch British football. The enthusiasm seems to be the same among the local residents as among the tourists and everybody seem to be cheering for the same team; Manchester United. For example when Manchester United scores a goal the whole crowd in the bar rises up and cheers. The crowd consists mostly of younger men. However, the local residents and the tourists do not seem to seek contact with each other. The local residents are sitting in one group at one table while the tourists sit together in their own groups.

4.2 Economic- and social gaps

4.2.1 Standard of living

One visible economic- and social gap that has been observed is the fact that some of the local residents live in simple, shed-alike homes. For example next to a hotel there is a local family living in a shed-alike home made of tarpaulins, with one bed inside. This creates a social gap, due to the fact that the tourists stay in nice hotels right among the local resident's homes. However, there seem to be no all-inclusive resorts in Koh Tao. Another social gap that has been visible is the fact that the local residents who work at restaurants, shops and other, seem to bring their children to work. For example at many of the restaurants there are children playing and watching TV while their parents are working. At one restaurant the authors noticed that one of the waitresses was studying with her child in between waitressing. Furthermore, many of the restaurants are open from early morning till late night and are therefore serving both breakfast and dinner. It has been observed that the personnel in these restaurants are working many hours a day, since there is always the same personnel no matter what time you visit the restaurant. Sometimes the owner is also seen at the restaurants. This shows that the personnel are working long hours almost every day. For example at some of the restaurants and also at one hotel there is the same personnel working every day during the eight weeks field study.

4.2.2 Cultural celebration

During the Thai New Year's celebration (Songkran), the Thais have a tradition where everyone soaks each other in water. This was something almost every tourist seemed to enjoy as they engaged in this tradition. With the tourists participating in this tradition it seems as it has become more of a tourist attraction rather than the authentic cultural tradition it once was. For example, many of the tourists bought water pistols and splashed water on everybody walking by. It was also observed that young children had their own water pistols and engaged in this tradition. In addition, some tourists who were driving by soaked the people sitting in restaurants in water, which was not appreciated by them.

4.2.3 Foreign business owners

Many of the local diving business and also most of the more expensive restaurants are owned by foreigners. For example one of the most popular restaurants on the island is French and the restaurant's chef is from France. Another popular and more expensive restaurant is Italian, with a foreign owner. The diving shops and instructors are from a plurality of different countries, for instance Sweden, France, Great Britain and Germany. Only one of the many diving schools seems to be owned by a local resident.

4.3 Tourist behaviour

When observing the tourist behaviour it is obvious that they are on vacation, with many of them consuming alcohol during daytime and walking around in bathing suit and barefoot. Many of the tourists travelling to Koh Tao are backpackers or divers. It is quite easy to recognise them, since the divers are usually walking around in wetsuits and the backpackers are carrying big backpacks. In addition, the backpackers are usually seen with other backpackers and the same goes for the divers. When observing a British bar, there were a lot of British tourists in there watching football and the waitress seemed to be annoyed rather than friendly. The tourists were quite enthusiastic and expressed their feelings in a rather loud way. For example, when a goal was made or when something negative happened the tourists stood up and screamed in excitement or despair. The atmosphere among the customers in the bar was positive but it seemed to be quite tiring for the waitress.

A lot of the tourists are renting mopeds during their stay at Koh Tao, which contributes to a lot of traffic. Just like among the local residents, there seem to be no concern for safety among the tourists that drives the mopeds. Almost no one is seen wearing a helmet and the majority is driving at a very high speed. It seems as if the tourists are contributing to the majority of the traffic at the island. However, the business of moped leasing seems to be rewarding since there are many local shops renting out mopeds and also quadricycles.

4.4 The host community

Over all the local residents seem to have a positive attitude towards the tourists. Most of them smiles towards the tourists and also greets them with *"hello", "good morning"* or *"good evening"*, both in formal and informal situations. Since most of the tourists smile back and responds, this creates a positive atmosphere.

Almost everyone within the local community seems to be working within the tourist industry. Aside from the obvious tourist businesses such as travel agencies, the customers at the local restaurants and shops are almost exclusively tourists. Even the real estate businesses seem to be focusing advertising towards tourists. The shops are for example most selling souvenirs, party clothes and beachwear, things that the local residents are never seen buying.

At almost every restaurant, hotel and guesthouse free wifi is available for customers. This service is diligently used by customers, who often bring their computers or phones to restaurants in order to use the internet. For example at many times customers are observed using Facebook and Skype. Also the fact that internet connection is available almost everywhere at the island is a positive effect for the local infrastructure.

During conversations with local residents at Koh Tao it becomes obvious that the community is small and that everybody knows everybody at the island. Also, people trust each other and there do not seem to be any worries about crime. According to one person employed in the tourist business there is no need to worry about criminal behaviour within the community, since nobody who is permanently living on the island would engage in this kind of behaviour. During an informal interview one of the local residents tell us that *"you do not need to worry about getting anything stolen here at Koh Tao. Everybody knows everybody so there are no thieves at the island."* However, since the tourists coming and going are strangers, they do not trust them in the same way, even though it does not seem as crime is common among the tourists either. One example regarding the trust within the community at Koh Tao is the observation of people often leaving their mopeds standing with the key in the lock outside shops and restaurants. There seem to be no worries about the vehicle being stolen. Furthermore a local resident explains that most of the Thai people and local residents at Koh Tao prefer to live simple and that there is a norm to live humble and not to possess unnecessary luxury goods.

The local residents seem to love when the tourists bring their children to restaurants. It has been observed that when there is a family with young children, the waitresses and waiters seem to enjoy it quite a lot. Many of them talks to the children and picks them up, which creates a good atmosphere among the customers and the personnel at the restaurant. For example at one time when two parents were at a restaurant together with their one-year old the personnel at the restaurants played with the child until the parents had finished their dinner. It seems as if the parents, the child and the personnel were equally happy about this.

Furthermore, it has been observed that many of the local residents seem to have a pretty good standard of living, especially since the island is situated in a developing country. This is based on the fact that the infrastructure is well developed, there is good access to water and many of

the local residents seem to own smartphones, ipads and mopeds. It was rare to see any of the local residents walk, even for very short distances they went by mopeds.

Koh Tao is surrounded by coral reefs and the environment is fragile. It has been observed that this is something that the community is aware of. There are many information boards about this matter and what people can do in order to preserve the environment at Koh Tao. Both local residents and divers are sometimes also seen wearing t-shirts with the words *"Rescue Koh Tao"* to promote the importance of keeping the island clean and decrease the use of plastic bottles and plastic bags.

5. ANALYSIS

In this chapter the results that appeared during the observations will be examined in-depth and discussed in relation to the theoretical framework. Firstly the information that appeared during observations and informal interviews will be analysed. Thereafter deeper reflections regarding possible perceptions among the local residents as the authors are trying to take on the perspective of the local residents.

5.1 Economic-, sociocultural- and environmental impacts

At Koh Tao there is no obvious indication of the fact that the island is part of a developing country. As mentioned earlier the infrastructure is developed and most of the local residents seem to own smartphones, ipads and mopeds. This may be a positive effect from the tourism industry, which have contributed both to jobs and infrastructure. During the observations it was noted that most of the local residents at Koh Tao are somehow employed within the tourist industry, working at restaurants, souvenir shops or as taxi drivers for example. In addition to the obvious tourist businesses, such as diving- and snorkeling businesses, the restaurants as well as the local shops seem to be focusing a lot at tourists. This does seem natural, since there are only about 3500 people living permanently at Koh Tao, whereas there are over 100 000 tourists visiting the island every year. Therefore the tourists do of course amount to a much bigger number of potential buyers. According to the social exchange theory, the more the tourist contributes to a destinations' economic development, the more positive is the attitude towards tourists within the host community. Most of the local residents at Koh Tao are involved in businesses that are depending on the tourist income which, in consistence with previous findings within the social exchange theory as well as TPB, seems to be the most important factor for the overall positive attitude toward tourists within the community. The tourism inflow at Koh Tao also seems to have contributed to development of the infrastructure. At most of the hotels, guesthouses and restaurants there are free wifi available, a service appreciated by the tourists since they like to use the internet in order to use Facebook or Skype. Also there are boats arriving at and departing from Koh Tao several times a day. The ferry traffic are mainly used by tourists and only a few local residents, therefore this service would probably not be economically feasible without the tourist inflow.

However, the environmental factor is probably in some ways negatively affected by the high number of arriving tourists. As mentioned earlier, previous researches regarding island destinations establish that a high number of people in a limited area, such as islands, are often associated with negative environmental impacts. This is highly relevant when it comes to Koh Tao, since the area consists of a fragile environment. However, efforts to protect the local environment are visible, for example information about the fragile coral reefs and codes of

conducts are spread by information boards. This do probably lower the negative environmental impacts due to tourism, although littering in the form of cigarette butts and some trash are notable. Still, the overall value that the tourism industry provides the island residents seems to be perceived to outweigh the potential environmental problems.

Furthermore, according to the TPB a social impact that may negatively affect the overall attitude towards tourists among the local residents is if the tourist contributes to heavy traffic. This seems to be the case at Koh Tao, since a lot of the tourists are driving mopeds. However, a lot of the local residents are making money by leasing mopeds to tourists. There are many bike rental businesses spread out around the island and the service seems to be very popular among the tourists. Therefore it is probable that the economic benefits to the tourist driving mopeds are valued higher than the negative social- and environmental effects. According to TPB, if some of the local residents are financially dependent on the moped leasing among tourists and therefore have a considered positive attitude towards the increased traffic, this may also affect the attitude among other local residents. This is according to TPB because of the normative beliefs, which means that individuals may adapt their behaviour depending on the perceptions of their significant others. Therefore if the local residents who are not themselves involved in the moped businesses perceive that their friends or family would be negatively affected by a decrease in moped leasings, they might think that their significant others' well being is more important than any negative attitude they might have themselves towards the traffic. However it is possible that not all of the local residents are positive to the increased traffic, even if any indications of this have not been observed during this study.

Koh Tao is an example of a small island destination where tourism plays a big part in the destination's economy. Nunkoo and Gursoy describes how some researchers argue that many smaller island destinations usually depend on tourism, which leads to culture changes as well as social- and environmental problems. At Koh Tao, there are many western restaurants, such as Italian and French, which is an example of the tourism industry's impact on the destination. In addition, the culture is quite similar to the European, due to these restaurants and the way of living. A problem with dependency is the fact that it is possible for the island to lose their social identity, which is quite obvious here at Koh Tao. The society is almost entirely based on tourism and it is hard to imagine what Koh Tao looked like before the tourists arrived. But it is obvious that it looked quite different compared to what it looks like now. This can also be likened with the culture change that might occur due to many tourists travelling to Koh Tao.

5.2 Tourist behaviour, local resident behaviour and gaps

According to TPB, if a person perceives a behaviour as positive and if the person's significant others are believed to see the behaviour as positive, this behaviour will be encouraged. Since

tourism has had positive effects on the local community at Koh Tao, most people do probably believe that being nice to the tourist is a positive behaviour. Also, there seem to be a norm within the community to treat the tourists well and to contribute to a positive destination image. In consistence with the TPB this seems to affect the subjective norms among the local residents, causing the intention of being nice towards the tourists and thereby a positive behaviour. However, the level of local control over the tourism businesses seems to vary. Many of the diving schools as well as the luxury restaurants at Koh Tao are owned by foreigners. This may affect the control belief, which will in turn affect the perceived behavioural control and have a negative effect on the behavioural intention. Yet, the personnel at the luxury restaurants do not seem to hold any grudge against the tourists. Instead, the atmosphere at these places is often friendly.

Another explanation for the overall positive relationship between tourists and local residents at Koh Tao is that the destinations has not yet reached the consolidation step in Butler's TALC-model. Koh Tao seem to still be in the beginning of the development stage, since the tourism may not be accounted for as small-scale any longer, but there are still no large companies or resorts at the island. According to Diedrich's and García-Buades's model of the relationship between TALC and the local perceptions of tourism impact, this stage is where the local resident's attitudes towards tourists are the most positive. According to the study performed by Sirakaya-Turk, Nyaupane and Uysal regarding German tourists travelling to Turkey, it was clear the there was a poor perception of these Germans in Turkey. This was due to the fact that the German tourists travelling to Turkey usually stay at all-inclusive resorts which gives the local residents a bad image of them. In Koh Tao there seem to be no all-inclusive resorts, mostly hostels and smaller hotels. This is probably because of the fact that Koh Tao is a rather small island and also because there are a lot of backpackers travelling to Koh Tao and they usually prefer to live cheap. As described earlier the main reason for a positive attitude towards tourism at Koh Tao seems to be the perceived economic advantages. If larger foreign companies and all-inclusive resorts were established at the island this would probably mean a decreasing support for local businesses, for example fewer tourists would probably be visiting local restaurants. This would mean that the perceived economic benefits among the local residents would probably drastically decrease, which would then have a negative effect regarding the attitude towards tourism. Therefore, it is most likely positive for Koh Tao not to have any all-inclusive resorts, since that could possibly give the local resident's a bad image of the tourists, like in the case of the Germans travelling to Turkey. In addition, according to the study the Germans did not either have a good image of the local residents which therefore did not help reduce prejudice. In Koh Tao the tourists seem to have a good connection with the local residents and it is probably for the best that the all-inclusive resorts do not establish themselves in Koh Tao, not only due to environmental impacts but also due to the social factors, in order to maintain the good atmosphere.

When travelling to tourist destinations around the world, one automatically becomes a tourist. According to the Identity theory one's identity affects how one behaves. When being a tourist it has been quite obvious here at Koh Tao, that one behaves just like one. Different type of tourists has been observed. Many backpackers are travelling to Koh Tao and most of them seem to identify themselves as backpackers. It has been observed that some backpackers are walking around with a beer in their hand and sometimes barefoot. In addition, these backpackers are interacting with other backpackers, so it seems as if they feel a connection with other backpackers, because they have just that in common. These people does most likely not behave the same way when they are in their own country, which is consistent with the Identity theory that claims that people have different identities depending on the situation. Furthermore, many tourists travelling to Koh Tao, come here to go diving. It is quite easy to see who are divers, due to the fact that they are always wearing diving clothes and interacting with other divers. In addition, just like the backpackers, the divers are identifying themselves as divers and it is obvious that diving is almost all they do while staying at Koh Tao. According to the Identity theory a person has different identities due to different social relationships. The backpackers and divers mentioned above are examples of different social relationships, meaning relationships with different groups of people. This is making these people behave a certain way due to the fact that they have different roles when interacting in different social relationships. Furthermore, the Identity theory claims that one gets affected by the social structure, which is another way to explain the reason the backpackers as well as the divers behave the way they do. One gets affected by different situations and adapts to the situation in order to fit in.

5.3 Interactions between local residents and tourists

Since almost all of the local residents at the island greets the tourists with smiles and a *"hello",* the impression is that there is a positive and welcoming attitude towards the tourists. Also the tourists usually respond in the same way, which contribute to a friendly and nice atmosphere at the destination. As described in the previous chapter if one of the parties are showing a nice and friendly behaviour, the other party will most likely respond in the same way.

In Koh Tao the tourists and the local residents are in contact almost all the time, since most of the local residents work within the tourism industry in some way. According to the study performed by Pettigrew and Tropp using the Intergroup contact theory, greater contact among different groups leads to less prejudice. However, when observing the tourist's behaviour in Koh Tao, it is quite obvious that they almost become tourist stereotypes. It has been noted that a lot of tourists seem to be consuming alcohol during the day and walking around in bathing suits and sometimes barefoot. This does not seem to annoy the local residents, but it could

possibly give them the image that all tourists behave this certain way. Therefore, in this case greater contact does not seem to lead to better understandings and less prejudice, but it does not create hostility between the two parties. However, there was a British bar in the area where they showed British football. In this bar there were a lot of British people, who were drinking quite a lot. When observing the waitress it was pretty clear that she were not too excited about this matter. She was not very friendly towards anyone and seemed to be quite annoyed. That was one exception where the local resident seemed to be annoyed with the tourists, rather than friendly as the local residents usually are. That was also an example of how greater contact does not seem to lead to better understanding. However, one should bear in mind that this occurred during nighttime and with alcohol involved, which most likely does not only annoy Thai people working in bars, but rather is a common tension in bars around the world.

Regarding the New Year's celebration, with a water-splash-tradition, there seemed to be a connection between the local residents and the tourists. With the tourists engaging in the water-splash-tradition, it seemed as if there was a good atmosphere between the two parties. This was a good example of intergroup contact between the local residents and the tourists. These types of events do in some way make it feel less authentic but at the same time draws people together. As mentioned before regarding the Intergroup contact theory greater contact leads to less prejudice. These types of events where the local residents interact with tourists on the same level, could possibly create an even better atmosphere among them, making the social gap less visible. According to previous findings in theories of the tourist experience it is of importance to retain the authenticity of a destination in order to gain the tourists satisfaction. In this study however, the tourists seem to be very excited about the New Year's celebrations, even though it has obviously lost some of its authenticity.

Unlike the results displayed in the study performed by Ward and Berno, where people who work within the tourism industry in a developed country are generally more positive towards tourists, unlike the people in a developing country. The observations in Koh Tao, which is part of a developing country, showed that the people working within the tourism industry are generally positive towards tourists. After observing the behavior between the two parties it seems as if the atmosphere is quite positive and that the local residents have a positive attitude towards the tourists, which is explained further through the social exchange theory mentioned above.

5.4 Tensions between tourists and local residents

Tensions between local residents and tourists seem to be occurring in situations where cultural differences and language barriers are visible. For example at the local store where both local

residents and tourists are shopping, tensions often occur because the tourists get annoyed with the local residents since they do not queue to the cashier, but instead seem to believe that whoever puts up their articles at the counter first should also be the one to pay first. However, since the local residents do not only penetrate the queue to pay before tourists but also before other local residents, this does not seem to be an act of disrespect against the tourists but more of a cultural difference. In some situations when the tourists who are in the queue get angry with the local resident who they believe are intruding the local resident seems to be very apologetic.

Furthermore tensions are quite often notable in situations at restaurants, hotels and shops when language barriers make it difficult for the local residents and tourist to understand each other. For example at restaurants if a tourist wants to make a change to his or her order or want to order something special, the language barriers often lead to the tourist settling for something else that is easier to explain. These language barriers do cause awkward situations, tensions and dissatisfaction. It may also inhibit the level of contact between tourist and local resident, since they might avoid longer conversations with each other.

These factors that lead to misunderstandings and therefore cause negative encounters are clarified in the model shown below.
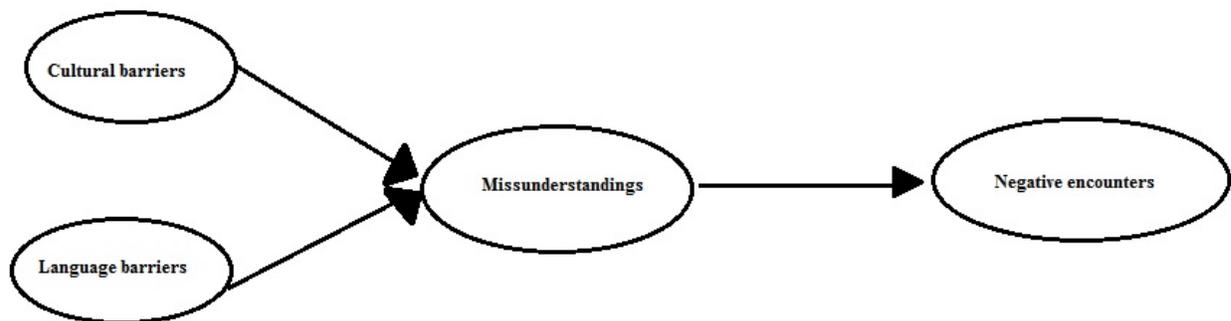

Figure 2. A model of negative encounters developed during this study by the authors.

In order to turn these cultural differences and language barriers into something positive, where both the local residents and the tourists may learn something from the interactions and in accordance with the intergroup contact theory obtain a positive experience and reduce prejudice, it is important that both groups are aware of the differences. The language barriers are probably already pretty obvious to all involved parties, but the cultural differences are more subtle. This also appears during the observations of these situations, since the language barrier does seldom cause annoyance with the other party, but more annoyance with the situation. In the negative encounters caused by cultural differences however, the misunderstanding seems more likely to cause irritation and even anger. This is probably because the involved parties might not be aware of the fact that the situation is caused by a

misunderstanding, but interpret the behaviour as disrespectful. Therefore, it might be of benefit for the tourist destination if the local residents were well aware of cultural differences that might appear in encounters with the tourists. This may be something that the business involved in the tourist industry could take into account. Of course it would be favorable if the tourists were also aware of these barriers when visiting the destination, even if awareness among the tourists might be harder to achieve. As a suggestion information about local culture could be disseminated for example through local guide books. The language barrier could also be lowered by language studies. For example the tourist businesses at the destination could provide language courses for their employees.

Since this study shows that tensions between the local residents and the tourists are linked to cultural- and linguistic barriers, it is possible that the amount of tensions could be reduced by reducing these barriers. By creating awareness and knowledge of cultural- and language barriers it is possible that these could be lowered and that the amount of misunderstandings could be reduced. This discussion is supported by previous researches within the TPB, that shows that there is a connection between the education level among local residents and their attitude towards tourist. Previous researches have concluded that a high level of education leads to a more positive attitude towards tourists. If the level of awareness and knowledge where increased, misunderstandings could be avoided. This is shown in the below model.
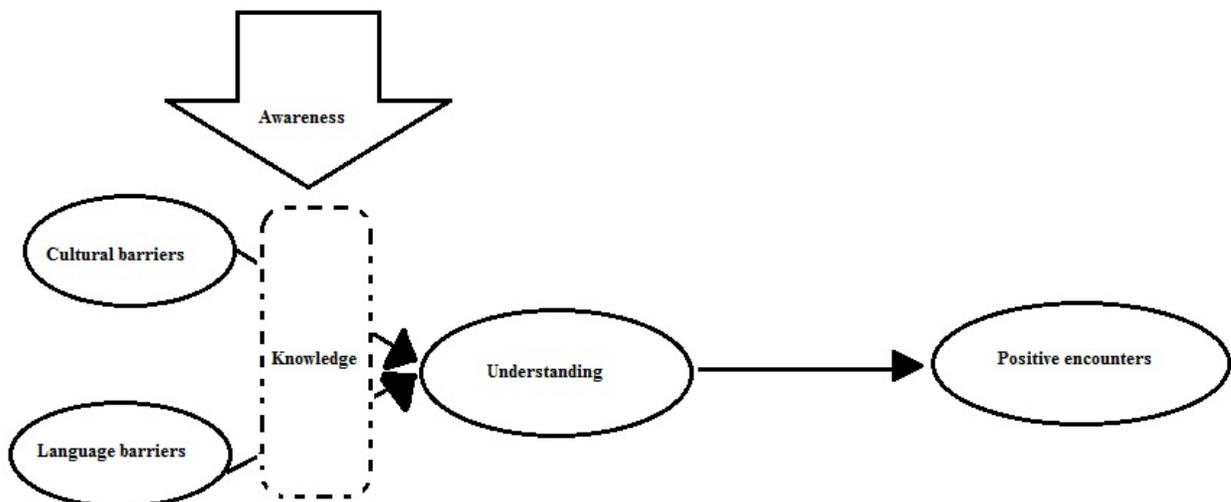

Figure 3. *A possible model of positive encounters developed during this study by the authors.*

This study has not shown any indications of social- or economic gaps being a causing factor to tensions between local residents and tourists, which previous researches referred to in the first chapter have shown. However a possible explanation regarding the fact that the observed tensions in this study could not be linked to gaps is that the local residents at Koh Tao seem to have a relatively high standard of living, why there are no major gaps visible.

5.5 Formal- and informal encounters

5.5.1 Formal encounters

Both the taxi drivers and the personnel of local shops and travel agencies are quite assertive with the tourists. By calling and sometimes even following the tourists they are trying to persuade the tourists to buy their products. This seems to be bothering the tourists and creates a tense atmosphere, especially near the pier. This may be due to the fact that the local residents may be personally depending on the income from the tourists buying their product, leading them to try their best to convince every potential customer of paying for their product. The tourists on the other hand, may not be used to this kind of offensive selling and also sometimes seem to be irritated by the locals' ignorance of their non-interest. However, when tourists are visiting the shops, taking a snorkeling trip or take a taxi, the atmosphere seem to be changing. In these situations most of the local residents are acting very service minded and humble and most of the tourists are acting nicely. The explanation for this change of atmosphere may be that the local residents have already sold the product and therefore have secured their income for the moment, while the tourist have already decided to buy the product and are in a good mood since they are enjoying their experience.

5.5.2 Informal encounters

During informal situations where neither of the parties are interested in any kind of exchange, the atmosphere becomes neutral or positive. For example, when observing the tourists and the Thai people visiting the British Bar near Mae Haad pier, the atmosphere was positive. During this situation everyone was at the same page and just came there to enjoy the football or to hang out. This is an example of an informal situation where neither the tourists nor the local residents want anything from one another, making the atmosphere positive and also a situation with common goals. Another kind of informal situation where both the local residents and the tourists are on the same level is when they are interacting at a nightclub for example. It was obvious when observing a nightclub by Sairee Beach that there was a good and relaxed atmosphere between the local residents and the tourists with both parties partying together.

5.6 Putting oneself in the situation of the local residents

Regarding the fact that there is quite a big difference in how the tourists are living and how some of the local residents are living, annoyance among the local residents have not been visible. However, it is important to be able to look at it from their perspective. Understanding

and respecting another group of people, is a key factor in order to create a good atmosphere among the tourists and the local residents, One of the four conditions stated by Allport in the Intergroup contact theory, to achieve less prejudice was "equal status within a certain situation". When there is this kind of social as well as economic gap between the two parties it could be difficult to achieve equal status within a situation. Therefore, it is possible that the positive attitude towards the tourists might not be as positive as it seems. Because when trying to see the situation from their perspective, it cannot be an ideal situation. However, the local residents are aware of the fact that they rely on the tourists, which is probably why they feel like they need to have a positive attitude towards them. One must not forget, however, that this may not be the case for every local resident, but it is something that needs to be stressed in order to achieve understanding. During an informal conversation one local resident also described that the local residents at Koh Tao appreciates a simple lifestyle and that they are not interested in luxurious possessions. According to the informant this is a norm within the local community. This may not account for all of the local residents, but taken into account that this may be a part of the local culture this could also be a possible explanation to why the differences in lifestyle between tourists and local residents do not seem to cause tensions. Reconnecting to TPB the reason why there are no obvious indications of jealousy or negative behaviour among the local residents might be because they perceive that they are expected to live a simple life and not endeavour to achieve luxury.

Another social and economic gap that has been observed is the fact that the local residents seem to bring their children to work. This is an example of a social gap, but it has proved to create a positive atmosphere, since many tourists are smiling and waving at the children. Therefore, it becomes a rather positive atmosphere when there are children in the picture. In addition, the local residents seem to love when the tourists bring their young children or babies to the restaurants for example. This shows that the excitement for babies is mutual which creates a good atmosphere.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter will begin with a concise answer to the purpose. Thereafter the three questions that were formed based on the purpose will be presented and answered more in detail. Finally some further conclusions that were formed during the study will be presented.

The purpose of this essay was to study the relationship between tourists and local residents in a developing country in order to examine what kind of tensions were visible between the two parties. Also the aim was to understand why tensions may occur and if they were linked to social- or economic gaps. To sum up the conclusions the overall relationship between tourists and local residents is positive. Some tensions are visible, such as annoyance and awkwardness. However, these tensions seem to occur due to misunderstandings rather than as an effect of social- or economic gaps.

What kind of behavior between tourists and local residents are observable?
The overall behaviour between tourists and local residents is positive. Both the tourists and locals are mostly showing a polite behaviour towards each other and the atmosphere at the island is friendly and welcoming. When tensions do occur, most often this does not seem to be an effect of negative behaviour, but rather due to misunderstandings.

During what kind of situations do tensions between tourists and local residents occur?
The situations where tensions between local residents and tourists have been visible are during formal encounters, mostly at restaurants and at the local shop. The causing factor to tensions that have been observed during this study is misunderstandings, which seem to be caused by language barriers or cultural differences.

Are any kind of indications of social- and economic gaps between tourists and local residents visible?
Indications of social- and economic gaps are visible and include long working hours and more primitive living standards among some of the local residents, while tourists are on vacation and often stay at nice hotels and bungalows near the beach. However, these gaps do not appear to cause visible tensions or a negative attitude towards tourists among the local residents.

6.1 So, is there trouble in paradise?

Finally, the conclusion is that the overall relationship between tourists and the local residents is positive. The main contributing factor to the positive attitude among the local residents toward tourists is most likely the economic benefits that the tourist industry means, since most of the local residents at Koh Tao seem to be financially dependent on tourist inflow. Also a fundamental rule for positive interactions between tourists and local residents seem to be that if the tourists are nice to the local residents the local residents will be nice back to the tourists, and the other way around. Furthermore the island of Koh Tao is still not overexposed to tourism, for example no all-inclusive resorts are established. This may be one possible explanation for the positive attitude. However, if the tourism industry continues to grow this may become a problem in the future, since overexposure may negatively affect the local residents' attitude towards tourists.

The conclusions in this essay are consistent with previous findings within the social exchange theory and the TPB. However, as described in the first chapter of this essay previous researches have shown that social- and economic gaps can cause tensions between tourists and local residents, especially at island destinations. The conclusions of this study do not confirm this but rather indicates that tensions are caused by cultural- and linguistic barriers. Yet, an explanation for this may be that no major social- or economic gaps were observed at Koh Tao.

7. CLOSING DISCUSSION

In this final chapter problems regarding the methodology approach that appeared during the study are identified and discussed. Also suggestions for future research are presented.

7.1 Critical elements

As mentioned above the two groups that were observed, the tourists and the local residents, may have seen the authors differently. The tourists may have seen the authors as "one of them", while the local residents saw the authors as outsiders. This is an important factor that the authors tried to keep in mind throughout the observation and also the analysis, since it may have affected the amount of information received from both groups. Since there was a language barrier between the local residents and the authors it was difficult to keep any long conversations with most of the local residents. These conversations were conducted in English and did often include many repeats and also misunderstandings, which meant that it was hard to get any useful data from these conversations. Therefore a deficiency in this study was obviously the fact that the authors did not speak Thai. The language barrier also accounted for some of the tourists, since some of them were not very good at English. Therefore most of the informal interviews were conducted with Swedish tourists or with employees within the tourist industry that spoke some English. On the other hand these interviews were also very rewarding. Furthermore the authors understanding of Thai traditions and culture are limited, which may also have contributed to misinterpretations during the study.

Some of the information that appeared during the informal interviews was facts or stories about incidents that the authors had not seen for themselves. Therefore this kind of information should be seen as the perceiving of the informant and not as hard facts. Still, the prospect is that these stories would help the authors to understand the relationship between tourists and local residents on a deeper level.

It was previously stated that more than one observer may increase the reliability of the study. However, the two authors in this study are from the same culture and have a similar world view. This is probably why the authors perceived most of the observations in the same way during the field study. Still, more than one observer opens up for discussion which has been an important part in this study.

7.2 Future research

Koh Tao may be a good example of the fact that the tourism industry is of high importance for developing countries, since the standard of living seem high compared to the fact that Thailand is still a developing country. Therefore future research studying how the tourism industry has affected the standard of living within the host community would be interesting and of importance for other developing countries. Also, further research regarding the relationship between local residents and tourists in other developing countries would be interesting in order to broadening the perspective and to complement this study. Especially an examination of the connection between cultural- and linguistic barriers and tensions in-depth and at other tourist destinations would be of interest.

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