

Shared Indonesia–Malaysia Identity and Cultural Openness as Strategic Communication: An Experimental Study among Malay-Malaysian Professionals

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ABSTRACT

Although regional mobility and immigrant animosity persist, Indonesia and Malaysia offer renewed opportunities for fostering cross-border tourism. This study examines how communication strategies centred on a shared Indonesia–Malaysia identity and cultural openness can reduce immigrant animosity and encourage creative tourism engagement among the majority group—Malay-Malaysian professionals. Grounded in Social Identity Theory and strategic communication as a purposive, identity-framing process, a one-way between-subjects experimental design was employed with 94 Malay-Malaysian professionals ($N = 94$). The experimental group received a stimulus highlighting shared cultural, religious, and linguistic heritage, while the control group engaged in a neutral reflection task. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM-AMOS) revealed that promoting a shared identity significantly reduced perceptions of immigrant population threat and animosity ($\beta = -0.322$, $p = 0.027$, 95% CI [-0.695, -0.002]), subsequently decreasing the avoidance of Indonesian creative village tourism products ($R^2 = .70$). Cultural openness amplified this effect ($\beta = -0.222$, $p = 0.032$, 95% CI [-1.463, -0.045]), while perceived authenticity communication did not significantly moderate the relationships. These findings offer fresh insights into how identity-based and culturally empathetic communication can strengthen tourism marketing strategies. Theoretically, these findings advance integrating Social Identity Theory into strategic tourism communication, elucidating how majority-group identity narratives operate through threat and animosity mechanisms to reduce behavioural avoidance. Practically, the results provide strategic guidance for tourism marketers and policymakers by demonstrating that identity-based appeals must be coupled with the cultivation of cultural openness to generate sustainable creative tourism products.

Keywords: *Experimental design, Malay-Malaysian professionals, Social Identity Theory, shared Indonesia–Malaysia identity, strategic tourism communication.*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia and Malaysia stand among Southeast Asia's most culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse nations, offering a complex yet fertile ground for advancing cross-border tourism. While this diversity is rich in cultural capital, it simultaneously presents challenges in cultivating mutual understanding and sustained collaboration. Despite sharing profound historical, linguistic, and religious ties, cross-border engagement between Indonesia and Malaysia is often hindered by underlying tensions. Negative perceptions of Indonesian migrant workers, fuelled by media bias and political rhetoric, continue to reinforce immigrant animosity among segments of the Malaysian mainstream population (Yoong & Lee, 2023). Such animosity perpetuates stereotypes that entrench social distance and create psychological barriers to tourism participation.

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Forging a shared Indonesia-Malaysia identity presents a strategic opportunity to bridge these divides. Yet, initiatives promoting shared identity are often perceived by dominant group members as threats to cultural purity or social dominance. These perceptions, compounded by persistent stereotypes, pose formidable challenges to regional tourism collaboration. Negative media framing and ethnocentric attitudes frequently exacerbate perceptions of immigrant population threat, further discouraging Malay-Malaysian professionals from engaging with tourism products associated with Indonesian migrant communities (Wan Husin et al., 2022; Chin, 2022; Izhar et al., 2023).

This study explicitly advances two novelties. First, it prioritizes the under-researched majority group perspective, analysing how dominant identity dynamics influence tourism choices. Second, it elucidates a mechanism integrating social identity into strategic tourism communication, specifically demonstrating how threat and animosity serially mediate the link between identity narratives and behavioural avoidance.

Emerging research underscores the pivotal role of identity narratives, particularly those formed through self-uncertainty and nostalgia, in shaping intergroup attitudes within polarized societies (Hogg, 2023; Reyna et al., 2022; Van Assche et al., 2023). In multicultural contexts, strategic communication emphasizing shared identity can mitigate hostility and foster cooperative behaviours. Social Identity Theory by Tajfel and Turner (1986) provides a robust framework for understanding these processes, explaining how in-group and out-group categorizations influence social perception and behaviour. Nonetheless, despite its theoretical promise, practical efforts to forge a shared identity between Indonesia and Malaysia often encounter significant resistance.

Recent scholarship highlights the resilience of negative stereotypes directed toward immigrant populations (DeQuero-Navarro et al., 2022; Fan, 2024). Cultural insecurity, amplified by political discourses and media biases, intensifies immigrant animosity and narrows the emotional space necessary for fostering inclusive tourism (Livingstone et al., 2020). The persistence of "Not in My Backyard" (NIMBY) responses towards immigrant-linked spaces reflects broader societal hesitance to embrace integration narratives (Chin, 2022; Wan Husin et al., 2022). Consequently, Malaysian professionals may consciously or unconsciously avoid tourism products associated with immigrant communities, perceiving them as culturally distant or socially threatening.

Nonetheless, emerging studies suggest that the deliberate promotion of shared cultural foundations such as the Malay language, Islamic heritage, and ancestral customs can bridge cultural gaps when framed authentically and empathetically (Yeoh et al., 2023). Successful identity-framing campaigns have demonstrated the potential to foster positive tourism intentions, reduce intergroup anxiety, and encourage cross-cultural engagement (Mansouri & Jamal Al-Deen, 2023). Authentic communication is crucial in these efforts; contrived or politically charged campaigns often backfire, exacerbating distrust and reinforcing stereotypes (Fan, 2024). "Indonesia's distinctive sociocultural context requires locally adapted communication" (Kriyantono & McKenna, 2017, p. 2).

Despite the theoretical importance of inclusive identity construction, empirical research examining the psychological mechanisms through which shared identity narratives influence tourism behaviour remains limited, particularly in Southeast Asia. While Social Identity Theory has been extensively applied to intergroup relations, its integration into tourism marketing and strategic communication is underdeveloped. Furthermore, limited research explores how cultural openness, the willingness to embrace and value cultural

diversity moderates the effects of shared identity on tourism engagement (Albada et al., 2021; Dedeoglu et al., 2023).

To address these limitations, this study explicitly investigates the following research questions:

RQ1: Does a shared Indonesia–Malaysia identity appeal reduce immigrant threat and animosity?

RQ2: Do reduced threat and animosity decrease the avoidance of Indonesian creative tourism?

RQ3: Does cultural openness moderate the effect of shared identity on tourism avoidance?

RQ4: Does perceived authenticity communication moderate these relationships?

Accordingly, the research objectives are specified in a concise and systematic manner:

- 1) To examine the impact of shared identity appeals on immigrant threat and animosity.
- 2) To test the mediating effects of threat and animosity on tourism avoidance.
- 3) To assess the moderating role of cultural openness.
- 4) To evaluate the moderating role of perceived authenticity communication.

Drawing on Social Identity Theory by Tajfel and Turner (1986), this study links strategic identity framing to tourism avoidance behaviours. Shared language and religion require identity-based tourism marketing.

H1a: Shared identity is negatively associated with the avoidance of creative village tourism products.

H1b: Shared identity is negatively associated with the avoidance of creative city tourism products.

H2a: Immigrant population threat and immigrant animosity mediate the relationship between shared identity and avoidance of creative village tourism products.

H2b: Immigrant population threat and immigrant animosity mediate the relationship between shared identity and avoidance of creative city tourism products.

H3a: Cultural openness significantly moderates the relationship between shared identity and avoidance of creative village tourism products.

H3b: Cultural openness moderates the relationship between shared identity and avoidance of creative city tourism products.

H3c: Perceived authenticity communication moderates the relationship between shared identity and avoidance of creative village and city tourism products.

LITERATURE REVIEW

a. Social Identity Theory and Strategic Communication

Research on shared identity offers valuable insights into how individuals in culturally and linguistically diverse societies develop cooperative intergroup relations. Indonesia and Malaysia present such a context, characterized by overlapping ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. Social Identity Theory (SIT) by Tajfel and Turner (1986) provides the theoretical foundation of this study, explaining how individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups, often leading to in-group preference and out-group bias.

Shared identity communication, a key principle in SIT, can transform perceived intergroup boundaries, allowing out-group members to be reclassified into an expanded in-group (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). When effectively framed through strategic communication, this re-categorisation reduces prejudice, increases cultural openness, and fosters intergroup cooperation (Chen et al., 2024). Strategic communication is defined as a purposeful, identity-shaping process (Fan, 2024) designed to influence behaviour. In tourism, it frames shared heritage and group boundaries beyond simple messaging.

Strategic communication plays a critical role in shaping identity narratives and mitigating immigrant animosity. According to Fan (2024), authenticity, emotional resonance, and audience-centric framing are pivotal to successful identity-based campaigns. In multicultural tourism contexts, these principles ensure that communication interventions are not merely symbolic but capable of shifting deep-seated perceptions. Accordingly, strategic communication is operationalised through experimental stimuli using shared identity, emotional narratives, and authenticity cues.

Recent research emphasizes that promoting inclusive identity narratives improves attitudes toward immigrant communities and stimulates integrative tourism behaviours (Brance et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2024). In Indonesia-Malaysia relations, shared cultural elements such as language, Islam, and ancestral traditions provide a fertile ground for constructing a superordinate identity that supports creative tourism engagement (Yeoh et al., 2023).

b. Shared Identity and Tourism Engagement

Shared identity construction significantly influences tourism engagement. Along the Silk Road, cultural ecosystems have evolved adaptively, highlighting the need to preserve local narratives while increasing tourism and striking a balance between tourism development and cultural heritage protection (Yu et al., 2023). When individuals perceive tourists or immigrants as members of their extended in-group, they are more willing to interact with and appreciate tourism products associated with those groups (Xie et al., 2023; Bazrafshan et al., 2024). However, immigrant-related anxieties and entrenched stereotypes often limit the impact of shared identity narratives. In Malaysia, negative stereotypes toward Indonesian migrant workers are perpetuated by biased media framing, reinforcing perceptions of economic and cultural threats (Yoong & Lee, 2023). Consequently, while shared identity communication may foster solidarity, its ability to overcome avoidance behaviours remains uncertain, particularly when immigrant animosity is deeply rooted. Prior studies on shared identity and tourism form two streams. First, general findings consistently demonstrate that shared identity narratives enhance intercultural attitudes and willingness to engage with tourism products (Yu et al., 2023; Xie et al., 2023). Second, emerging evidence highlights a critical empirical gap: shared identity alone does not consistently translate into reduced avoidance behaviours in contexts characterised by high immigrant-related threat and hostility (Yoong & Lee, 2023). This unresolved tension motivates the formulation of the present hypotheses.

Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a: Shared identity is negatively associated with the avoidance of creative village tourism products.

H1b: Shared identity is negatively associated with the avoidance of creative city tourism products.

c. Immigrant Population Threat and Immigrant Animosity as Mediators

Perceptions of immigrant threat strongly shape intergroup attitudes and behaviours. Immigrants are often perceived as economic competitors or cultural outsiders, leading to heightened animosity and avoidance of tourism products associated with their communities (DeQuero-Navarro et al., 2022; Duman, 2023).

Shared identity communication, by emphasizing common heritage, has the potential to reduce these perceptions of threat (Freitag & Hofstetter, 2022; Garand et al., 2022). By recasting immigrants as part of the in-group, inclusive narratives facilitate positive tourism engagement and diminish defensive intergroup reactions (Farmaki, 2024).

Empirical evidence further suggests that immigrant population threat and immigrant animosity mediate the relationship between identity narratives and behavioural outcomes. Garand et al. (2022) demonstrate that while strong national identities may initially heighten immigrant population threat perceptions, inclusive framing significantly reduces anxiety and hostility. "Religious tourism encourages community unity into valuable destination" (Pradana et al., 2024, p. 135). Studies overlook threat–animosity in tourism avoidance; this study tests them as mediators linking shared identity to rural–urban tourism contexts.

Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- a. H2a: Immigrant population threat and immigrant animosity mediate the relationship between shared identity and avoidance of creative village tourism products.
- b. H2b: Immigrant population threat and immigrant animosity mediate the relationship between shared identity and avoidance of creative city tourism products.

Table 1 synthesises this gap motivates mediation hypotheses in Southeast Asian creative tourism.

Table 1: Summary of Key Studies and Identified Research Gaps

Focus of Prior Studies	Key Findings (What We Know)	Limitations / Research Gaps
Social Identity and Intergroup Attitudes	Shared or superordinate identity reduces prejudice and improves intergroup attitudes (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Riek et al., 2010).	Limited attention to behavioural avoidance toward specific products, particularly in tourism contexts.
Identity-Based Communication in Tourism	Identity narratives foster positive destination image, openness to out-group cultures, and willingness to engage with culturally different destinations (Yeoh et al., 2023; Brance et al., 2023).	Negative behavioural outcomes (e.g., tourism product avoidance) are rarely examined.
Immigrant Threat and Animosity	Perceived immigrant population threat increases hostility, animosity, and avoidance of out-group-related products and services (Stephan et al., 2008; Garand et al., 2022).	The serial mediating mechanism linking common identity to tourism avoidance via threat and animosity remains underexplored.
Cultural Openness	Cultural openness facilitates intercultural interaction, reduces social bias, and enhances acceptance of culturally foreign tourism products (Lee et al., 2021; Dedeoglu et al., 2023).	Its role as a boundary condition strengthening identity-based communication effects has not been consistently tested.

Communication of Perceived Authenticity	Authentic marketing communication enhances trust, emotional engagement, and positive consumer evaluations (Men et al., 2018; Lu et al., 2022).	Mixed evidence exists regarding whether authenticity moderates identity–behaviour relationships under conditions of strong immigrant animosity.
Tourism Product Typologies	Village and city tourism products evoke different psychological, emotional, and cultural responses among tourists (Yu et al., 2023).	Few studies differentiate village versus city tourism avoidance within a single identity-based and migration-sensitive framework.

d. Moderating Role of Cultural Openness and Authenticity Communication

Cultural openness, defined as the willingness to engage with and appreciate different cultures, has emerged as a key moderating variable in intergroup tourism behaviour (Lee et al., 2021). It functions independently of group identity strength (Hakim et al., 2023). "Religious and traditional approaches encourage willingness to change" (Ida et al., 2024, p. 10). Individuals with high cultural openness are more likely to perceive immigrant-linked tourism products as enriching rather than threatening (Webster et al., 2023; Dedeoglu et al., 2023).

Strategic communication that emphasizes perceived authenticity further enhances emotional engagement and satisfaction (Alvarez & Campo, 2020). Authentic narratives, seen as genuine and culturally legitimate, strengthen tourist loyalty and revisit intentions, particularly in heritage and creative tourism sectors (Lu et al., 2022).

Nonetheless, recent studies suggest that authenticity communication alone may not suffice to overcome entrenched biases. Cultural openness appears to be a more powerful enabler in reinforcing the effects of shared identity narratives. While perceived authenticity communication enhances tourist experiences, it does not significantly moderate the relationship between shared identity and tourism avoidance if underlying immigrant animosity remains strong (Alvarez et al., 2020). This divergence highlights an unresolved issue about authenticity's conditional effects; therefore, we distinguish cultural openness as cognition and authenticity communication as messaging, clarifying roles. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H3a: Cultural openness significantly moderates the relationship between shared identity and avoidance of creative village tourism products.
- H3b: Cultural openness moderates the relationship between shared identity and avoidance of creative city tourism products.
- H3c: Perceived authenticity communication moderates the relationship between shared identity and avoidance of creative village and city tourism products.

e. Integrating Social Identity Theory and Strategic Communication in Tourism Marketing

The integration of Social Identity Theory and strategic communication offers a robust framework for understanding how shared identity narratives can reduce immigrant animosity and foster tourism engagement. Recent research emphasizes the importance of communication strategies that highlight emotional resonance, authenticity, and audience involvement (Mansouri & Jamal Al-deen, 2023).

Shared identity narratives, when coupled with high levels of cultural openness, have been shown to foster greater empathy, solidarity, and willingness to engage with culturally

diverse tourism products (Brance et al., 2023; Fan, 2024). However, the persistence of immigrant-related anxieties underscores the importance of carefully crafting communication interventions that address both emotional and cognitive dimensions of intergroup relations (Reyna et al., 2022; Hogg, 2023).

In Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia-Malaysia relations, the strategic promotion of common cultural foundations such as shared language, Islamic traditions, and ancestral ties can serve as powerful tools to foster inclusive tourism narratives. Yet, these efforts must be authentic, culturally empathetic, and responsive to prevailing socio-political sensitivities to be effective (Yeoh et al., 2023).

This study contributes to the literature by empirically testing how shared identity communication, moderated by cultural openness and perceived authenticity communication, influences the avoidance of creative village and city tourism products. It extends Social Identity Theory by incorporating strategic communication principles and situating the analysis within the multicultural and migration-sensitive context of Indonesia-Malaysia relations.

By offering a comprehensive model that links shared identity, immigrant population threat, immigrant animosity, cultural openness, and authenticity communication to tourism engagement, the study provides both theoretical advancements and practical recommendations for tourism marketers, policymakers, and communication strategists aiming to promote sustainable and inclusive cross-border tourism. Strategic communication shapes tourism through identity, emotion, culture.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of this study, illustrating the hypothesised relationships between shared identity communication, immigrant population threat, immigrant animosity, tourism avoidance behaviours, and the moderating roles of cultural openness and perceived authenticity communication. The diagram clarifies the theoretical integration of Social Identity Theory and strategic communication by visually mapping direct, mediating, and moderating pathways tested in the empirical model.

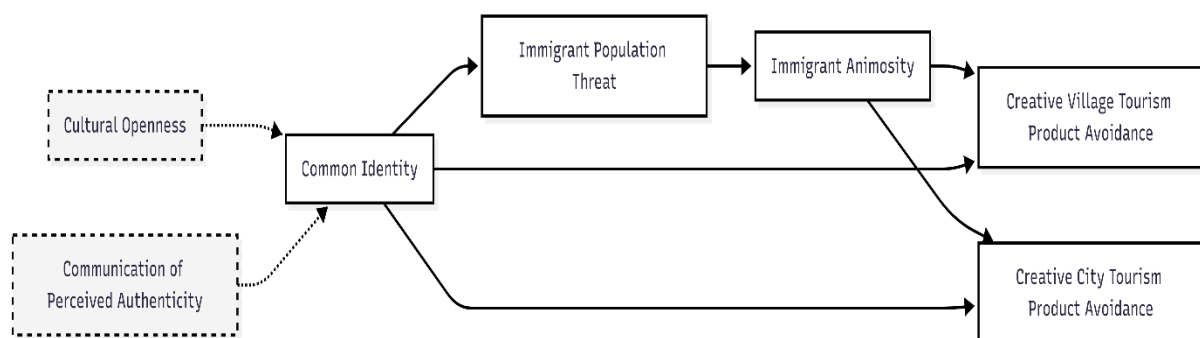


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the serial mediation and moderation model

Note: The framework illustrates the hypothesized relationships. Dashed lines originating from Cultural Openness and Communication of Perceived Authenticity indicate their role as moderators influencing the strength of the relationship between Common Identity and the tourism avoidance outcomes (H3a, H3b, H3c).

METHODOLOGY

a. Design and Participants

This study utilized a one-way between-subjects experimental design to examine the influence of shared Indonesia-Malaysia identity communication on the avoidance of culturally linked

tourism products. The independent variable was shared identity communication (experimental vs. control), while the dependent variables were the avoidance of creative village and city tourism products. Mediating variables included immigrant population threat and immigrant animosity while moderating variables were cultural openness and perceived authenticity communication.

The experimental intervention drew from Social Identity Theory by Tajfel and Turner, (1986), which posits that emphasizing common in-group membership fosters intergroup empathy and reduces prejudice. The stimulus material, a newsletter, highlighted shared cultural elements: language, religion, and regional heritage to activate inclusive social identity (Thomsen & Juhl, 2024).

Participants ($N = 94$) were Malay-Malaysian professionals aged 18 to 59 years. All participants self-identified as ethnically Malay, adhered to Islamic cultural practices, and were full-time employed professionals. This demographic was selected because Malay-Malaysian professionals, as members of the mainstream majority group, play a critical role in shaping tourism attitudes due to their economic mobility and cultural influence (Ridderstaat, 2022; Kriyantono et al., 2022). Given Malaysia's multicultural society, this study focuses on Malay-Malaysian professionals (the primary economic driver and opinion leader group). Findings apply within this group and are not generalisable to other populations (e.g., Chinese-Malaysian or Indian-Malaysian groups).

Participants were recruited through a professional business platform. Eligibility criteria required Malay ethnicity, Malaysian citizenship, and professional full-time employment. Sampling a professional demographic is supported by recent tourism research suggesting that higher socio-economic status correlates with greater leisure travel propensity and cross-border tourism engagement (Ridderstaat, 2022). Focusing on professionals improves internal validity, offering analytical generalisability to comparable influential groups in multicultural societies.

Sample size adequacy, while the total sample size of 94 participants is modest, it aligns with recommended thresholds for experimental designs employing Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). According to Hair et al., (2020), models with limited complexity can be reliably estimated with samples ranging from 50 to 100 participants. Kline (2023) further emphasizes that SEM models testing basic mediation and moderation paths are acceptable with samples over 80 cases. Given the simplicity of the proposed model and the focus on direct, mediating, and moderating relationships, the current sample size was deemed sufficient for robust analysis.

b. Experimental Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental group ($n = 50$) or the control group ($n = 44$). Experimental Group: Participants read a specially designed newsletter priming a shared Indonesia-Malaysia identity, highlighting commonalities in culture, language, and religion based on Social Identity Theory principles. Control group: participants completed a neutral reflection task about their daily activities, designed to control for cognitive engagement without activating shared identity themes.

Strategic communication framing methods, grounded in identity-based messaging by Čehajić-Clancy and Olsson (2024), were applied to craft the intervention. Prior studies affirm that framing shared identity narratives can influence public attitudes and foster prosocial intergroup behaviours (Hing et al., 2022; Čehajić-Clancy & Olsson, 2024).

Participants were fully briefed on the study's objectives, voluntary nature, and confidentiality policies. Written informed consent was obtained before participation. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Review Committee, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Brawijaya (Approval No. 37/UN10.F08.10/PN/2024), ensuring adherence to institutional ethical standards.

c. Pilot Testing and Validity

A pilot study ($N = 60$) was conducted to assess scale clarity and reliability. Construct validity was confirmed as Pearson correlation coefficients exceeded 0.30 ($p < .05$) for all items. Internal consistency was strong, with Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.70 across all constructs, indicating good reliability and robust psychometric properties. This ensured that the scales used were both reliable and valid for the Malaysian context.

d. Measures

All constructs were assessed using validated scales on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Shared identity is measured via exposure to the newsletter, operationalizing identity priming based on methods adapted from Mumtaz and Nadeem (2023). Cultural openness was measured using adapted items from Webster et al. (2023), capturing acceptance of cultural diversity. Immigrant population threat and immigrant animosity were measured using scales assessing perceived economic and cultural threats, adapted from Mazzotta (2022) and DeQuero-Navarro et al. (2022). Perceived authenticity communication was evaluated using adapted items from Antón et al., (2019) focusing on perceptions of cultural legitimacy and narrative authenticity. Tourism product avoidance was measured based on participants' intentions to avoid Indonesian creative village and city tourism products, following measures from Fuchs et al., (2024). Demographic covariates such as age, gender, income, education, and travel frequency to Indonesia were included, consistent with tourism behaviour research standards (Tong et al., 2022).

i. Validity and Reliability Check

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess the measurement model. Most indicators demonstrated strong loadings; however, two indicator ($\lambda = 0.486$ and 0.474) were retained for construct completeness. Detailed results are presented in Table 2 and Figure 2.

Table 2: Measurement Model: Standardised Factor Loadings, Reliability, and Validity Indices

Construct & Illustrative Items	Std. Loading (λ)	Description	CR	AVE	Cronbach's α
Common Identity			0.876	0.548	0.861
CI1: [Malaysians and Indonesians have Malay culture proximity.]	0.702	Valid			
CI2: [Both Malaysians and Indonesians have a gentle attitude.]	0.811	Valid			
CI3: [Both Malaysia and Indonesia have artistic heritage.]	0.752	Valid			
CI4: [Both Malaysians and Indonesians were determined to reduce hostility between groups.]	0.511	Valid			

CI5: [Malaysians and Indonesians have a common identity to live in peace.]	0.741	Valid			
CI6: [Malaysians and Indonesians strengthen common identity as a group consequence.]	0.873	Valid			
Immigrant Population Threat			0.945	0.743	0.944
IPT1: [I feel threatened due to the growing population of Indonesia's migrant workers in my country.]	0.912	Valid			
IPT2: [Migrant workers from Indonesia are conspicuous in the rural areas and cities of my country so I feel threatened.]	0.888	Valid			
IPT3: [I am threatened by the increasing number of Indonesia's migrant workers because they can replace workers in my country.]	0.807	Valid			
IPT4: [I am worried about the political stability and security in my country due to the large number of migrant workers from Indonesia.]	0.722	Valid			
IPT5: [The number of migrant workers from Indonesia causes unrest in my country.]	0.933	Valid			
IPT6: [I exhibit more negativity toward migrant workers from Indonesia.]	0.892	Valid			
Immigrant Animosity			0.931	0.736	0.917
IA1: [I hate immigrants from Indonesia who work in my country]	0.958	Valid			
IA2: [Immigrants from Indonesia are my enemy.]	0.932	Valid			
IA3: [I do not like immigrants from Indonesia.]	0.883	Valid			
IA4: [I hate the immigrants because they take my job.]	0.879	Valid			
IA5: [I cannot forgive illegal immigrant workers.]	0.587	Valid			
Cultural Openness			0.902	0.572	0.902
CO1: [I would like to have opportunities to meet people from different countries.]	0.582	Valid			
CO2: [I am very interested in trying other products from different countries.]	0.762	Valid			
CO3: [We should have respect for traditions, cultures, and ways of life of other nations.]	0.656	Valid			

CO4: [I would like to learn more about other countries.]	0.863	Valid			
CO5: [I have a strong desire for overseas travel.]	0.775	Valid			
CO6: [I would like to know more about foreign culture and customs.]	0.753	Valid			
CO7: [I have a strong desire to meet and interact with people from foreign countries.]	0.862	Valid			
Communication of Perceived Authenticity			0.898	0.596	0.897
CPA1: [Indonesian tourism product advertisement is an authentic experience.]	0.764	Valid			
CPA2: [Authentic advertisements of Indonesian tourism products have helped me understand local culture.]	0.769	Valid			
CPA3: [From authentic advertisements for Indonesian tourism products, I learned many things.]	0.680	Valid			
CPA4: [I now understand Indonesian society's local traditions and habits.]	0.740	Valid			
CPA5: [Authentic advertisements for Indonesian tourism products trigger a process of self-referencing experiences with real message advertisements.]	0.837	Valid			
CPA6: [My liking for authentic advertisements of Indonesian tourism products has increased.]	0.833	Valid			
Creative Village Tourism Avoidance			0.903	0.619	0.905
CVTPA1: [I do not want to buy a creative village tour package for Indonesia's destination.]	0.932	Valid			
CVTPA2: [I do not buy tickets to Indonesia's creative village destinations.]	0.928	Valid			
CVTPA3: [I do not want to buy Indonesia's creative village tourism products.]	0.926	Valid			
CVTPA4: [I do not want to spend money on hostile, creative village destinations.]	0.623	Valid			
CVTPA5: [I do not buy unfamiliar, creative village destinations.]	0.713	Valid			
CVTPA6: [I do not want to buy a creative village package from a country that is hostile towards my Country.]	0.486	Valid			
Creative City Tourism Avoidance			0.914	0.651	0.919
CCTPA1: [I do not want to buy a creative city tour package in Indonesia.]	0.935	Valid			

CCTPA2: [I do not buy tickets to Indonesia's creative city destinations.]	0.917	Valid
CCTPA3: [I do not want to buy Indonesia's creative city tourism products.]	0.954	Valid
CCTPA4: [I do not want to spend money on hostile, creative city destinations.]	0.663	Valid
CCTPA5: [I want to buy other things rather than unfamiliar products from the creative city destinations.]	0.788	Valid
CCTPA6: [I do not want to buy a creative city package from a country that is hostile towards my country.]	0.474	Valid

Note: λ = Standardised Factor Loading; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; α = Cronbach's Alpha. All factor loadings were statistically significant at $p < .001$.

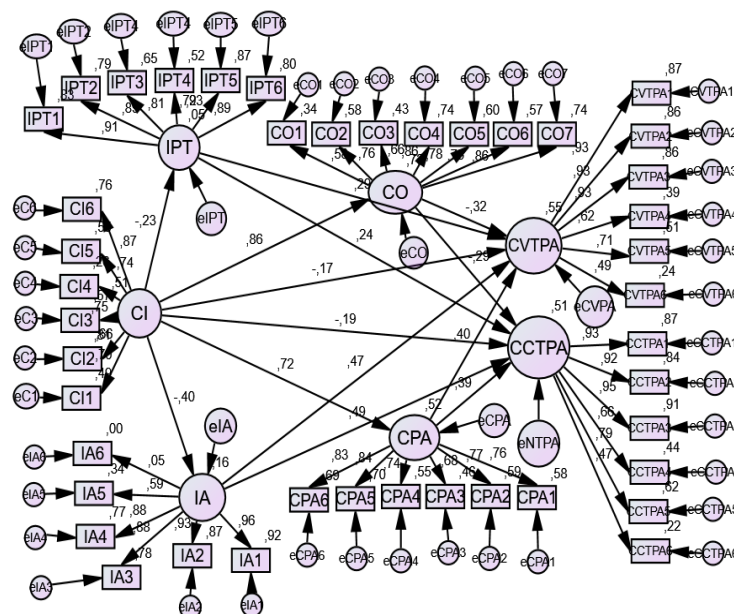


Figure 2: Measurement model with standardised factor loadings

e. Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected via Zoho's secure online business platform. Attention check questions were embedded to ensure participant engagement and data integrity. Responses failing attention checks were excluded. No missing data were detected due to mandatory response settings; inattentive cases were excluded prior to analysis. No imputation was required; inattentive participants were removed before analysis.

Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) via AMOS, selected for its capacity to simultaneously assess direct, mediating, and moderating effects in complex models (Kline, 2023). Consistent with reporting conventions, the analysis emphasises transparency, enabling readers to follow SEM assumptions and diagnostics. The assumption of normality was evaluated (experimental group: Skewness = .100; Kurtosis = -.777). Control group: Skewness = .610; Kurtosis = 1.211). These values fell within the acceptable range (Kline, 2023), confirming the appropriateness of parametric SEM analysis. SEM tested the direct effects of shared identity on tourism product avoidance, the mediating

roles of immigrant population threat and immigrant animosity, and the moderating roles of cultural openness and perceived authenticity communication. This comprehensive analytical framework provided a nuanced understanding of the psychological mechanisms linking shared identity communication to tourism behaviours.

f. Demographics Summary

Demographics summaries are summarised in Tables 3 to improve readability. A total of 94 Malay-Malaysian professionals participated in the study, comprising individuals assigned to experimental and control conditions. The detailed demographic composition of the sample is presented in Table 3. Overall, the sample reflects a socio-demographically relevant segment of the Malay-Malaysian professional population, characterised by variation in age, income, gender, and cross-cultural travel exposure. This composition is particularly appropriate for examining intergroup tourism attitudes, as professionals represent a socially mobile group with higher decision-making autonomy in international travel contexts. Importantly, cultural homogeneity was maintained across key identity markers—religion (Islam), ethnicity (Malay ancestry), nationality (Malaysian), and cultural practice—thereby reducing potential confounding effects related to cultural variance. At the same time, diversity in economic standing and travel experience to Indonesia provides meaningful variance for assessing how shared identity communication operates under different socio-economic and experiential conditions. Taken together, the demographic structure strengthens the internal validity of the experimental design while supporting the broader applicability of the findings to Malay-Malaysian professionals, a group recognised for its pivotal role in shaping regional tourism flows and cross-border cultural engagement (Ridderstaat, 2022).

Table 3: Demographic Profile of Participants across Experimental and Control Conditions

Variable	Experiment (n = 50)	Control (n = 44)	Total (%)
<i>Age</i>			
18 – 29 years	17	13	32%
30 – 44 years	27	24	54%
45 – 59 years	6	7	14%
Occupation: Professional	50	44	100%
Religion: Islam	50	44	100%
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	33	24	61%
Female	17	20	39%
Nationality: Malaysia	50	44	100%
Practicing Malay Culture	50	44	100%
Malay Ancestry	50	44	100%
<i>Income</i>			
< MYR 5,000	20	18	41%
MYR 5,000 -10,000	24	21	47%
MYR 15,000-20,000	3	5	9%
> MYR 25,000	3	0	3%
<i>Travel to Indonesia</i>			
Rare	28	23	54.3%
Often	22	21	45.7%

Note: n = sample size per condition; percentages calculated based on total sample (N = 94). All participants are Malay-Malaysian professionals practicing Malay culture with Malay ancestry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

a. Attention Checks and Data Integrity

Before hypothesis testing, attention checks were implemented to ensure participant engagement and data integrity. Participants were asked to recall their assigned task, either (a) “read information” (experimental group) or (b) “draft a daily agenda” (control group). A total of 94% of participants answered correctly, indicating strong engagement with the communication stimuli and affirming the reliability of the dataset. This high attention rate demonstrates that participants processed the experimental materials appropriately, ensuring the internal validity of the study and supporting the credibility of subsequent hypothesis testing.

Preliminary normality assessments based on skewness and kurtosis indicated that the data were approximately normally distributed, with all values falling within the acceptable range of ± 2 , as recommended by Kline (2023). Although the overall model fit indices did not reach conventional thresholds, the hypothesized relationships were tested and interpreted cautiously, focusing on standardized path coefficients and significance levels, following recommendations for exploratory intercultural communication research (Hair et al., 2020).

b. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 4 reports the mean values and zero-order correlations among the study variables. The correlation matrix reveals theoretically consistent relationships among identity-based, emotional, and behavioural constructs. Common identity shows strong positive associations with cultural openness and perceived authenticity communication, suggesting that shared identity frames are closely linked to openness toward cultural difference and perceptions of authentic communication (Cabano & Minton, 2023).

As expected, immigrant population threat is strongly correlated with immigrant animosity, indicating that cognitive threat perceptions are closely intertwined with affective hostility responses. Furthermore, avoidance of both creative village and creative city tourism products is positively associated with immigrant threat and animosity, while demonstrating negative relationships with cultural openness and perceived authenticity communication. These patterns underscore the role of both emotional and cognitive mechanisms in shaping tourism avoidance behaviour. The correlation structure provides preliminary support for the proposed theoretical framework and justifies subsequent structural equation modelling analyses.

Table 4: Mean values and zero-order correlations among study variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Common identity	-	-0.09	-0.263	.743**	.577**	-0.266	-0.226
2. Immigrant population threat		-	.695**	-0.23	-0.242	.566**	.592**
3. Immigrant animosity			-	-.391**	-0.273	.682**	.635**
4. Cultural openness				-	.667**	-.387**	-.338*
5. Communication of perceived authenticity					-	-0.212	-0.216
6. Creative village tourism product avoidance						-	.936**
7. Creative city tourism product avoidance							-

Note: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Overall, the correlation patterns indicate theoretically coherent relationships among identity-based, emotional, and behavioural constructs. Shared identity is closely associated with greater cultural openness and perceived authenticity communication, while perceptions of immigrant population threat are strongly aligned with affective animosity. In turn, avoidance of creative village and city tourism products appears systematically linked to heightened threat and animosity, alongside reduced openness and authenticity perceptions. These findings underscore the interplay of cognitive and emotional mechanisms in shaping tourism avoidance and provide a robust foundation for the subsequent structural equation modelling analyses.

c. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using AMOS was employed to test the hypothesised relationships. To ensure a robust interpretation beyond statistical significance ($p < .05$), the assessment incorporated standardised path coefficients (β), 95% confidence interval (CI), and Cohen's f^2 effect sizes to evaluate the magnitude and stability of the structural paths.

Direct effects. Contrary to H1, the direct effects of Common Identity on both Creative Village Tourism Avoidance ($\beta = -0.236$, 95% CI [-0.699, 0.226], $p = 0.308$) and Creative City Tourism Avoidance ($\beta = -0.203$, 95% CI [-0.696, 0.291], $p = 0.413$) were not supported.

Indirect effects. In contrast, the mediation hypothesis (H2a) was supported. The results revealed a significant serial indirect effect whereby Common Identity reduced Creative Village Tourism Avoidance through Immigrant Population Threat and Immigrant Animosity ($\beta = -0.322$, 95% CI [-0.695, -0.002], $p = 0.027$, $f^2 = 0.067$). This represents a substantive small to-moderate indirect relationship, underscoring the central role of emotional threat mechanisms. The corresponding mediation path for Creative City Tourism Avoidance (H2b) was not supported ($\beta = -0.286$, 95% CI [-0.822, 0.072], $p = 0.072$).

Moderating effects. As visualised in Figure 4, Cultural Openness significantly moderated the relationship between Common Identity and Creative Village Tourism Avoidance (H3a: $\beta = -0.222$, 95% CI [-1.463, -0.045], $p = 0.032$, $f^2 = 0.011$). Although modest in magnitude, this interaction effect is consistent with established benchmarks for moderation in behavioural research. In contrast, Cultural Openness did not moderate the path to Creative City Tourism Avoidance (H3b: $\beta = 0.028$, 95% CI [-1.516, 0.570], $p = 0.666$), and Perceived Authenticity Communication did not exhibit significant moderating effects for either outcome (H3c Village: $\beta = -0.193$, 95% CI [-0.891, 0.785], $p = 0.074$; H3c City: $\beta = 0.068$, 95% CI [-1.246, 0.587], $p = 0.426$).

Overall, the final structural model accounted for $R^2 = .70$ of the variances in Creative Village Tourism Avoidance and $R^2 = .67$ for Creative City Tourism Avoidance, indicating meaningful levels of explanatory power. Figure 3 presents the structural equation model with standardised parameter estimates.

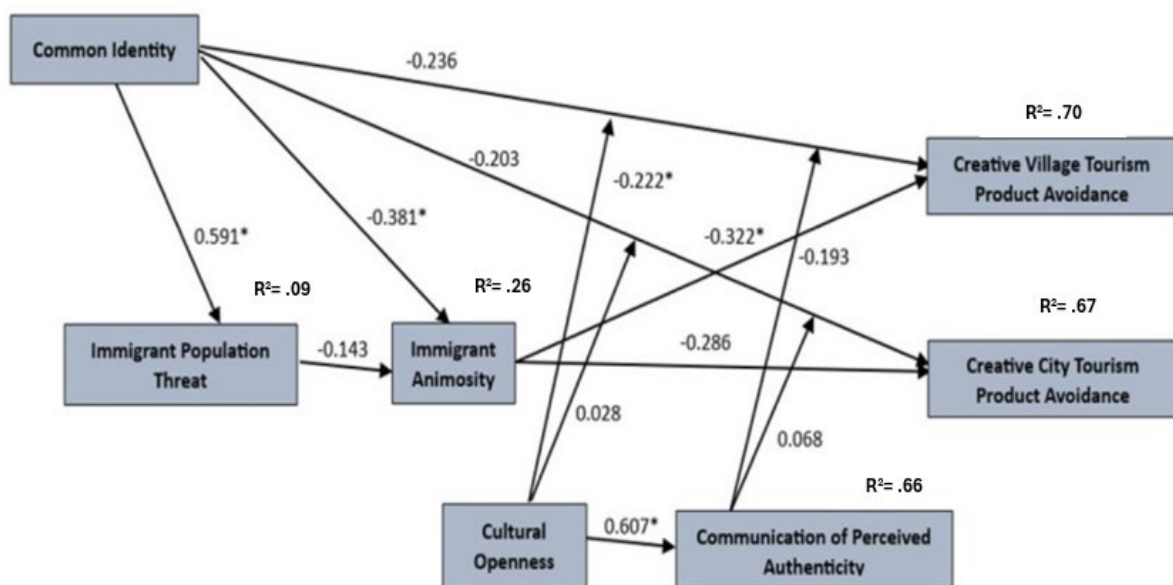


Figure 3: Structural Equation Model Results

Note: Values represent standardised path coefficients (β). Effect sizes (Cohen's f^2) are reported in Table 5. R^2 values are displayed above endogenous variables. Significant paths are denoted by * $p < .05$.

d. Moderating Role of Cultural Openness

Cultural openness strengthened shared identity's protective effect, such that higher openness produced a stronger negative link between common identity and creative village tourism avoidance.

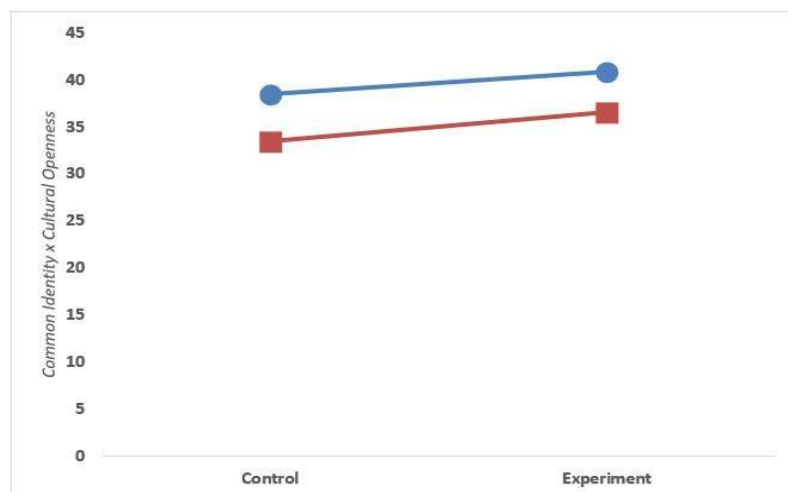


Figure 4: Moderating effect of cultural openness on the relationship between shared identity and avoidance of creative village tourism products.

Discussion

a. Summary of Key Findings

As shown in Table 5, the model shows a significant serial mediation: common identity reduces creative village tourism avoidance via immigrant threat and animosity (H2a), with small but

meaningful effects for Malay-Malaysian professionals. Supported moderation (H3a) indicates cultural openness strengthens identity-based reductions in avoidance, whereas direct effects (H1a, H1b) and other moderations (H3b, H3c) are non-significant and add little explanatory value.

Finally, these findings are context-specific, reflecting responses among Malay-Malaysian professionals. Given Malaysia's multi-ethnic composition, the results should not be generalised to Chinese, Indian, or other ethnic groups without caution, as distinct intergroup histories and sensitivities may yield different identity dynamics and behavioural responses.

Table 5: Structural model results: path coefficients, effect sizes, and confidence intervals

Hypothesis	Structural Path	Std. β	95% CI	Effect Size (f^2)	p-value	Result
Direct Effects						
H1a	Common Identity → Creative Village Tourism Avoidance	-0.236	[-0.699, 0.226]	0.027	0.308	Not Supported
H1b	Common Identity → Creative City Tourism Avoidance	-0.203	[-0.696, 0.291]	0.020	0.413	Not Supported
Indirect Effects						
H2a	Common Identity → Immigrant Threat → Immigrant Animosity → Village Avoidance	-0.322*	[-0.695, -0.002]	0.067	0.027*	Supported
H2b	Common Identity → Immigrant Threat → Immigrant Animosity → City Avoidance	-0.286	[-0.822, 0.072]	0.061	0.072	Not Supported
Moderating Effects						
H3a	Cultural Openness × (Common Identity → Village Avoidance)	-0.222*	[-1.463, -0.045]	0.011	0.032*	Supported
H3b	Cultural Openness × (Common Identity → City Avoidance)	0.028	[-1.516, 0.570]	0.010	0.666	Not Supported
H3c (Village)	Authenticity Communication × (Common Identity → Village Avoidance)	-0.193	[-0.891, 0.785]	0.012	0.074	Not Supported
H3c (City)	Authenticity Communication × (Common Identity → City Avoidance)	0.068	[-1.246, 0.587]	0.016	0.426	Not Supported

Note: 95% confidence intervals (CI) were estimated using 5,000 robust samples. Asterisks (*) indicate supported hypotheses with CI not crossing zero at the 0.05 level. Non-significant effects show CI crossing zero. Cohen's f^2 reflects the substantive magnitude of effects.

b. Theoretical Contributions

The study extends Social Identity Theory by Tajfel and Turner (1986) in several critical ways. First, it confirms that shared identity alone is insufficient; emotional processes particularly

immigrant population threat and immigrant animosity mediate its impact on behaviour. This aligns with dynamic models of social categorization emphasizing emotion regulation (Chen et al., 2024). Second, cultural openness emerges as a crucial moderator. The findings corroborate that cultural openness amplifies the effectiveness of shared identity narratives, facilitating positive intercultural engagement (Thomsen & Juhl, 2024). Third, the non-significant role of authenticity communication challenges prevailing assumptions in tourism marketing (Yi et al., 2022; Li & Li, 2022). This non-significant effect can be theoretically explained by the persistence of underlying immigrant animosity and perceived group threat, which constrain the persuasive capacity of authenticity cues (Alvarez & Campo, 2020). When intergroup anxiety remains salient, authenticity messages—although cognitively recognised—are emotionally discounted and fail to function as effective moderators of avoidance behaviour (Lu et al., 2022; Webster et al., 2023). Accordingly, authenticity must be embedded within broader frameworks of shared identity reinforcement and cultural openness cultivation to generate meaningful behavioural change (Dedeoglu et al., 2023; Thomsen & Juhl, 2024).

The study confirms that socio-psychological factors such as psychological distance, intergroup dynamics, and personal experiences play a more decisive role than economic considerations in driving cross-border tourism behaviours. This finding further explains why authenticity communication alone may be insufficient, highlighting that emotional connections and perceived social safety outweigh financial incentives in shaping travel intentions (Kondrateva, 2022; Long et al., 2023; Hu et al., 2023).

c. Practical Contributions

Several practical recommendations emerge:

- i. Integrated communication strategies: tourism marketers should combine shared identity messaging with initiatives to foster cultural openness, such as bilateral heritage campaigns and intercultural education programs.
- ii. Prioritizing rural tourism given the stronger effects in village contexts, community-based, immersive tourism experiences emphasizing shared cultural roots should be prioritized.
- iii. Reframing authenticity narratives: authentic messaging must be linked with narratives of shared identity and cultural openness to counteract existing biases.
- iv. Addressing emotional barriers: strategic messaging should target immigrant population threat perceptions by highlighting shared struggles, achievements, and cultural heritage between groups.
- v. Leveraging digital media: social media should be used to disseminate inclusive identity narratives and authentic intercultural stories.

d. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although the sample size was sufficiently large for SEM analysis, the demographic homogeneity of Malay-Malaysian professionals may limit the generalizability of findings. Future research should explore more diverse demographic groups across different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. Additionally, this study focused solely on Malaysian perceptions of Indonesian tourism products. Future research could explore reciprocal perceptions from Indonesian participants toward Malaysian tourism offerings. Urban identity constructs were not explicitly examined; future studies should investigate how urban versus

rural identities differentially shape responses to shared identity communication. Finally, longitudinal designs assessing the cumulative impact of repeated identity-based communication interventions would provide deeper insights into the sustainability of behavioural change.

This study underscores that the influence of shared identity communication on tourism behaviour is conditional upon emotional and cognitive factors. Common identity narratives must be strategically supported by efforts to reduce the immigrant population threat, foster cultural openness, and integrate authentic communication within broader frameworks. By promoting inclusive identity, and empathetic communication frameworks, tourism stakeholders can significantly enhance cross-border tourism engagement and contribute to deeper regional integration and mutual understanding across Southeast Asia. Given Malaysia's multicultural society, findings from Malay-Malaysian professionals are not generalisable to other ethnic groups (e.g., Chinese-Malaysian or Indian-Malaysian populations). Future studies should replicate this investigation across diverse Malaysian ethnic groups.

CONCLUSION

This study advances Social Identity Theory by Tajfel and Turner (1986) and Strategic Communication by demonstrating that fostering a shared Indonesia-Malaysia identity and promoting cultural openness can effectively reduce immigrant animosity and encourage creative tourism engagement among Malay-Malaysian professionals. Emphasizing shared cultural, religious, and linguistic heritage significantly lowers perceptions of immigrant population threat and immigrant animosity, leading to reduced avoidance of Indonesian creative village tourism products. However, shared identity alone is insufficient; its effectiveness is critically dependent on the presence of cultural openness, underscoring the need for inclusive attitudes to sustain cross-border tourism relations.

Importantly, the findings extend Social Identity Theory by illustrating that strategic communication interventions rooted in identity narratives must be coupled with cultural empathy to meaningfully reduce intergroup biases. These results further underscore the strategic role of communication framing in shaping intercultural perceptions, extending the application of Strategic Communication principles within tourism marketing. Although perceived authenticity communication did not significantly moderate the tested relationships, the positive effect of cultural openness highlights its vital role in enhancing tourism receptivity in multicultural societies.

Practical recommendations for tourism marketers and policymakers: First, tourism marketers should design identity-based communication campaigns that explicitly highlight shared Indonesian-Malaysia elements, such as common language, Islamic traditions, and regional heritage. These campaigns must move beyond symbolic gestures to affirm a shared destiny and mutual respect. Second, cultural openness themes should be seamlessly integrated into promotional materials, celebrating similarities while promoting appreciation of cultural diversity. Third, policymakers must implement intercultural education initiatives across schools, universities, and public media to dismantle stereotypes and foster intercultural solidarity. Fourth, efforts should be made to improve the welfare and portrayal of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia, positioning them as integral contributors to Malaysian society. Fifth, greater investment is needed in the digital promotion of creative tourism destinations such as Nglanggeran Village in Indonesia, utilizing high-quality

storytelling platforms targeted at Malaysia's professional demographic. Sixth, bilateral initiatives including joint cultural festivals, tourism exchange programs, and collaborative heritage projects should be institutionalized to sustain shared identity narratives and deepen public engagement.

While this study offers important insights, its focus on Malay-Malaysian professionals limits generalizability, suggesting the need for future research to examine broader demographic groups. Longitudinal designs assessing the cumulative effects of repeated identity-based interventions could also provide deeper insights into the sustainability of behavioural change. Strengthening identity-based communication and fostering cultural openness are not merely vital for advancing cross-border tourism, but pivotal for cultivating resilient and empathetic societies across Southeast Asia. In light of the findings, future tourism communication strategies should not solely rely on highlighting cultural similarities, but also actively address the emotional and psychological barriers rooted in past intergroup experiences. Communication that centres empathy, mutual recognition, and historical context can help mainstream group's view tourism products associated with immigrants not as 'foreign,' but as shared cultural heritage worthy of engagement. Ultimately, the study affirms that fostering inclusive identity requires consistent effort in building trust, reinforcing empathy, and addressing historical misperceptions that often go unspoken.

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