

Enhancing Social Integration through Intra-ASEAN Travel

Gabriella Fardhiyanti¹ and Victor Wee²

^{1,2}Faculty of Social Sciences & Leisure Management,
Taylor's University Lakeside Campus,
1, Jalan Taylors, 47500 Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia
gebriellafardhiyanti@sd.taylors.edu.my; victor.wee@taylors.edu.my

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Abstract

The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) was established in 2015 with the goal of enhancing regional integration, including social integration, which has been linked to the ASEAN populace's motivations for regional travel. This paper examines emerging intra-ASEAN travel using Esser's (2001) social integration dimension theory. To fully comprehend the vision of social integration and sustainable tourism development, continuous efforts must be made to develop, promote, and protect the member states' common interests through ASEAN integration. This study aims to assess whether the social integration dimension connects individuals in preference to travelling within the ASEAN region. A questionnaire survey of ASEAN nationality passengers at Malaysia's KLIA2 Airport was used to collect the data. The study findings will present social integration arising from intra-ASEAN travellers and the benefits of promoting tourism for economic stability in the region.

Keywords: Social Integration, ASEAN Economic Community, intra-ASEAN travel, regional tourism

Introduction

The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) was back in the spotlight in 2017 while marking its 50th anniversary. The members have taken steps to further develop this regional community in the upcoming years following the establishment of the ASEAN Community at the end of 2015 (Permatasari, 2020). Tay and Zainul (2017) state that efforts are still being made to strengthen the ASEAN Community Blueprint 2025. In order to achieve equitable economic growth in the region, the regional focus areas for economic integration

include a digital single market, financial integration, policy integration, and connectivity (Jones, 2019). ASEAN aims to make the region more integrated by focusing on the region's political stability, economic integration, and socio-cultural pillars. According to Chirathivat, Kunnamas, and Welfens, (2020), the increasing number of integration projects in the global economy and the growth in the number of countries engaged in regional integration initiatives have shown that regional integration is a crucial catalyst of economic integration, globalisation, and multilateralism.

The objective of social integration is to foster social and cultural development, but it is not as clearly defined as the economic objectives. This makes the accomplishments of ASEAN social integration hard to assess (Dosch, 2017), since social and cultural progress can be classified in many ways. ASEAN strives to facilitate this development by developing a community identity through collaboration in education, tourism, and non-governmental organisations. Many studies have discussed the impact of the Open Skies Policy on enhancing economic integration. There is still a lack of studies regarding the impact of air transport on social integration (Abeyratne, 2014). The ASEAN Community promotes efforts to forge a strong community identity that would exist within the unique characteristics of each member state. Nevertheless, ASEAN has not yet developed projects to achieve these objectives. Regional cooperation in tourism and non-governmental organisations is quite limited, and intra-ASEAN travel presents an opportunity for development.

The establishment of the ASEAN Community led to the growth of intra-ASEAN tourism due to the rise of intra-ASEAN travellers among the ASEAN populace, contributing to the growth of the economy in the region. In addition, increasing intra-ASEAN tourism facilitates social and cultural progress. Despite the significant contributions made by tourism in the area, the social integration aspect that influences the collaboration in tourism between ASEAN countries has received little coverage in the literature. The research investigates the role of intra-ASEAN travellers as catalysts for social integration. The research is considered important as it examines social integration arising from the growth of intra-ASEAN travellers in the region. This topic has received little attention among researchers in the field of tourism.

Furthermore, Southeast Asia as a region has the potential to develop into a major tourist destination due to its diverse cultures, which attract international tourists and can also be used to draw tourists within the region. Intra-ASEAN travel deserves to be given great attention because of the similarities between the member states (Oegroseno, 2013). The research reinforces our understanding of the issue by presenting empirical evidence describing the social integration conditions that promote intra-ASEAN travel. The research shows that there is a relationship between cultural adaptations, positioning, interaction, and the growth of intra-ASEAN travel. Intra-ASEAN travellers discover similarities in terms of language, culture, friendliness, and hospitality and actively absorbed knowledge and news about ASEAN countries throughout their tour. Additionally, the privilege of holding an ASEAN passport enables individuals to travel freely within ASEAN, which has increased their drive to travel more intra-regionally, enhancing the demand for more excellent connectivity. The research also finds that there is more social interaction within the ASEAN region because people have friends, family, and relatives who live in other ASEAN countries. Overall,

ASEAN countries have developed a stronger familiarity with each other and a sense of belonging to the community over the past five years since the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

Literature Review

Esser's Social Integration Theory

Social integration refers to the inclusion of individuals in a system by creating relationships among individuals and their attitudes towards society. It results from the conscious and motivated interaction and cooperation of individuals and groups. Social integration can be derived from the bonds of attraction and similar interests that unite its members. A social integration system consists of the shared interactions in a certain social structure that includes the conceptions of conflict and order. Social integration is a practice of developing the values, interactions, and institutions necessary to attain the envisioned society. However, social integration can be seen from various perspectives (Ferguson, 2008) and emphasises the dynamics of power, governance, structures, and values that allow leaders and the well-off to protect their exclusive roles. According to Esser (2001), social integration focuses on integrating individual actors into the system. Although closely associated, system integration and social integration are theoretically distinct and independent, allowing for separate studies (Esser, 2001). In the ASEAN context, system integration occurs through the interplay of 10 member states, whereas social integration occurs through interpersonal interactions. As seen in Figure 1, the research focuses exclusively on the latter. Esser (2001) identify the following four dimensions of social integration: cultural adaptation, positioning, interaction, and identification.

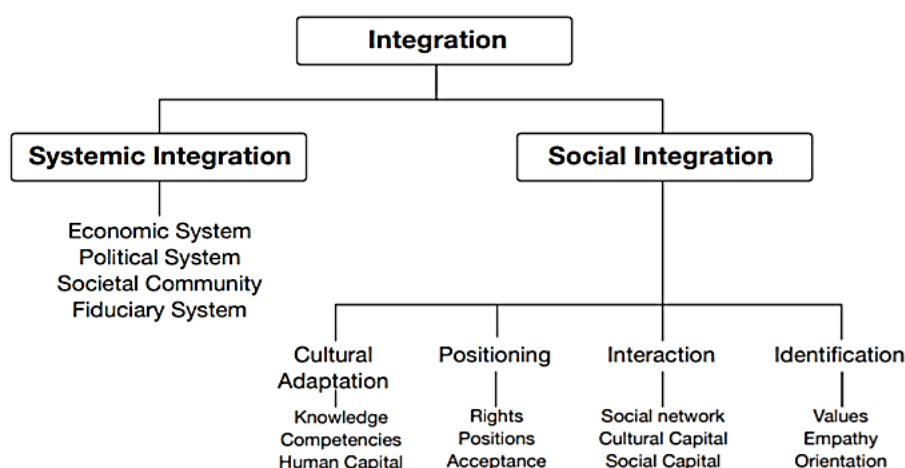


Figure 1. Own adaptation, based on Esser (2001)

Social integration can be conceived to foster principles, relationships, and structures that allow everyone to engage in economic and political social action on the basis of equality and opportunity, fairness, and decency. Afterwards, the concept addressed the social integration practice of building systems that foster a community based on social and economic equality values. These four dimensions comprise the important characteristics of social integration. Cultural adaptation, or acculturation, encompasses cultural knowledge and language competencies required for interaction and is part of the socialisation process in a society. Interaction refers to the building and maintaining social relationships in daily life by individuals who share a mutual orientation. On the other hand, identification encompasses the emotional relationship between the actor and society, a subjective feeling of belonging as it concerns cognitive and emotional aspects. The feeling of belonging may develop in the integration process later, which can be developed due to participation and acceptance. On the subjective level, inclusion in a new society is indicated by feelings of belonging to and identification with groups, particularly on the national level. Finally, positioning refers to the position in society and the rights gained with it by citizenship or economic position (Esser, 2001).

Cultural Adaptation

Cultural adaptation applies to individuals who acquire essential knowledge and special skills to behave and engage in an appropriate, informed, and effective manner. When it comes to cultural adaptation, specific language skills, societal values, and behaviour regulations are all important considerations (Esser, 2001). Acculturation is another term for cultural adaptation, which refers to the process of engaging with cultural change (Mittelstädt & Odag, 2015). Among the most often adopted acculturation concept developed by Berry (1997), cultural adaptation refers to the exchange of culture. One group assumes another group's beliefs, practices, and rituals without sacrificing the characteristics of its own culture. His research reveals that individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds deal with two crucial issues: 1) the importance of cultural heritage preservation; and 2) the value of building relationships with mainstream culture. Lakey (2003), in his review of Berry's work, states the extent of the implication of four acculturation strategies: 1) integration, 2) separation, 3) assimilation, and 4) marginalisation. Integration refers to individuals that appreciate both cultural preservation and intergroup relations.

Positioning

Positioning, as Esser believes, is the essential dimension of integration. Positioning can be described as the acquisition by an individual of a particular social position. The individual is, thereby, integrated into the existing social system and its functions. Positioning may take place by granting certain rights to individuals, including the right to a nationality. It may also be linked to the recruitment of a job or the completion of education. Positioning, therefore, takes place at the level of the market and follows the rules of supply and demand (Stadler, 2016). Positioning is part of the integration, initially proposed by Slocum & Langenhove (2003)

(Figure 2). The positioning concept is further introduced as an analytical framework that illustrates the meanings attributed to space and individuals identified within the space.

Interaction

Interaction refers to the building and maintaining social relationships in daily life by individuals who share a mutual orientation. Interaction is ostensibly the third level of social integration. It is represented as a type of social activity in which people influence the knowledge and behaviour of one another (Esser, 2001). According to Stadler (2018), interaction applies to creating social contacts within the scope of the everyday environment. As in acculturation, prospects are essential to interaction, as is the willingness to embrace promising neighbourly approaches or relationships from both sides. Sciortino (2010) developed the notion of assimilation, which derives from the spontaneous and unintended interaction processes in the social construct.

Identification

Identification, on the other hand, encompasses the emotional relationship between the actor and society, a subjective feeling of belonging. As it concerns both cognitive and emotional aspects, the sense of belonging may develop later in the integration process due to participation and acceptance. The identification process is defined as an individual's association with the societies that are subject to the norms of those groups as a basis for comparing their behaviour. This process involves the identification of the group (Burnazoglu, 2020). In addition, the identification dimension has transformed into a social identity model which explains social identities related to guests (e.g., migrants) and host communities, particularly those linked to the socio-cultural order, such as racial, gender, and class identities. The social identity model can consider heterogeneities whose impact is not represented by simple comparisons, and which generate disparities in integration consequences (Duroy, 2011).

Assessing Intra-ASEAN Travel

The magnitude of intra-ASEAN travellers is expected to increase as the ASEAN Economic Community, launched in 2015, seeks a more integrated regional economic strategy and the mobility of travellers within the region. As ASEAN member states enter this new social integration era from very different economic perspectives, the movement of travellers will enhance the integration of the ASEAN populaces. The research examined a variety of characteristics perceived in the travel decision, and several variables emerged, such as: 1) affordability, 2) accessibility, 3) visa exemption for ASEAN nationality, and 4) business and tourism activity.

Affordability

Transport affordability has been regarded as the ability to make transport movements (i.e. making basic movements to work and school). The ease of travel with affordable fares is offered to facilitate visits to other destinations and other essential trips without substantially confining the ability to undertake other important activities (Carruthers, Dick, & Saurkar, 2005). The concept of "essential travel" remains vague as it relies significantly on exchange with further training. Affordability is not an absolute term but reflects the relationship between the cost of the service and the consumer's income. In this research, affordability refers to the cost associated with travelling between the regions. As a result, travellers consider having a pleasant vacation in any particular location based on their ability to pay (Murthy, 2016). In conjunction with the growth of low-cost carriers (LCCs) and national carriers in opening up new destinations, has greatly contributed to intense competition in the aviation industry. One of the main benefits of deregulation is that consumers have more affordable fares and a greater selection of choices (Fedosova, 2016). As a result, the business sector has grown, and fares are becoming more cost-effective and affordable.

Accessibility

Accessibility entails the ease of achieving the intended purpose of travel or selection of travel objectives and the nature of the amenities that may be accessible. According to Gwilliams (2017), accessibility is often influenced by the generalised cost of travel, such as time, money, and convenience. Though it involves fulfilling particular travel criteria, accessibility is often critically dependent on the relative location of the desired destination set and the origin of the trip. Thus, the accessibility indicator will be the average generalised costs associated with meeting a set of quality travel requirements. Changes in the location of operations can increase accessibility in this conventional sense while reducing aggregate mobility. Airlines industry play a major role in bringing people closer together through promoting connectivity and ensuring air travel are affordable for the passengers (Akgüç, Beblavý, & Simonelli, 2018)

Nonetheless, accessibility is undoubtedly preferable to mobility as a transport planning objective since it is free from the adverse external effects of increased mobility (Litman, 2013). Improving accessibility can adversely affect productivity. Adopting accessibility as a fundamental objective will lead to shorter trips that may facilitate reaching the destination by various forms of transportation.

Visa Exemption for ASEAN Nationality

Visa exemption is a cornerstone of the establishment of the ASEAN Community, including the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the ASEAN Political and Security Community (APSC), and the ASEAN Social and Cultural Community (ASCC). In 2015, all ASEAN Communities urged ASEAN Member States to strengthen and reform in all countries

to ensure ASEAN Member States' commitment. Moreover, to help the ASEAN Economic Community, the liberalisation of goods, services, and labour is taking place. In addition, ASEAN will establish an ASEAN framework agreement on the visa exemption scheme. The visa exemption policy adopted by a country aims to increase the number of foreign tourist arrivals. As a result, countries with a high welfare level generally apply visa-free policies to countries whose welfare levels are considered equal – observing these developments, as one of the countries with tourist destinations that are in high demand by foreign tourists, Indonesia has begun to implement visa-exemption policies. The main objective of this policy is to increase the enthusiasm of foreign tourists to visit Indonesia so that it can be directly proportional to foreign exchange earnings in the tourism sector (Dhesinta, 2017). The key objectives of the visa exemption for citizens of ASEAN member states are to support and facilitate intra-ASEAN acceleration and movements of people, particularly intra-ASEAN travel.

Business and Tourism Activity

According to Chon and Maier (2010), there are two purposes for travel: leisure and business. Individuals who travel for pleasure and not for business, or those who are on vacation and want to share their experiences with their life partner, friends, and family members, are considered leisure travellers (Smith & Warbuton, 2012). In contrast, business travellers are individuals who travel for work in an irregular location – such as conferences and tradeshows, government business, and sales trips – and stay for a short time. Meanwhile, Rini (2020) argues that a strong and sustainable regional economy is produced when existing resources such as the community and the government effectively collaborate. The government, acting as a regulator, has a strategic role to play in seeking out numerous opportunities for businesses to actively engage in regional economic activities including intra-ASEAN businesses and travel. Hakinson (2004) divide the tourist destination into business tourists and leisure tourists. However, the ease with which people may travel influences international business, and meetings, seminars, and events are the primary sources of business tourism. Therefore, two indicators of trading activity must be considered for business tourists, such as: 1) the investment process made by an investor from a particular country in a specific ASEAN country, and 2) bilateral trade among the member states. Although the statistics do not find evidence that foreign direct investment (FDI) impacts travel intention among business tourists, they find convincing evidence of the trade balance growth (Parikesit & Magribi, 2004).

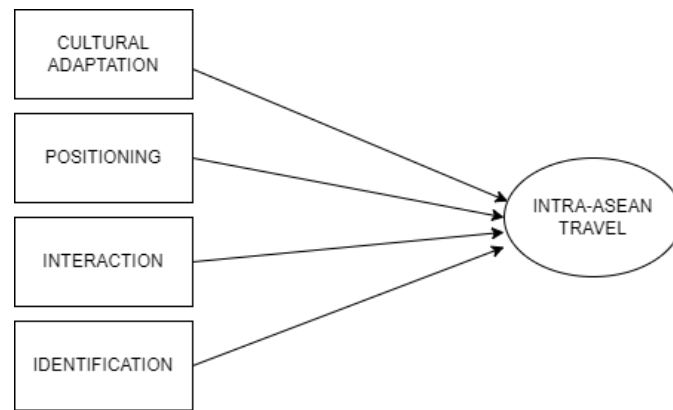


Figure 2. Research Framework

Method

In this quantitative research, a questionnaire survey is conducted to find the social integration dimension that connects individuals' preferences for travelling within the ASEAN region. Related secondary data is reviewed from the literature and previous research to verify the hypotheses. Subsequently, in February 2020, the research is conducted using a face-to-face and online survey platform to collect data from ASEAN nationality passengers at KLIA2 Airport Malaysia. Through the stratified random sampling technique, a total of 356 samples are obtained. The research evaluates the distribution of the data across some demographic characteristics of the respondents. The respondents are asked to indicate their age, nationality, educational level, and preferred destination based on this study. The quantitative data from the questionnaire responses are summarised and presented clearly. The current research adopts SEM (structural equation modelling) SmartPLS for statistical data analysis. The technique can model nomological networks by expressing theoretical concepts through constructs and connecting these constructs via a structural model to examine mediation relationships using regression analysis (Benitez, 2019).

Construct Validity and Reliability

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is used to determine the validity of Esser's social integration dimension. It is found that the sets of items assessing the components had equal relative magnitudes (Ozturk, 2010). In the confirmatory factor analysis, the covariance matrix is analysed with the maximum likelihood estimation method. Sharif and Nia (2018) assert that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's sphericity tests performed to analyse the determinants factor extraction were based on eigenvalues > 1 , communalities > 0.3 . Hence, the second analysis for CFA based on model fit assessment is conducted using several model fit indexes, such as Chi-square (χ^2) test, Chi-square/degree of freedom ratio < 5 , goodness-of-fit index (GFI) > 0.90 , comparative fit index (CFI) > 0.90 , normed fit index (NFI) > 0.90 , and standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) < 0.09 .

Results and Discussions

The majority of the participants are identified in the age range of 26 to 35 years old, consisting of 54% of the total respondents. Concerning nationality, the majority of the respondents are nationals of the six ASEAN founders. Indonesians constituted the majority (29%), followed by Malaysians (25%), Bruneians (11%), Thais (8.9%), Singaporeans (8.4%), and Filipinos (4%). As these six ASEAN countries are high middle-income countries, there is a greater likelihood for their citizens to use air travel for holidays overseas. The remaining travellers, on the other hand, are nationals of CLMV (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam) countries. Regarding the education level, most of the respondents (51%) are graduates with a Bachelor's degree and are young (three-quarters are below 35 years) with tertiary education. Data also indicates that 83% of the respondents preferred to travel within the ASEAN region.

Table 1. Discriminant Validity

	AVE	CA	ID	IN	Intra-ASEAN	P
Cultural Adaptation	0.575	0.758				
Identification	0.797	0.743	0.893			
Interaction	0.609	0.812	0.815	0.780		
Intra-ASEAN	0.499	0.761	0.621	0.731	0.706	
Positioning	0.621	0.723	0.646	0.782	0.693	0.788

Discriminant validity – Fornell –Larcker

Table 1 shows that the research extracts the AVE and cross factor loading for all latent variables. All items have higher loadings on their corresponding constructs than the cross-loadings on the other constructs in the model. The cross-loading results pertain to the social integration dimension item. All indicators loaded high on their constructs but low on other constructs. All items in the measurement models achieve discriminant validity as the constructs are distinctly different from one another. The AVE for each construct factor exceeds the respective squared correlation between the factors, therefore providing discriminant validity evidence (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 2. Enhancing Social Integration through Intra-ASEAN Travel

Construct	Items	Factor loading (CFA)	Cronbach's Alfa	rho_A	CR	AVE
Esser's Social Integration	Cultural Adaptation	0.765	0.851	0.890	0.705	0.515
	Positioning	0.730	0.794	0.810	0.933	0.521
	Interaction	0.781	0.919	0.922	0.920	0.509
	Identification	0.720	0.754	0.841	0.676	0.505
	Intra-ASEAN travel	0.701	0.706	0.704	0.703	0.501

As indicated in Table 2, the CFA results employing the dataset (n = 365) are used to corroborate and validate the factor structure determined by the EFA. The factor loadings ranged from 0.701 to 0.781. The model is found to be a good fit, as evidenced by goodness-of-fit indices ($\chi^2(23) = 83.016$, $p < 0.05$, $\chi^2/df = 2.598$, GFI = 0.840, CFI = 0.864, NFI = 0.850, SRMR = 0.060, Chi-square = 602.707). The Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.706 to 0.919. The composite reliability, which ranges from 0.676 to 0.933, is found greater than 0.7, indicating the construct's high reliability. Moreover, convergent validity is demonstrated as the AVE range for all the constructs exceeded 0.500, and the CR value is greater than AVE.

Table 3. Summary Hypothesis

	Original sample	Sample mean	STDEV	T statistic	P values	Decision
H ₁ -Cultural Adaptation→Intra-ASEAN	0.444	0.442	0.068	6.571	0.109	Accepted
H ₂ -Positioning→ Intra-ASEAN	0.214	0.213	0.065	3.287	0.092	Accepted
H ₃ -Interaction→ Intra-ASEAN	0.231	0.233	0.088	2.631	0.082	Accepted
H ₄ -Identification→ Intra-ASEAN	-0.034	-0.034	0.072	0.041	0.637	Rejected

The standardised beta estimates, Sample Mean (M), Standard Deviation (STDEV), T Statistics ($|O/STDEV|$), and probability value (P-value) for each construct in the research are tabulated in Table 3. Accordingly, H1 finds that there is a relationship between cultural adaptations and intra-ASEAN travel. Table 3 shows that the hypothesised path for H1 is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.001$, $p < 0.109$). Thus, hypothesis H1 is supported. This occurs because cultural adaptation as a dimension of social integration is examined by intra-ASEAN travellers' propensity to try local cuisine while visiting other ASEAN countries.

Consistently, H2 discovers that there is a link between position dimension and intra-ASEAN travel. According to Table 3, the relationship in H2 is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.001$, $p < 0.092$). The relationship between positioning and intra-ASEAN travel is depicted in this research, indicating that while travelling, ASEAN travellers prefer to queue at the ASEAN line in the airport (ASEAN line for immigration checkpoints). Additionally, the privilege of holding an ASEAN passport enables individuals to travel freely within ASEAN, which has increased their drive to travel more intra-regionally, enhancing the demand for more excellent connectivity. Furthermore, H3 ostensibly indicates a positive and significant ($\beta = 0.009$, $p < 0.082$) relationship between interaction and intra-ASEAN travel. The research finds that there is more social interaction within the ASEAN region because people have friends, family, and relatives who live in other ASEAN countries. They are also more willing to interact with the locals while visiting to make new friends from other countries. Travelling within the ASEAN region is more convenient since it is easier to communicate with people than travelling outside the region. Lastly, H4 examines the association between identification and intra-ASEAN

travel, and Table 3 indicates that H4 is negative and not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.637$, $p < 0.01$). ASEAN countries have developed a stronger familiarity with each other and a sense of belonging to the community over the past five years since the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). This can be represented through collective spirit or national pride.

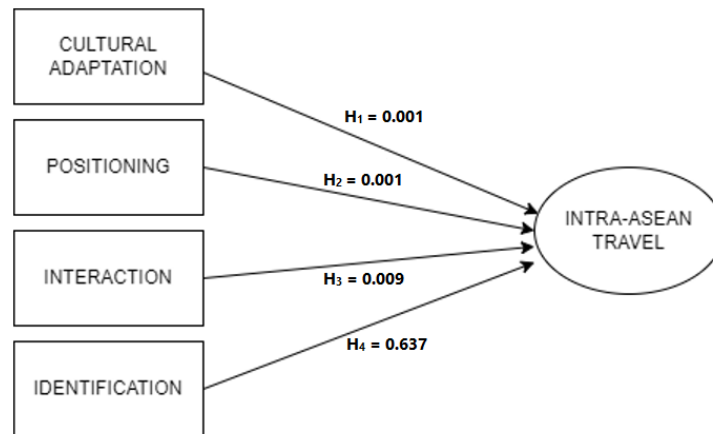


Figure 3. Hypothesis Result

The majority of respondents in this research are between 26 and 35 years old, making up 54% of the total. The research shows that most intra-ASEAN travellers are young adults, referred to as millennials. Millennials are important in ASEAN countries, where the populations have a high percentage of young people. The number of intra-ASEAN travellers has shown substantive figures over the past five years, as they represent nearly 70% of international arrivals into Malaysia. The remaining figures consist of travellers from other countries, such as China, India, Australia, etc. The five major ASEAN countries that contribute to arrivals in Malaysian are: Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Brunei, and Philippines. These countries have strong relations and share common objectives as a community. Furthermore, this group of travellers travels for various reasons, including vacations, school, business, and visiting friends. Backpacking is also a common option for young adults traveling within the region. Mazumder, Sultana, and Al-Mamun (2013) indicate that the ASEAN region shares a significant geographical, cultural, historical, archaeological, and social bond. Due to the convenience of air travel, Southeast Asia has the potential to become a fascinating destination for millennial travellers, which has made it a hotspot for cultural tourists in recent years. The data provides an exploratory account that links these four dimensions with ASEAN passengers to examine their motives for travelling within the region. Data shows that an exploration of passenger motives has improved understanding of the dimensions that influence their decision to travel, namely, cultural adaptation, positioning, and interaction.

Cultural adaptation or acculturation includes cultural knowledge and language competencies needed for interaction, which become a part of the socialization process into a society. It refers to the individual possessing essential language skills, cultural norms, and behaviour. Cultural adaptation occurs when groups of people with different cultures contact

each other for the long term, changing the culture of one or both groups. Cultural adaptation as a dimension of social integration is used in the research to describe travellers' willingness to try local cuisine during their vacation to another ASEAN country. The research finds that the people of the ASEAN countries share a common language, culture, friendliness, and hospitality. The willingness of intra-ASEAN travellers to try the local cuisine during their visit to the other ASEAN country. They also actively sought information about the ASEAN countries. Hence, the growing interest of ASEAN citizens in their region contributes to an increase in the frequency of flights between ASEAN member states.

Nevertheless, positioning is the main aspect of integration since it shows how individuals tend to integrate themselves into an existing social system and its established functions. This dimension is closely linked to cultural adaptation. The link between position and cultural adaptation can be seen in the willingness to move to other ASEAN countries due to the cultural and language similarity. Furthermore, the relationship between positioning and intra-ASEAN travellers demonstrates that while travelling within ASEAN countries, travellers prefer queuing ASEAN line at the airport if it is available (ASEAN line for immigration checkpoints). It shows that positioning helps in the growth of airlines by opening more ASEAN destinations to the secondary and tertiary cities and collaborating with the local airport to provide an ASEAN line at the immigration checkpoints. Additionally, the privileges associated with ASEAN passport holders make it easier for them to travel across ASEAN countries, encouraging them to travel more inside the ASEAN region.

Interaction dimension describes the social conduct in which individuals engage in reciprocal actions and behaviour. It refers to the social contact and communication between two people. In other words, interaction is closely linked to cultural adaptation since interaction further depends on the competencies acquired through cultural adaptation. However, these cultural and language skills can only be attained and developed through interaction with other social system members. The results shows there is increased social interaction throughout the ASEAN region due to people having friends, family, and relatives who live in different ASEAN countries. They are also more willing to interact with the locals while visiting to make new friends from other countries. Travelling within the ASEAN region is more convenient than travelling outside the region since communication is more accessible. Meanwhile, in terms of the relationship between the interaction dimension and the rise of intra-ASEAN travel, the high level of air connectivity plays a significant role. It means that, as a result of the rise of LCCs, numerous airlines have added new destinations to secondary and tertiary cities around ASEAN while maintaining affordable fares that encourage people to travel more.

Identification is the emotional relationship between individuals and the social system. It encompasses the emotional relationship between the actor and society, a subjective feeling of belonging, and identification with cognitive and emotional aspects. The feeling of belonging may develop later in the integration process due to participation and acceptance. For example, the identification process can be expressed through collective spirit or national pride. The identification dimension demonstrates that people have gained a stronger familiarity with ASEAN countries and a sense of belonging to the community over the last

five years since the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). Therefore, identification is about integration as a process of becoming a member of the collective structures at the ethnic, local, national, and regional levels. Unfortunately, this identification is the only factor that does not contribute to the motivation to travel intra-ASEAN, as those who travel intra-ASEAN do not feel a sense of belonging to the region. Unfortunately, this identification is the only dimension that has no bearing on social integration. The feelings of people traveling within ASEAN are unaffected by their ties to the region.

In addition, while economic integration is the top agenda for ASEAN integration, serious consideration should also be given to the socio-cultural aspects of the integration initiatives, particularly improving people's mobility across the region, as strengthening people-to-people connectivity through intra-ASEAN travel can act as a stepping stone to heightened awareness of regional integration and a growing sense of connectedness to the initiatives. It is linked to the social integration theory on individuals' desire to integrate into an existing system and become involved in the community to foster an ASEAN-centric mindset among them. As a result, the situation is linked to integration theory, as ASEAN should be more open to the experience and insights from neo-functionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism to build the theory of ASEAN integration as a one community, so-called the ASEAN way.

Conclusions and Recommendation

The findings contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the social integration dimensions, which Esser (2001) divide into four: cultural integration, positioning, interaction, and identification. Furthermore, the research provides an exploratory account that links the four dimensions with ASEAN passengers to examine their motives to travel within the region. Data shows that an exploration of passenger motives has improved our understanding of the dimensions that influence their decision to travel, namely cultural adaptation, positioning, and interaction. Interestingly, identification has been noted to be of less influence. The finding may be explained by Jones (2011), who reports that little attention has been made to determining the measures necessary to integrate individuals with varied cultural and ethnic identities into a broader regional identity or citizenship. Onyusheva (2018) has found a lack of awareness among ASEAN communities' communities. This occurs since the AEC's benefits are underutilised due to cultural differences, non-tariff measures, internal competition, and a lack of awareness and understanding about the region or insufficient information. Thus, it is reiterated that this research will enhance the understanding of social integration theory, with a special emphasis on ASEAN, which can assist the community in addressing issues related to the identification. Strategies might, therefore, be introduced to nurture the feeling of belonging among the ASEAN community and forge a united ASEAN identity. In this regard, the findings indicate that strengthening ASEAN's social integration will contribute to the region's sense of belonging, which is shaped primarily by geographic and cultural proximity and facilitated by the region's ease of travel. ASEAN should encourage

their citizens to actively participate in tourism because most intra-ASEAN travellers are mainly from Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, and Brunei.

In contrast, the research finds a lack of CLMV travellers. A joint promotion with a public-private partnership will be a good tourism promotion and development model. Developing and improving tourism in a country is important as a well-maintained and organised tourism destination will increasingly attract domestic and foreign tourists. The performance of tourism must be regulated and controlled by the member states. It can help boost community development, generate stable incomes for communities, boost sustainable tourism development through social integration, share the feeling of belongingness, and the growth of travel within the region has undoubtedly stimulated its economic growth through the communities' participation in various sectors. Eventually, this may lead to a complete understanding of ASEAN citizenship. For ASEAN to become a more people-centred organization, it needs to be less elitist, more accessible to everyone, and more aligned with the concerns and interests of the people of ASEAN. This can be done by encouraging the shift from a state-centred to a people-centred ASEAN. Lastly, the research provides the contribution of aspects of quantitative methods using SEM analysis in ASEAN studies and international relations. The research is expected to contribute to the development of international relations, especially the study of integration in the ASEAN region, with a quantitative approach, especially SEM, since this type of effort must be increased to improve international relations analysis.

Future research is suggested to enhance Esser's social integration theory by providing more comprehensive perspectives on ASEAN integration in other sectors such as tourism, education, and business. Another factor to examine is the states' interest in benefiting reciprocity from the integration plan. In addition, future research can also consider adding more sample sizes and broadening the location for data collection. Multiple LCCs in the region can also be investigated, followed by multiple international airports for data collection. Lastly, another important recommendation is to conduct an extensive study on several ASEAN countries to get more accurate information based on the involvement of more member states as it could generalise ASEAN as a whole.

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ORCID

Gabriella Fardhiyanti <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1411-5365>

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