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The impact of cultural distance on local residents perception of tourism development: The case of Dubai in UAE

Abstract

This study discusses the importance of understanding cultural differences between tourists and hosts for developing positive cross-cultural tourist interaction and its influence on the host's perception of sociocultural impacts of tourism. A logistic regression model is used to identify the significant positive as well as negative impacts perceived by hosts who view a significant cultural distance between them and tourists versus those who do not. It is found that there is a significant relationship between the perceived cultural differences and the perceived sociocultural impacts of tourism. The majority of respondents who do not perceive cultural differences agree to most of the perceived positive impacts of tourism. The results of running the regression model have identified improved quality of life as the largest positive impact. Becoming more proud of their city comes next, then improved infrastructure, followed by an increased variety of leisure attractions, and lastly more shopping varieties and facilities. On the other hand, the study found that higher prices for goods and services are the largest perceived negative impact. Tourist's failure to respect local customs and moral values comes next, followed by community conflict and tension, then loss of cultural identity, and increased crime. The implications of the results for tourism industry managements and marketers are presented as well as areas for future research.

Key words: tourism; sociocultural impact; cultural differences; modernization; Islamic destinations; Dubai

Introduction

Although culture has long been identified as an important reason why societies in different countries make different decisions (Ng, Anne Lee & Soutar, 2007), research on its impact in the context of tourism has been limited (Henderson, 2003; Ng, Anne Lee & Soutar, 2007). This study aims to address this gap by examining the influence of cultural distance on host's perception of the sociocultural impact of tourism.

The paper first examines host society perceptions of the sociocultural impacts of tourism and then investigates the relationship that may exist between the perceived positive and negative impacts of tourism with cultural differences between local residents and tourists. Understanding the importance of cultural differences between host community and tourists and the ways this influences the perceived sociocultural impacts of tourism is essential for developing positive cross-cultural tourists' interaction (Ng et al., 2007).

Considering the cultural differences between hosts and tourists has been identified as significant in the literature (Reisinger & Turner, 1988, 2003; Henderson, 2003) for developing positive cross-cultural host-tourist, interaction (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). However, studies on cultural differences between

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hosts and tourists have focused on its impact on tourists and not on the host society. This is critically important since the successful operation and sustainability of tourism rely greatly upon the enthusiasm of local residents and their support to tourism development and tourists' presence (Gursoy, Jurowski & Uysal, 2002). Moreover, tourism can develop and grow when host community has a positive attitude toward it and when they see their role in the process of the tourism development (Reisinger & Tuner, 1998). The lack of consultation with the local residents has been identified in the literature as one of the reasons for tourism-planning failure (Uysal, 2002). Research on residents' attitude to tourism can help tourism authorities and planners understand why residents support or oppose tourism (Williams & Lawson, 2001; Gursoy et al., 2002). Accordingly, research on residents' perception of sociocultural impact of tourism and the way it is influenced by the perceived cultural distance between tourists and hosts can help understand the attitude of the hosts, particularly in the case of non-Muslim tourists and resident Muslims.

The host community's perception of tourism impact was extensively studied in the literature (Reisinger & Turner, 2003; Gursoy et al., 2002; Ng et al., 2007). The findings of such studies suggest that local residents are influenced by the perceived impact of tourism in three main categories of costs and benefits (Gursoy et al., 2002): economic, environmental, and social (Gee, Mackens & Choy, 1989; Gunn, 1988; McIntosh & Goeldner, 1990; Murphy, 1985). The residents' perceptions of social and cultural impacts of tourism development have also been often studied (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Some studies suggest the economic impacts of tourism are perceived positively while the sociocultural and environmental impacts of tourism development are perceived negatively (Liu & Var, 1986; Milman & Pizam, 1988; Perdue, Long & Allen, 1987; Prentice, 1993). On the other hand, other studies suggest that hosts viewed tourism as a way of providing various social, cultural, and environmental benefits to their community. For example, tourism results in improved cultural facilities, heritage and natural areas conservation, and providing cultural exchange opportunities (Gursoy et al., 2002; McCool & Martin, 1994; Mathieson & Wall, 1982).

As mentioned earlier, past research works have examined the local residents' perceived sociocultural impacts. However, few studies have investigated the characteristics of host community that may affect residents' perceptions of tourism impacts. One of these main characteristics, that have attracted little attention in tourism literature is the cultural differences between hosts and tourists. Thus, the purpose of this research is to build on the existing body of knowledge and examine the relationship between the cultural differences and host's perception of the sociocultural impacts of tourism. More specifically, this research aims to answer the following questions:

1. How do hosts perceive and categorize sociocultural impacts of tourism?

2. Is there a direct relationship between the perception and categorization of tourism impacts and the perception of cultural differences between hosts and tourists?

Literature review

Tourism development does not only create benefits, but it also enforces costs (Wall & Mathieson, 2006). By weighing these benefits and costs, local residents develop their perception toward tourism development (Gursoy et al., 2002). Some tourism scholars have explored host community reactions towards tourism development in the context of social exchange theory (Ap, 1990, 1992; Lindberg & Johnson, 1997; Perdue, Long & Allen, 1990; Turner, 1986). This theory states that hosts are probably participating in the exchange by supporting tourism only if the perceived benefits of tourism exceed

the perceived cost of tourism (Allen, Hafer, Long & Perdue, 1994; Ap, 1992; Getz, 1994; Madrigal, 1993). Moreover, tourism literature shows that economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits are the key factors affecting residents' willingness to participate in an exchange (support for or oppose tourism development) (Reisinger & Turner, 2003; Gursoy et al., 2002; Ng et al., 2007).

Once a community becomes a destination, the consequences of tourism development will significantly influence the quality of life of the hosts (Wall & Mathieson, 2006). Such consequences include an increased number of people, higher prices of goods and services, traffic congestion, and several economic and employment- based effects (Allen et al., 1994; Ap, 1992; Getz, 1994; Allen et al., 1994). The knowledge and support of the local residents in tourism planning is essential for the success of tourism projects and initiatives (Ng et al., 2007; Reisinger & Turner, 1998, 2003). Providing world-class services and attractions is not enough for tourism success, as success requires the hospitality of the hosts. Fridgen (1991) suggested that local resident's anger, apathy, or distrust will eventually be conveyed to the tourists and may result in non-repeat visits to destinations where they feel unwelcome. Therefore, understanding local reactions and the factors that influence these attitudes is essential in achieving the goal of favorable support for tourism development.

A review of previous studies defines social contact as the similarities and differences between members (Reisinger & Tuner, 1998, 2003). There are three types of social contact between tourists and local residents depending on the distance in cultural background (Reisinger & Turner, 1998): where the cultural background (1) is the same; (2) is different, but the differences are not significant; and (3) is different and the differences are significant (Sutton, 1967). The bigger the cultural distance, the greater the probability that interaction between hosts and tourists will lead to friction and misunderstanding (Sutton, 1967; Reisinger & Turner, 2003; Henderson, 2003) because the more likely they will distort the meaning of each other's behavior (Triandis, 1977; Reisinger & Turner, 1998). This study is the first empirical study that examines the impact of the significant cultural differences between hosts and tourists on host's perception of the sociocultural impacts of tourism in Middle Eastern countries, where Islam is the dominant religion. Understanding the impact of cultural distance on hosts perception about tourism is specifically important in emerging destinations such as Dubai where the "distance"between a tourist's home culture and a destination's culture is significant. Such understanding will lead to successful planning for such visited destinations that has an ambition to achieve 20 million visitors in 2020 entitled as Dubai Tourism Vision 2020 announced in 2013 by the ruler of Dubai.

Socio-cultural impacts of globalisation and tourism in the United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates consists of seven "emirates", similar to states or provinces, each having originated from a different Middle Eastern nomadic tribal family (Taryam, 1987). According to Taryam (1987) the emirates united in 1971 to combat growing threats from surrounding nations who were improving their political situations by dealing in oil. The seven emirates have existed in relative peace under the leadership of a central government created with assistance from the crown of England since their inception (Taryam, 1987).

Historic societal structures in the UAE consisted of familial leadership, limited collaboration with Western society, or even most Middle Eastern societies, and nomadic subsistence (Heard-Bey, 2005). Modernity, including decisions to move toward a tourism-focused economy, has altered these realities. The leader of Dubai is one of the seven tribes and envisioned and enacted a tourism plan that was to

place the emirate at the forefront of the world's tourism industry (Stephenson & Ali-Knight, 2010; Alhosani & Zaidan, 2014). A component of this plan was to appeal to western visitors (Taryam, 1987).

Social and cultural impacts stemming from tourism are being felt within the UAE (Stephenson & Ali-Knight, 2010; Stephenson, 2014). The combination of Western schooling and Middle Eastern cultural heritage, while intermixing with a unique blend of Indian, European, African, and New World cultures, has created a unique social structure with no mirror images worldwide (Heard-Bey, 2005). Tribal differences within the UAE have changed so quickly according to some researchers that it is likely the only differences left to tell tribes apart exist genetically (Heard-Bey, 2005). Others believe some socio-cultural differences do still exist. For example, there are gastronomical differences signifying tribal affiliation and societal heritage according to (Stephenson & Ali-Knight, 2010). Basically, in less than forty years the tribes changed from displaying stark differences to potentially minute differences such as gastronomical choices.

Another example of socio-cultural changes brought about by westernization includes religiosity, which is under pressure (Fattah, 2005). The local citizens are predominantly Muslim. There are only 200,000 local citizens out of the 4.4 million people currently residing in the country though. The remaining 4.2 million inhabitants are predominantly affiliated with other religious beliefs. Indians have referred to Dubai as "the best-run Indian city"(Fattah, 2005, para. 1) and Westerners, of which there are more than 300,000, have many of the highest paying jobs in the country. Furthermore, the younger and older generations have a large gap in thought process and belief. This has led to a plethora of issues between ages, ethnicities, religions, and cultures, according to Fattah (2005) and Elessawy and Zaidan (2014) including differences in dress, store hours, holy days, traditions, media, and even tourism and the economy.

Not all changes from globalization are negative. There are also positive impacts being generated by the multiculturalism in the burgeoning nation. Positive impacts noted by Fattah (2005) include openness, worldwide acceptance, greater access to Western education and freedom, economic growth and development, limited corruption, and stability. Through multiple documentations of the United Arab Emirates' cultural situation (Fattah, 2005; Henderson, 2006) it is obvious a tightrope is currently being tread; how can a country hold on to its cultural roots while growing and developing with Western values?

Forty years ago Dubai was one of the least developed regions in the world (Sharpley, 2008). Today its landscape contains luxury residences, the world's largest shopping complex, the world's tallest steel tower, possibly the world's most luxurious hotels (Burj Al Arab), the first large-scale man-made islands ("Palm"and "The World"), theme parks, international sporting events and concerts, private bridges, double-decked highway flyovers, air-conditioned bus-stops, a monorail system, and entertainment complexes (Smith, 2010). Modern Dubai has already been identified as well positioned on the international tourism map as a destination (Bageen, 2007; Sharpley, 2008). Dubai projects 20 million tourists annually by 2020 (DTCM, 2013). How this growth occurred is important to understanding the current dichotomy of socio-cultural factors and western influences brought about by tourism.

Dubai's forays into tourism development included such studies as impacts, environmental degradation, and capacity (Stensgaard, 2005). Stensgaard (2005) points out that research showed a significantly large capacity was possible in Dubai, thus resulting in the mass tourism concept Dubai chose to take, but as more has been learned in recent decades about the volatile nature of the environmental and socio-cultural affects, and as societal functions lessen the amount of impacts that is deemed acceptable, there has been a necessary re-visitation of impact policies. To date these re-visitations have focused on

environmental concerns, while recognizing that socio-cultural influences are problematic (Stensgaard, 2005).

The barriers to development in the Middle East have been primarily societal in nature, yet the release of barriers in the form of a neoliberal approach to development in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates makes this country fertile ground for investment (Henderson, 2006). This investment has come in the form of tourism. The investment is paying off in growth (Zaidan, 2015).

The DTCM (Dubai Tourism and Commerce Marketing) department has published its figures on their website of Government Dubai for 2014. The Emirate welcomed 11.6 million visitors in 2014, a 5.6% increase over 2013. Exempting 13 more European countries from visa requirements to enter UAE applied since March 2014 has significantly contributed to the growth in number of visitors from this continent (+2.8% to 2.9 million tourists) (Government of Dubai, 2014). The Director General of the Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) explained that the growth that Dubai is experiencing is due to many factors including the coordinated city-wide destination management strategy; mega tourism structures, world-class infrastructure; and Dubai location at the crossroads of East and West, he added that "historically the city was seen by some markets as a stopover destination but in recent years it has become the destination"(DTCM, 2013, p. 1).

Furthermore, Dubai has developed its economy to the point where oil accounts for only 7 per cent of the emirate's GDP; tourism accounts for 22.6% of the emirate's annual GDP (DTCM, 2013). The success of tourism in the UAE is recognized as paramount to the sustainability of the country (Bageen, 2007; Sharpley, 2008). Issues known to plague tourism have accompanied the pace of changes in domestic economic patterns brought about through tourism.

On the other hand, Dubai has experienced quick growth alongside problematic qualities. For example, it has long been recognized that tourism can be correlated with un-sustainable modernization processes, which can lead to effects on culture and local societies (Erisman, 1983; Nunez, 1963; Turner & Ash, 1975). Furthermore, tourism can be perceived as an "enemy of authenticity and cultural identity"(Turner & Ash, 1975, p. 197). The accelerated urbanization that accompanied a focus on tourism threatens the historical districts and local heritage of the emirate, which has put tourism at the core of it's economic development plans in order to diversify their economy and decrease their dependency on fluctuating oil prices (Stephenson & Night, 2010). The growth of tourism in Dubai has brought internal socio-cultural effects to the country. Local residents may perceive these effects as negative.

Moreover, according to the MasterCard Global Destination Cities Index (2014), Dubai ranks fifth among top global destinations for international travellers, rising two slits from the seventh position in 2013. Dubai, not only jumped ahead of New York and Istanbul to take the fifth place, but it already welcomed almost 12 million overnight international visitors in 2014, meaning rising by 7.5 per cent from 2013. Paris and Singapore, for example, with 1.8% and 3.1% growth rates respectively, are both eclipsed by Dubai's 7.5% growth rate. If their present growth rates continue, then Dubai would surpass both Paris and Singapore within five years only (MasterCard Global Destination Cities Index, 2014).

The numbers of overnight international visitors can also be demonstrated on a per resident basis for each of the top twenty destination cities to show the degree of their impacts. Figure 1 reviews the ratios between international visitors and residents in the top destination cities in the world both 2009 and 2014. Whereas the ratios have grown for the top 20 destination cities between 2009 and 2014, Dubai has the highest ratio of 4.8 visitors per resident, up from 4.2 in 2009.

Figure 1
Top 20 global destinations by overnight visitor arrivals per city resident (2009 vs. 2014)
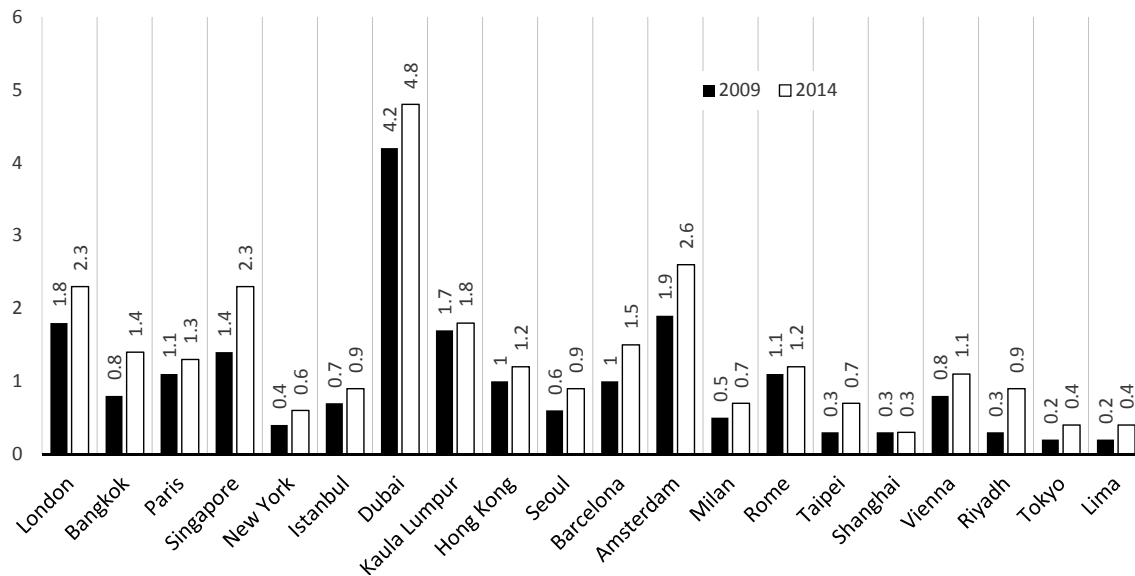
Source: Adapted from MasterCard Global Destination Cities Index (2014).

Little attention has been paid to tourism impacts on the host community in Dubai despite the rapid tourism development (Bageen, 2007; Balakrishan, 2008; Govers & Go, 2005, 2009; Henderson, 2006a, 2006b; Junemo, 2004; Sharpley, 2008). It has been hypothesised that the socio-cultural impacts of tourism have been strong in the emirate, particularly in regards to a loss of heritage and culture (Stephenson & Ali-Knight, 2010). Specifically, the westernization of social and cultural elements stemming from tourism growth may be impacting the emirate (Stephenson, 2014).

This study seeks to better understand the impacts of tourism growth on Dubai's socio-cultural factors. The study views Dubai's existing tourism influences under a framework established by Boniface and Cooper (2005); their model sought to identify social and cultural capacity, which they define as "a measure of the ability of the host community to tolerate tourism"(p. 33). The framework is particularly apt to this case study because the host country, Dubai, has experienced tourism growth in particular from western nations.

Social and cultural capacity

The most complicated problems that are associated with tourism development are inherent in the relationship between local residents and tourists (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Moreover, the destination capacity and the quality of life in the host society can limit tourism growth (Gursoy et al., 2002). When the limits are exceeded, the hosts may develop negative attitudes towards tourism and tourists presence. Once negative attitudes become beliefs, barriers to tourism development will appear (Gursoy et al., 2002). The perceptions and beliefs of the local residents could be identified as the most reliable indicator of the limits to tourism growth and the increase of tourists' arrivals to the destination (Ng et al., 2007).

Boniface and Cooper (2005) define social and cultural capacity as, "A measure of the ability of the host community to tolerate tourism"(p. 33). Their study noted that socio-cultural capacity has been recently added to typologies of capacity but its importance had not been recognized. Furthermore,

Boniface and Cooper (2005) described what socio-cultural sustainability conveys within the context of a case, writing:

"*One of the most important tests of a sustainable tourism destination is the level of involvement of the local community in plans and decisions relating to tourism development. Whilst there is a concern that local residents have a lack of knowledge about tourism, new techniques such as 'destination visioning' (where the locals determine the future of tourism), and 'limits to acceptable change' where they determine levels of future development, are increasingly being adopted and are a form of capacity management*" (p. 34).

Boniface and Cooper (2005) further explained that tourism planning must be central to these issues and added, "*Such planning has evolved from an inflexible, physical planning approach to a flexible process which seeks to maximize the benefits and minimize the costs of tourism, whilst at the same time recognizing the 'holistic' nature of tourism – we must plan for the visitor as well as the resource*"(p. 32).

The tenets of sustainability, as Boniface and Cooper note, include socio-cultural indicators of well-being. When society is under pressure on the verge its tipping point, an integral 'socio-cultural capacity', has been reached. The framework that Boniface and Cooper (2005) presented serves as the framework for understanding socio-cultural impacts in this study and under which the findings in this paper are investigated.

Methodology

This paper examines host perceptions of the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in Dubai in relation to contemporary literature. It identifies the negative as well as the positive impacts of tourism perceived by local residents. It also uses logistic regression model to investigate the significant perceived negative and positive impacts of tourism of those who perceive significant cultural distance exists between hosts and tourists versus those who do not. T-tests in addition to Chi-square tests are used to examine the relationship between cultural distance and the host's perception of the sociocultural impacts of tourism.

The study exists in two phases. First, an exploratory approach was taken to examine host perceptions of the socio-cultural impacts of tourism. Research in this area in Dubai is new and as of yet undefined; therefore a qualitative approach was taken (Creswell, 2009). A qualitative survey, consisting of in-depth interviews with local residents, was carried out in order to determine the perceived sociocultural influences of tourism on this host community. The key issues noted from the literature review were developed into questions to examine the extent to which they coincided with residents' own views.

The collection of qualitative data leads to theory construction (Creswell, 2009); specifically Boniface and Cooper (2005) were realized as an existing model that may explain the course of Phase II that is a survey of local residents. The survey instrument was created based on findings from Phase 1. The negative and positive sociocultural impacts that are considered in the survey instrument are illustrated in Table (4) and (5). The response range was on a five point Likert scale (1, strongly disagree and 5, strongly agree).

The data for each phase was collected via a convenience sampling method. Potential respondents were approached by researchers and asked to participate in the study after explaining the nature of the study and its objectives. Only Emirati citizens were targeted in streets, malls, coffee houses, and restaurants within Dubai. The local culture was respected in order to minimize the number of Emiratis who would reject to participate. For example, female researchers approached female respondents and male researchers approached male respondents.

Findings and discussion

The demographic characteristics of participants in the sample are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Socioeconomic characteristics of participants in the sample

	Socioeconomic characteristics	Number of responses	Percent of total
Gender	Male	216	50.5
	Female	212	49.5
Marital status	Married	230	53.7
	Single	198	46.3
Age	20-30	230	29.7
	31-40	135	32.8
	41-50	94	22.9
	51-60	32	7.8
	60 and over	28	6.8
Number of children	0	142	33.4
	1	90	21.2
	2	127	29.9
	3	45	10.6
	4	10	2.4
	5 or more	11	2.6
Education	Primary school	11	2.6
	Middle school	37	8.7
	High school	136	31.9
	University	181	42.5
	Postgraduate-university	61	14.3
Occupation	Self-employed	69	16.3
	Government	168	39.6
	Private sector	65	15.3
	Student	71	16.7
	Retired	7	1.7
	Unemployed	35	8.3
	Other	9	2.1
Annual income (USD $)	Less than 8,000	72	17.9
	8,000-11,000	138	34.2
	12,000-15,000	116	28.8
	16,000-19,000	50	12.4
	More than 19,000	27	6.7

N=428

With regard to differences in culture, the majority of the respondents (62.4%) indicate that culturally, there is significant difference between the hosts and the tourists, while 37.6% believe that there is no significant difference (Table 2).

Table 2
Perception of cultural differences between hosts and tourists

Do you perceive significant cultural differences between local residents and tourists

	Response	Percentage
Yes	261	62.4
No	157	37.6

N=428

Dubai, in which Islam is the religion of the local residents, such information collected helps to construct a composite picture, allowing comment on the interaction between tourism and religion and conclusions about the implications of such connections. To assess if there is a relationship between gender and perception of cultural differences, a chi-square test for association between these two variables is performed. A statistically significant difference is at 0.05 (Sig.=0.000) indicating a strong association between gender and perception of cultural differences between hosts and tourists. Cross-tabulation analysis has shown that the majority of the participants (83.3%) who indicated that there were significant differences between local residents and tourists were women.

Contradictions between religious observances and visitor requirements are identified in the Dubai case, which is an interesting context within which to explore these contradictions given possible friction in society between modernization and demands of Islamic religion which is central to everyday life.

Positive impacts

In general, it is found that local residents who perceive no significant cultural differences between hosts and tourists agree to all of the perceived positive impacts of tourism. These positive impacts are shown in Table 3; becoming prouder of Dubai (with a mean value of 4.56), improved quality of life (4.32), more shopping varieties and facilities (4.30), increased variety of leisure attractions (4.12), improved infrastructure (4.04), improving image of Dubai (3.65), learning about other nations (3.50), promoting understanding among different nations (3.2), meeting interesting (3.14), improved cultural facilities (3.11), heritage conservation (3.04), and tolerance towards cultural difference (3.01).

Tourism has led to positive attributes for local residents in the form of primarily pride in their host community and personal growth in a better global understanding. This may be explained by the fact that in the case of mass tourism as in Dubai, tourism becomes highly developed and facilities and resort areas expand, contacts between the guests and their hosts do not occur or are mainly infrequent (Wall & Mathieson, 2006). Billions of dollars have been spent on tourism infrastructure and facilities in Dubai that have resulted in the increased variety of leisure attractions, more shopping facilities, improved infrastructure, and improved quality of life which has ultimately led to an improved destination image.

Table 3
Perceived positive impacts of tourism development

Positive impacts	Category	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	T-test d.f=1	Significance (two-tailed)
I became prouder of my city	Group 1	271	4.56	0.773	1.18	7.206	0.000
	Group 2	153	3.38	0.538			
Improved quality of life	Group 1	271	4.32	0.655	0.96	6.619	0.000
	Group 2	152	3.36	0.692			
More shopping varieties and facilities	Group 1	272	4.30	0.778	0.97	5.509	0.012
	Group 2	153	3.33	0.603			
Increased variety of leisure attractions	Group 1	271	4.12	0.809	0.78	8.113	0.000
	Group 2	149	3.34	1.013			
Improved infrastructure	Group 1	271	4.04	0.899	0.66	6.568	0.000
	Group 2	151	3.38	1.019			
Improved the image of the destination	Group 1	272	3.65	1.372	0.80	5.673	0.000
	Group 2	153	2.70	1.373			
Learning about other nations	Group 1	272	3.50	0.723	0.99	2.592	0.012
	Group 2	152	2.51	0.780			

Table 3 **Continued**

Positive impacts	Category	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	T-test d.f=1	Significance (two-tailed)
Promoting understanding among different nations	Group 1	270	3.20	0.682	0.69	5.649	0014
	Group 2	151	1.52	0.587			
Meeting interesting people	Group 1	270	3.14	0.825	1.96	4.443	0.003
	Group 2	154	1.18	1.000			
Improved cultural facilities	Group 1	273	3.11	0.982	2.02	2.649	0.001
	Group 2	154	1.09	1.100			
Heritage conservation	Group 1	272	3.04	1.060	2.01	4.649	0.038
	Group 2	153	1.03	1.114			
Tolerance towards cultural difference	Group 1	270	3.01	1.145	2.00	3.443	0.003
	Group 2	149	1.01	1.241			

Response range is on 5-Likert scale (1, strongly disagree and 5, strongly agree).
Group 1: Local residents who perceive no significant cultural differences between hosts and tourists
Group 2: Local residents who perceive significant cultural differences between hosts and tourists

On the other hand, Table 4 shows that local residents who perceive significant cultural differences have opinions ranging from disagree (1.01) to these benefits to agree (3.38). The positive impacts that they agree with are: becoming prouder of Dubai (with a mean value of 3.38), improved quality of life (3.36), more shopping varieties (3.33), increased variety of leisure attractions (3.34), and improved infrastructure (3.38). The impacts they disagree with are: promoting understanding among different nations (with a mean value of 1.52), meeting interesting people (1.18), improved cultural facilities (1.09), heritage conservation (1.03), and tolerance towards cultural difference (1.01). They were neutral regarding the following sociocultural impacts: improved the image of the destination (with a mean value of 2.70), and learning about other nations (2.51).

It is clear from Table 4 that there is a significant difference between local residents who perceive significant cultural distance and those who do not in their opinions of the positive socio-cultural impacts of tourism. T-test for equality of means revealed values of $p < 0.05$, which leads to reject the null hypothesis (H0) of no difference between the two groups (Group 1, local residents who perceive no significant cultural differences between hosts and tourists, Group 2, local residents who perceive significant cultural differences between hosts and tourists).

In running the logistic regression model to identify the most significant positive socio-cultural impacts, the results show that there are five significant socio-cultural impacts of tourism in Dubai. These positive impacts are: making citizens prouder of their city, an improved quality of life, more shopping varieties and facilities, increased variety of leisure attractions, and improved infrastructure.

Table 4
**Variables in the equation
(positive socio-cultural impacts of tourism development in Dubai)**

Positive impacts	B	SE	Wald	df	Significance
I became prouder of my city	3.874	0.657	36.654	1	0.000
Improved quality of life	3.889	0.658	37.675	1	0.000
More shopping varieties and facilities	2.989	0.588	27.987	1	0.000
Increased variety of leisure attractions	3.236	0.565	28.995	1	0.000
Improved infrastructure	3.298	0.650	33.544	1	0.000
Constant	-6.665	1.081	45.658	1	0.000

Negative impacts

As the second objective of the study seeks to identify the negative socio-cultural impacts of tourism development, Table 5 demonstrates some of these negative impacts perceived by citizens. Mainly, local residents who perceive significant cultural distance agree to all of the negative impacts of tourism listed in this study. These negative impacts are: higher prices for goods and services (mean value of opinions is 4.52), community conflict and tension (4.36), higher cost for real estate and land (4.09), tourists fail to respect local customs and moral values (4.01), loss of cultural identity (3.79), increased crime (3.76), and the presence of the tourists disturb the local people's lives (3.32), cultural clashes due to differences (3.21), loss of access to places and recreational activities (3.11), cultural erosion due to copying tourist behaviour (3.06).

On the other hand, citizens who do not perceive significant cultural differences have neutral opinions regarding community conflict and tension (mean value of opinions is 2.89), tourists fails to respect local customs and moral values (2.89), loss of cultural identity (2.87), and increased crime (2.18). However, as Table 6 shows they disagree with the presence of the tourists disturbing the local people's lives (1.98), cultural clashes due to differences (1.95), loss of access to places and recreational activities (1.631), cultural erosion due to copying tourist behaviour (1.81).

Lastly, they do agree with the following negative impacts: higher prices for goods and services (mean value of opinions is 3.72), and higher cost for real state and land (3.55). Furthermore, T-test for equality of means emphasizes that there is a significant difference in opinions between the two groups (group 1 and 2), as demonstrated in Table 6.

Table 5
Perceived negative impacts of tourism development

Negative impacts	Category	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	T-test d.f=	Significance (two-tailed)
Higher prices for goods and services	Group 1	272	3.72	1.035	-0.80	-6.306	0.000
	Group 2	152	4.52	1.112			
Community conflict and tension	Group 1	270	2.89	1.522	-1.47	-5.676	0.000
	Group 2	153	4.36	1.03			
Higher cost for real state and land	Group 1	272	3.55	0.985	0.54	-4.343	0.000
	Group 2	153	4.09	0.986			
Fails to respect local customs and moral values	Group 1	271	2.89	0.912	-1.12	-6.163	0.000
	Group 2	149	4.01	0.876			
Loss of cultural identity	Group 1	270	2.87	0.821	-0.92	-3.782	0.005
	Group 2	151	3.79	0.877			
Increased crime	Group 1	272	2.18	0.867	-1.58	-4.583	0.000
	Group 2	152	3.76	0.944			
The presence of the tourists disturb the local people live	Group 1	274	1.98	1.406	-1.34	-3.589	0.000
	Group 2	153	3.32	1.378			
Cultural clashes due to differences	Group 1	273	1.95	1.251	-1.26	-2.776	0.009
	Group 2	152	3.21	1.035			
Loss of access to place and recreational activities	Group 1	274	1.63	1.067	-1.48	-3.735	0.000
	Group 2	151	3.11	1.522			
Cultural erosion due to copying tourist behaviour	Group 1	271	1.81	0.954	-01.25	-2.543	0.000
	Group 2	148	3.07	0.982			

Response range is on 5-Likert scale (1, strongly disagree and 5, strongly agree).
Group 1: Local residents who perceive no significant cultural differences between hosts and tourists.
Group 2: Local residents who perceive significant cultural differences between hosts and tourists.

In running the logistic regression model of the negative impacts of tourism, Table 6 indicates five significant negative impacts. The higher price for goods and services is the largest perceived negative impact. A tourist fails to respect local customs and moral values come next, then community conflict and tension, followed by the loss of cultural identity, and then increased crime.

Table 6
Variables in the equation (negative impacts of tourism development)

Negative impacts	B	SE	Wald	df	Signifi-cance
Higher prices for goods and services	-0.731	0.237	6.345	1	0.000
Fails to respect local customs and moral values	-0.891	0.266	10.976	1	0.000
Community conflict and tension	-0.908	0.230	11.777	1	0.000
Loss of cultural identity	-0.910	0.298	11.812	1	0.000
Increased crime	-1.244	0.277	21.989	1	0.000
Constant	1.829	0.344	28.998	1	0.000

This study discusses the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in Dubai. It identifies the negative as well as the positive impacts of tourism perceived by Emirati citizens. It also uses a logistic regression model to investigate significant perceived negative and positive impacts of tourism. T-tests were used in order to identify the relationship between cultural distance and the way local residents perceive the sociocultural impacts of tourism. The results have shown that there is a significant relationship.

According to Henderson (2003), tourism movements and industry practices are determined by conditions in society and mirror unequal gender relations where these exist. Male preeminence is a characteristic of many Muslim countries where women are denied a place in public life. This study has investigated if there is a relationship between gender of the participants and the way they perceive cultural distance. The chi-square test for association between 'gender' and 'perceived cultural distance' was performed. A statistically significant difference is identified at 0.05 (Sig.=0.000) indicating a strong association between these two variables. The study results have shown that the majority of the respondents (83.3%) who perceive significant cultural distance between hosts and tourists are women.

Sonmez (2001, p. 123) claims that 'women's inferior status is legitimized' in the Middle East by 'mis-interpretation' of the religious texts, resulting in barriers to participation in tourism as well as other spheres of activity. At the same time, Emirati women believe that a proper textual interpretation actually enhances and protects their rights (Afshar, 1998). Veiling is also seen as an assertion of cultural identity that they are proud of and not a symbol of female oppression (Moghadam, 1994).

The study suggests that rapid modernization and a westernized approach of tourism development have resulted in negative impact on the local residents in Dubai. The perception of tourism leading to the loss of the Emirati authenticity is very considerable when planning for hosting 20 million visitors by 2020. This is further endorsed by other academic studies Stepehenson, Russel, and Edgar (2010) and Stephenson (2014) who noted that the development of modern heritage sidesteps the production of ethnically founded heritage experiences, leading to a process described by Giddens (1994, pp. 92–93) as the "de-traditionalization of social order", as the past has "lost its hold"because the future significantly attracts "compelling interest".

Furthermore, Junemo (2004) describes the Palm as a "... generic place whose symbolism does not relate to a specific culture". This study may debate that Dubai is becoming a destination of symbolic reflection rather than a destination of rooted historical and cultural identity. Additionally, another

study by Govers and Go (2005, p. 86) based on results of a content analysis of photographic and textual material of 20 Dubai-based company websites, the study suggested that the image of Dubai did not "coherently reflect its true cultural identity". The authors further note that host culture can be perceptually misrepresented if the destination image of tourists is not accurate and 'rooted in a sense of place' (Govers & Go, 2005, p. 87). Furthermore, the finding of this study strongly coincides with those of Stephenson (2013) as he noted that the polished image of Dubai ignores the 'other side of Dubai' as the lives of ordinary Emiratis with normal lifestyles and patterns of consumption.

Stephenson (2013, p. 7) further notes, "The worlds of those living in such older communities such as Satwa, Al Jafilya and Al Karama thus rarely feature in the touristic vision of Dubai. These lifestyles are not fully acknowledged by Western media, which has either focused on its 'razzmatazz' image or its 'darker side' – i.e. a world of two extremes: the super-rich and the poor". Additionally, Park and Stephenson (2007) argue that heritage representations and resources support enduring shared social memories of the host community as well as encouraging a sense of "prestige and human continuity".

On the other hand, Stephenson and Night (2010) argue that popular interpretation of the concept 'hospitality' should be confined to obviously represent the ethnic and social dynamics of the host community. This is critically associated with matters of national and cultural ownership, where tourism and hospitality should be considered, to some extent, as products of the Emirati culture and society.

For this reason and from ethical and political perspectives Stephenson and Night (2010) debate that that Emiratis should be positioned in vital service sector roles within tourism and hospitality industries in order to deliver and manage the products and services.

Additionally, global hotels chains in Dubai often represent Western and not cultural or Islamic appearances and interpretation of hospitality (Stephenson, Russell & Edgar, 2010). Thus, this study also suggests the expansion of Emirati human capital within the hospitality and tourism industries that would certainly reflect more indigenous values and cultural products of the host community. Further research is suggested to examine ways in which Dubai as a tourism destination could develop the Emirati and the Islamic concepts of hospitality in its approach for tourism development.

The perception that tourism development did not lead to heritage conservation coincides strongly with those of Stephenson and Ali- Night (2010), where they note that the Director of the General Projects Department at Dubai Municipality believes that the local residents are losing their built heritage at the rate of one historic building a day. If these are not to be protected by law, there is a little that can be done to reverse them.

On the other hand, failure of tourists to respect local customs and moral values has been identified in the study as the second most significant sociocultural negative impact. This has implications in tourism marketing and planning in Dubai. Promotional strategies, specifically those that target western tourists, may highlight the cultural differences and include some information about Emirati culture and how it could be respected. All tourist attractions including hotels, shopping venues and malls, restaurants, and leisure attractions in Dubai should have promotion material to be distributed to the tourists about the Emirati culture and promote tourists to respect it.

Some Islamic tourism destinations may find tourists more acceptable than others, fairly depending on the degree of moderation, open-mindedness, and a community gains and losses (Henderson, 2003). Like Malaysia the case that has been investigated by Henderson (2003), Dubai is generally considered relatively moderate so positive widespread reactions have been recorded in the Emirate. Nevertheless, participants in this study have raised concerns about rapid modernization and Westernisation that

may ultimately result in the loss of their cultural identity and authenticity. Therefore, this study is consistent with Henderson (2003) that suggests that such results are inconclusive, thus there is critical need for further research into Muslim perceptions of sociocultural impacts of tourism development on their communities.

Recommendations and conclusion

This study examined the influence of cultural distance between hosts and tourists on the hosts and the way they perceive negative and positive sociocultural impacts of tourism. The results have shown that there is a significant relationship between cultural distance and the way the hosts perceive the sociocultural impacts of tourism. In Dubai, this has been the first research on socio-cultural impact of tourism based on a primary data from a survey of local residents. However, the results of the study has significant implications for policy-makers in the tourism industry as it provides information on the host community's perception and attitudes to tourists presence and to tourism development.

This exploratory study has profiled the socio-cultural impact of tourism development and tourist presence in Dubai and highlighted the citizens perceived negative as well as positive impacts of tourism and tourists' presence. Relying on Boniface and Cooper (2005), as a framework, positive and negative socio-cultural impacts were identified as existing due to tourism in Dubai. Investigating the perceived positive impacts of tourism, it is found that citizens who perceive no significant cultural distance between tourists and hosts have agreed to all of the perceived positive impacts of tourism identified in this study. These positive impacts are: becoming prouder of Dubai, improved quality of life, more shopping varieties and facilities, increased variety of leisure attractions, improved infrastructure, an improving image of Dubai, learning about other nations, promoting understanding among different nations, meeting interesting people, improved cultural facilities, heritage conservation, and tolerance towards cultural difference.

Empirical results of the regression model show that citizens perceive improved quality of life as the largest positive impact of tourism, followed by becoming prouder of their city, improved infrastructure, increased variety of leisure attractions, more shopping varieties and facilities, and an improved image of the destination. These results indicate that citizens who do not perceive significant cultural distance are aware of the positive impacts that tourism may bring to their society. On the other hand, citizens who do perceive significant cultural distance between tourists and hosts mostly have neutral opinions or disagree with these positive impacts and accordingly may be much less supportive for tourism development and Dubai Tourism Vision 2020 of attracting 20 million visitors.

Investigating the perceived negative impacts of tourism, it is found that citizens who perceive significant cultural distance between tourists and hosts have agreed to all of the perceived positive impacts of tourism identified in this study. These negative impacts are: higher prices for goods and services, community conflict and tension, higher cost for real estate and land, tourists fail to respect local customs and moral values, loss of cultural identity, increased crime, the presence of the tourists disturbing the local people's lives, cultural clashes due to differences, the loss of access to places and recreational activities, cultural erosion due to copying tourist behaviour.

Empirical results of the regression model showed that a higher price for goods and services is the largest perceived negative impact. Tourists' failure to respect local customs and moral values comes next, followed by community conflict and tension, then loss of cultural identity, and increased crime.

Contradictions between religious observances and visitor requirements in Dubai are identified in this study, which is an interesting context to explore these contradictions given possible friction in society between modernization and demands of a religion which is central to everyday life. Gender differences have also appeared to be a critical factor as the majority of those who perceive significant cultural differences between hosts and tourists are women. This coincides with previous studies where gender differences in interaction with tourists are observed elsewhere (Henderson, 2003; Kinnaird & Hall, 1994; Swain, 1995). However, it is very striking in Dubai where Islamic cultures impose severe restrictions on women. While recognizing variations in perceptions of cultural differences between hosts and tourists in Dubai case study, women do appear to be disadvantaged as hosts and workers in the tourism industry in Islamic destinations.

The socio-cultural impacts of tourism described here are the effects of Dubai's approach to tourism development on host communities as well as of direct and indirect contacts with tourists. For many reasons, local residents often are the weaker part, particularly women in Islamic tourists destinations, in interactions with their guests and service providers, leveraging any influence they might have. These influences are not always obvious, as they are challenging to measure and are often indirect or hard to identify. The impacts become more obvious when tourism leads to changes in rooted cultural image as the case of Dubai and thus intimidates local ethnic identity. Conversely, tourism can also cause positive impacts as fostering pride among residents of their city.

In its foray for rapid modernization, there is a critical need for the city to reassess its official responses to the challenges of effectively balancing the demands of a religion, which is central to the everyday life of local residents and international tourist requirements. To avoid dissatisfaction of hosts, marketers should focus more on cultural differences between tourists and hosts and the impact of these differences on the tourist's cultural needs and experiences. Tourism marketers and authorities should be concerned about the influence of cultural differences on the behaviour of the local residents and develop strategies to minimize their negative effects. The dissatisfaction of the hosts about the behaviour of tourists, that may be explained as a failure to respect the local culture at the destination, will negatively influence the host-tourist interaction.

The planning and marketing of tourism have been primarily oriented towards the needs of the tourists and the provision of interesting and high-quality tourist experiences. Key questions of traditional planning approaches have been the number of tourists desired to come and visit a destination and on developing the facilities and services that cater to their needs. In emerging Islamic tourism destinations as Dubai, Malaysia, and Indonesia, it is imperative that tourism authorities become less occupied with the visitor and devote more attention to the welfare of those being visited. Therefore, they should consider questions such as what is the number of tourists does an area desire to welcome and how can tourists contribute to the enhancement of the lifestyles of local residents.

Findings of this research can help planners select those developments that can minimize the negative impacts and maximize support for tourism development amongst certain members of the local population. It has now become widely recognized that planners and entrepreneurs must take the views of the host community into account if the industry wants to pursue the goal of sustainable development (Allen et al., 1994).

While state and federal governments further desire to expand the tourism industry and extend a fanatical welcome to 20 million tourists by 2020 regardless of their religion and origin, they need to be aware of the social carrying capacity of their society so as not to exceed it. Religion allied to culture is a defining feature of the Dubai host community where Islam is vital to public and private life, with

the potential for conflict between Muslim residents and non-Muslim international tourists. Thus, an appreciation of religious sensitivities is highly recommended in this study. This implies helping to educate tourists about local culture and appropriate behaviour to avoid any cultural conflicts between hosts and tourists.

Thus, the paper argues that tourism planning in Dubai needs to be attentive to local cultural norms and values for it to be accepted by the local community and promote sustainable development. This is possible if all the stakeholders (government, tourism operators and the local community) work together in policy making, implementation and monitoring. Only through this approach can the negative cultural impacts will be minimized while the positives will be endorsed. This will ultimately lead to a successful achievement of Dubai Tourism Vision 2020 of attracting 20 million visitors.

This research aims to set the foundation for continuing studies on the impact of culture in the tourism context, also on gender differences in tourist interaction, and most importantly on managing tourism and Islam in the Islamic tourism destination that attracts western tourism. The study suggests that further research should be conducted on Muslim perceptions of the sociocultural impacts of tourism development on their communities. This is particularly relevant in light of recent changes to local government structures in the region. Moreover, as Lankford (1994) notes, the successful development of a tourism industry requires developing positive cross-cultural tourist host interaction, tourist's holiday satisfaction, and repeat visitation. According to Reisinger and Turner (2003), this entails effective planning that both recognises tourists' demands and emphasizes the values of the local host community.

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