

Social Distance and Attitudes of Hosts towards Foreign Tourists

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Abstract *It is axiomatic that the relationship between marriage motivation and tourism is still undeveloped area of study in the recent tourism literature. Since the mid of 80's, Indonesia has known as a sex tourism destination for Middle Eastern male tourists. The tourists marry young female host for certain short period of time. This study aims to examine the impact of social distance towards Mid-Eastern male tourists on attitude of female host towards Mid-Eastern male tourists. Data was collected in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia, where cases of contract marriage between host and tourist occurred. By using a projective technique, 199 participants involved consisting of teen females. This study carries out a result that there is a negative and significant impact of social distance towards Middle Eastern male tourists on attitude of female host towards such tourists.*

Keywords: *Social Distance, Contract Marriage, Attitude towards Foreign Tourists, Middle Eastern Tourists, Female Host, Halal Sex Tourism*

INTRODUCTION

It could be argued that cross-cultural contact can have both positive and negative impacts on the host residents and on the tourists in the different tourism contexts and settings (Thyne & Lawson, 2015). In the same vein, it is apparent that tourism can promote the cross-cultural exchange of tourists and local communities and improve their knowledge about one another's cultures which helping in mutual understanding, tolerance and respect (Inskeep, 1991). Nevertheless, it seems that the elimination of conflicts between residents and international tourists is critical to enhance the economic outcomes of the exchange of people from different cultural backgrounds (Sinkovics & Penz, 2009). Similarly, the relationships between local residents and tourists are considered a barometer of the nature and scope of sustainable tourism within a specific community (Tasci & Severt, 2017).

One main construct by which we can better understand the relationships between local hosts and tourists of a destination is social distance (Aleshinloye et al., 2020). Thus, the construct of social distance involves the level of intimacy

and association among people (Sinkovics & Penz, 2009). The social distance could be defined as "the level of physical and emotional closeness an individual is willing to feel toward an individual from another group distinct from his/her own group in one or more of the identifier characteristics such as religion, culture, nationality, ethnicity, race, cast, social class, or residence" (Yilmaz & Tasci, 2015, p. 115).

Joo et al. (2017) suggest that there is a vital role for social distance to explain the interactive relationship between local residents and foreigner tourists in the tourism context. Due to lack of familiarity, prejudices and stereotypes could play a clear role in augmenting the social distance, distorting destination image and decreasing the likelihood of tourist behaviour such as visit, satisfaction, and recommendation (Tasci, 2009). Thyne et al. (2006) mention that tourists' nationality was the most significant factor in identifying residents' preferences and tolerance for different tourist markets, with residents less accepting of tourists more physically/culturally unlike to themselves.

Tourist–host social contact has important impact on the perceptions of tourists and deserves considerable attention from tourism. Hence, there are minimal studies on the

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relationship between these two constructs in the tourism context (Fan et al., 2017). Therefore, this study aims at measuring the impact of social distance on female local hosts attitude towards foreign tourists (the Middle Eastern male tourists). Besides, this study is addressed to examine the impact of social distance towards foreign tourists on favourable and unfavourable attitude of young female host towards the Middle Eastern male tourists. More specifically, this study took place in Cisarua village, Bogor city, a sub-district town in the province of West Java, about 60 km from Jakarta, Indonesia. Since the middle of 1980's, tourists from Middle East countries started visiting the area and involved in a contract marriage with local women who are mostly very young. One of the objectives of being involved in contract marriage is to avoid adultery, and therefore, it is called as halal sex tourism (Suhud & Syabani, 2014).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Background

Social Distance in Tourism

The term of *social distance* for the first time was introduced by Park (1924, p. 339). According to this scholar, social distance is “the grades and degrees of understanding and intimacy which characterize personal and social relations generally”. According to Chen et al. (2020, p. 15), “the extant tourism literature has provided limited explanations for the composition and measurement of social distance between tourism community”. Çelik (2019) has summarized that the major reasons for the advent of social distance are prejudices and stereotypes.

Social distance has been studied by many scholars in various settings. For example, in mental illness (Lauber et al., 2004; Moon et al., 2008) and dictator games (Hoffman, McCabe & Smith, 1996; Bohnet & Frey, 1999; Charness & Gneezy, 2008). Also, in second language acquisition (Schumann, 1976), intermarriage (Pagnini & Morgan, 1990) and social identity (Brewer et al., 1987). Furthermore, distance to women wearing veils (Muslim outfit) (Murphy, 1964), friendship networking (Krackhardt & Kilduff, 1999), and homosexuality (Mahaffey & Bryan, 2016). Besides, there are also studies focussing social distance in consumer evaluation (Kim, Zhang & Li, 2008), gifted children (Maddux, Scheiber & Bass, 1982), and speech behaviour. Also, in disable person (Bowman, 1987), cross cultures, and HIV stigma (Locke et al., 2014). Further, in the tourism and marketing fields of study, social distance can affect consumers' complaint intention, product evaluation, and attitude (Yang, Chen & Tan, 2014; Fan, Mattila & Zhao, 2015).

Further, according to Tasci and Severt (2017) “only a few studies have examined the significance of social distance

in tourism”. Chen et al. (2020) claim that “the extant tourism literature has provided limited explanations for the composition and measurement of social distance between tourism community.” Table 1 shows studies of social distance in the tourism context, for example, social distance between hosts towards other hosts (Yankholmes & Timothy, 2017), the tourism industry personnel towards tourists, also between tourists towards other tourists (Nyaupane, Timothy & Poudel, 2015), hosts towards tourists (Sinkovics & Penz, 2009; Woosnam & Lee, 2011; Thyne & Lawson, 2015; Joo et al., 2018), hosts towards tourism development (Thyne & Zins, 2003; Thyne, Watkins & Yoshida, 2018), and tourists towards word-of-mouth (Zhang, Yang & Ye, 2012; Chen & Chen, 2017). Although previous studies have explored social distance of tourists towards other tourist (Nyaupane, Timothy & Poudel, 2015) and hosts towards tourists (Sinkovics and Penz, 2009; Woosnam and Lee, 2011; Thyne and Lawson, 2015; Joo et al., 2018), however, there is a paucity of study on social distance of hosts towards foreign tourists who married female hosts.

Chen et al. (2020) have developed a scale that aims at understanding and evaluating the social distance between tourism community residents. They further conclude that social distance scale includes three dimensions: degree of familiarity, degree of interaction and degree of support.

Table 1: Studies of Social Distance in the Tourism Context

Sr. No.	Topics	Sources
1	Social distance of hosts towards other hosts	(Yankholmes & Timothy, 2017)
2	The tourism industry personnel towards tourists, also between tourists towards other tourists	(Chang, 2017)
3	Tourists towards other tourists	(Nyaupane, Timothy & Poudel, 2015)
4	Host towards tourists	(Sinkovics & Penz, 2009; Woosnam & Lee, 2011; Thyne & Lawson, 2015; Joo et al., 2018)
5	Hosts towards tourism development	(Thyne & Zins, 2003; Thyne, Watkins & Yoshida, 2018)
6	Tourists towards word-of-mouth	(Zhang, Yang & Ye, 2012; Chen and Chen, 2017)

Attitude towards Foreign Tourists

Chen, Hsu and Li (2018) conclude that tourism studies conducted from the persecution of residents can be commonly

divided into two types. The first was conducted to determine residents' perspective of different tourism impacts, thus forecasting their support for local tourism development. The second type explores residents-tourist interactions and mainly concentrates on tourist experience satisfaction rather than the resident experience and feelings of such interaction. Lopez et al. (2018) suggest that better understanding of host-tourist relationship from the local hosts' perspective, is a cornerstone for the sustainable development of tourism destinations (López et al., 2018). Accordingly, Tasci and Severt (2017) indicate that the manners in which residents and tourists perceive each other create a significant element of tourism consumption, particularly in the context of different cultural backgrounds. Krippendorf (1982) postulates that local hosts are more intolerant of tourists who are culturally or physically different. Monterrubio (2016) (Monterrubio, 2016) states that minimal studies have examined local hosts attitudes and impressions towards a particular group of tourists. According to Egresi and Kara (2018, p. 1), "Resident perception of tourism impacts has been one of the most studied areas of tourism. However, there is an extremely limited literature on resident perceptions of religious tourism development, especially in non-Western countries". Nunkoo et al. (2013) clarify that reducing the conflicts between tourists and residents requires examining the attitudes and needs of local communities and the outcomes incorporated into tourism planning.

A favourable attitude that is presented by hosts would develop a favourable social distance between hosts and the tourists. On the other hand, unfavourable attitude that is showed by the host, might create an unfavourable social distance. Favourable attitude and favourable social distance might happen if there is respect and understanding among these hosts and visitors. further, this good relationship might maintain a sustainability of tourism itself.

Theoretical Framework

The authors illustrate two research models (Fig. 1). The first model is to test the influence of social distance towards foreign tourists on attitude towards foreign tourists. There is limited study focussing on this path. A qualitative study measuring a relationship between these two variables. (Cashwell et al., 2011) assess the differences of each group in social distance toward adults with mental illness and measure relationship between social distance and attitude towards adults with mental illness. They included non-mental health students, counselling students, social work students, psychology students, mental health professionals, and non-mental health professional. Their study shows a difference social distance among groups of participants. They also claim that social distance relates to attitude towards adults

with mental illness. Furthermore, Suhud and Willson (2017) claim that attitude of foreign tourists contains favourable and unfavourable attitude.

Based on the limited discussion above, here is the hypothesis to be tested.

H – There will be a significant and negative impact of social distance towards foreign tourists on attitude towards foreign tourists.

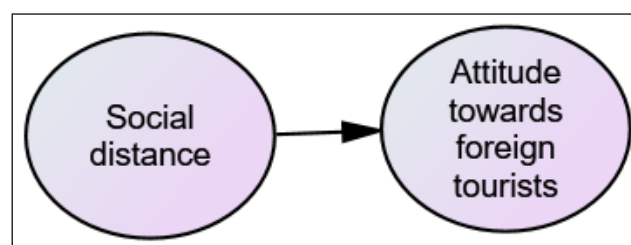


Fig. 1: The Research Model Proposed

RESEARCH METHODS

Sample

All participants of this current study were female who were approached conveniently and selected using a projective technique. This technique allows the author to choose third persons to representative real actors of contract marriage (Steinman, 2009). This technique was employed as the author face a difficulty when attempted to invite those who had an experience in contract marriage. Data were collected in Ciawi, Bogor city, an area closed to Cisarua, the sub-district town where many contract marriage cases occurred.

Measures

Social distance and attitudes toward foreign tourists were measured using indicators from previous studies. Scale of social distance towards foreign tourist has been established by Bogardus (1933). However, for this current study, this variable was measured by indicators from the study of Yilmaz and Tasci (2015), and Sinkovics and Penz (2009). Furthermore, attitude towards Middle Eastern male tourists was examined by the scale as a result of a qualitative study and further was quantified by Suhud and Willson (2017). Each indicator is measured using a 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 for "strongly disagree" to 6 for "strongly agree". The authors chose a six-point scale to prevent participants from choosing 'neutral' so that the authors did not see the bias of participants on each indicator used. The questionnaire was in Indonesian.

Data Analysis

The author analysed the quantitative data collected in three phases. The first stage performed exploratory factor analysis. This stage aimed to establish the dimensions of each variable if it existed and maintained valid indicators. Valid indicators should have factor loadings of 0.4 or more. According to Hair, if factor loadings are installed 0.4, then the participants must be at least 200 (Hair et al., 2019). The second stage was to test the reliability. In this study, the authors selected factors that had a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2019). The third stage, testing the research model using structural equation model (SEM) with four important criteria chosen including probability, CMIN/DF, CFI, and RMSEA as shown in Table 2. A structural model would be considered fitted if the score of probability value should have 0.05 or larger (Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger & Müller, 2003). Additionally, it should have a CMIN/DF score of 2 or less (Tabachnick, Fidell & Ullman, 2007) and a CFI score of 0.97 or larger (Hu & Bentler, 1995). The last one, the model should reach an RMSEA score of 0.05 or less (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Table 2: Criteria of the Fitted Model

Criteria	Rule of Thumb	Resources
Probability	$0.05 < p < 1.00$	Schermelleh-Engel et al. (2003)
CMIN/DF	$0 \leq \text{CMIN/DF} \leq 2$	Tabachnick et al. (2007)
CFI	$0.95 \leq \text{CFI} \leq 1.00$	Hu and Bentler (1995)
RMSEA	$0 \leq \text{RMSEA} \leq 0.06$	Hu and Bentler (1999)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Participants

In term of age, 85 participants (42.7%) were 16 years old and 83 participants (41.7%) were 17 years old. The remaining participants consisted of those who were 14, 15, 18, and 19 years old. Furthermore, three of participants indicated that their mother was involved in contract marriage with a tourist. Four of them said, their sister was involved, and another four participants answered that their aunt was involved. Furthermore, nine participants mentioned that their neighbour engaged in contract marriage and followed by six participants said, that their friend engaged in contract marriage. Additionally, 14 participants mentioned other closed people experienced marry in certain period of time with a Middle Eastern male tourist.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Table 1 reveals the results of exploratory factor analysis. Social distance formed four dimensions as well as attitude towards Middle Eastern male tourists. The first social

distance dimension had five indicators with a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.807. The second dimension had three indicators with a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.723. The third dimension owned four indicators with a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.760. Additionally, the last dimension of social distance obtained a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.582. The last dimension had the lowest reliability score among others. However, the scores are accepted to be reliable. Furthermore, the first dimension of attitude obtained a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.871 and the second one had 0.605. In addition, the third dimension was with 0.693. All the score of dimensions were considered to be reliable (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 3: Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis

	Indicators	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha
	Social Distance (1)		0.807
Sd3	Playing sport together	0.829	
Sd4	Exchanging gifts and correspondence	0.801	
Sd2	Sharing a meal with them	0.707	
Sd5	Sitting beside them on the public transport	0.584	
Sd6	Sitting beside them in a place	0.491	
	Social Distance (2)		0.723
Sd8	Seeing them in a souvenir shop.	0.845	
Sd9	Seeing them at tourist sports or attractions when i am also there	0.766	
Sd7	Seeing them in a group was walking around.	0.748	
	Social Distance (3)		0.760
Sd14	Having them in my house as long-term guest	0.831	
Sd13	Having them in my house as dinner guests	0.679	
Sd11	Having a close personal relationship	0.604	
Sd10	Having my photo taken by them	0.488	
	Social Distance (4) Foreign Tourists as a Friend		0.582
Sd19	Having them as friends	0.763	

	Indicators	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha
Sd16	Chatting in public places	0.618	
Sd18	Inviting them to attend my family event	0.595	
Sd15	Having them as friends of my family in my house	0.555	
	Attitude towards Middle Eastern male tourists (1) (-)		0.871
Ata05	They are annoying	0.907	
Ata04	They are terrible	0.885	
Ata06	They are disgusting.	0.797	
Ata07	They are creepy	0.795	
Ata01	Damaging the morale of local communities	0.671	
	Attitude towards Middle Eastern Male Tourists (2) (+)		0.605
Ata02	Increasing income of Cisarua and surrounding communities	0.833	
Ata03	Increasing the country's foreign exchange.	0.748	
Ata08	They come to enjoy the beauty of Cisarua and surrounding attractions	0.628	
	Attitude towards Middle Eastern Male Tourists (3) (-)		0.693
Ata09	They come to marry women in Cisarua	-0.860	
Ata10	They come to meet biological needs	-0.797	
Ata11	They have a very high lust	-0.634	

and RMSEA score of 0.031. Based on the SEM calculation, social distance significantly had an influence on attitude towards tourists with a C.R. score of -2.414. As predicted, the direction of the influence was significantly negative.

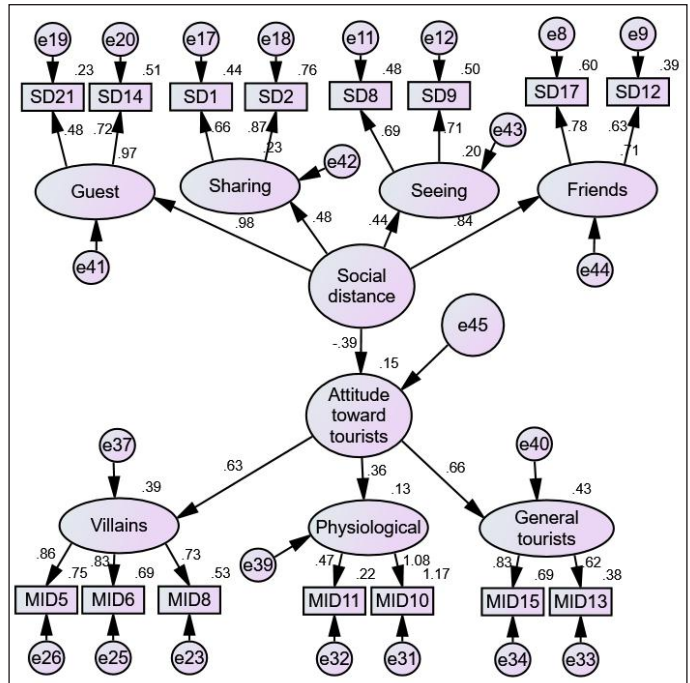


Fig. 2: Structural Model of the Hypothesis Testing

DISCUSSION

As examined by Cashwell et al. (2011), social distance correlated with attitude. In this case, social distance of hosts towards foreign tourists was used to predict attitude of hosts towards foreign tourists and as a result, social distance significantly affected attitude. The social distance scale developed by Yilmaz and Tasci (2015) and Sinkovics and Penz (2009) has dimensions and indicators with a positive nuance. In contrast, attitude towards foreign tourists which were developed by Suhud and Wilsson (2017) consists of dimensions and indicators with positive (favourable) and negative (unfavourable) tendencies. Therefore, it was expected that social distance negatively influenced attitude.

CONCLUSION

Several studies have been conducted to explore the nature and scope of social distance in the tourism literature. This current study aimed to measure the impact of social distance on hosts attitude towards foreign tourists. Foreign tourists in this case were Middle Eastern male tourists who visited Cisarua village, Indonesia. As a result, social distance of hosts towards foreign tourists significantly affected their attitude of hosts towards such tourists.

Hypothesis Testing

Fig. 2 shows the structural model of the hypothesis testing. Social distance survived four dimensions including foreign tourists as a guest, sharing, seeing, and foreign tourists as a friend. Furthermore, attitude towards foreign tourists retained two dimensions including tourists as a villain, psychological, and foreign tourist as a general tourist. This fitted model had a probability score of 0.115 and CMIN/DF score of 1.191. Additionally, it had a CFI score of 0.979

This study expands the study of international tourism. International tourism is closely related to the meeting of two different cultures, from hosts and tourists. One thing they have in common is religion. This cultural element will affect the tourism planning, development, management, and marketing of the destinations visited by tourists. For this reason, this study also deepens the study of tourism management. Furthermore, because the current research is also related to the sexual activity of tourists, the findings of this study enrich the study of sex tourism, especially in countries where the majority are Muslim.

Marriage contracts could be one of the tourism attractions in the village such Cisarua. Given the negative impact of contract marriage by the host (Suhud & Syabani, 2014), the protection of the host as a service provider should be considered by the local authorities. Some parties acknowledge that contract marriages are prostitution (Wahab, Kustini & Ali, 2018). If so, hosts involved in contract marriages should be treated as providers of professional sex services, which within a specified period must conduct health checks and obtain appropriate information about the harmful effects of sexual relations with many men. Apart from the controversy of whether contract marriage is a halal activity or not, then saving young women in the tourism destination is absolute.

Prior studies have investigated studies on sexual activity between tourists and hosts. The practice of contract marriage between hosts and foreign tourists does not often occur in many tourism destinations. Therefore, copying settings such as those chosen in the current research for future research will be complicated. However, sex tourism can happen anywhere, without having to marry a previous host to get pleasure. So, the research methods and indicators of this research can be adapted, especially for measuring attitudes towards foreign tourists, especially those who engage in sexual activity between hosts and tourists. If only, the sex activity is considered inappropriate.

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