

Evaluating perceptions of residents' towards impacts of tourism development in Emirates of Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the influence of nationality on residents' perceptions of the impacts of tourism, and their support for tourism development, in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected from self-administered questionnaires from 407 residents, representing 30 nationalities residing in Abu Dhabi.

Findings – The findings suggest differences in perceptions of the impacts of tourism between national and expatriate residents. Despite these differences, both groups reported support of tourism development.

Research limitations/implications – This paper groups residents into only two groups – nationals and expatriates – which limits the explanation of findings. Tourism officials should customize strategies to reach targeted group of residents.

Originality/value – Extant literature examines residents' perceptions of the impacts of tourism in homogenous groups, and little research explores the influence of nationality on residents' perceptions. This study is the first to be conducted in Abu Dhabi – where more than 80 per cent of the population is comprised of expatriates – that identifies differences in perceptions between national and expatriate residents regarding tourism's impacts.

Keywords Expatriate, Abu Dhabi, Residents' perceptions, Emirati, Tourism impacts

Paper type General review

1. Introduction

Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and a promising tourism destination (Al Ameri, 2013), had an economy that depended on pearling, shipbuilding, marine transport, fishing, farming, handcraft and trade with India, East Africa and other places. A milestone of economic development occurred in 1962 when the first shipment of oil was exported from the country (Adco.ae, 2017). A booming economy led to the arrival of many immigrants from neighbouring countries that were seeking better life conditions and work opportunities (Al-Shamsi, 2009). The population of Abu Dhabi increased from 19,908 in 1960 to 2.8 million in 2015, with 81 per cent of the residents being expatriates (SCAD, 2017). Because oil is a depleting resource, and the price of oil fluctuates worldwide, the UAE realized the importance of economic diversifications during development planning (Al Ameri, 2013). Tourism development is an essential economic resource that the government is focusing on as part of its diversification plan for a post-oil-dependency economy which led to Abu Dhabi experiencing unprecedented tourism growth in recent years from government support of tourism development. The

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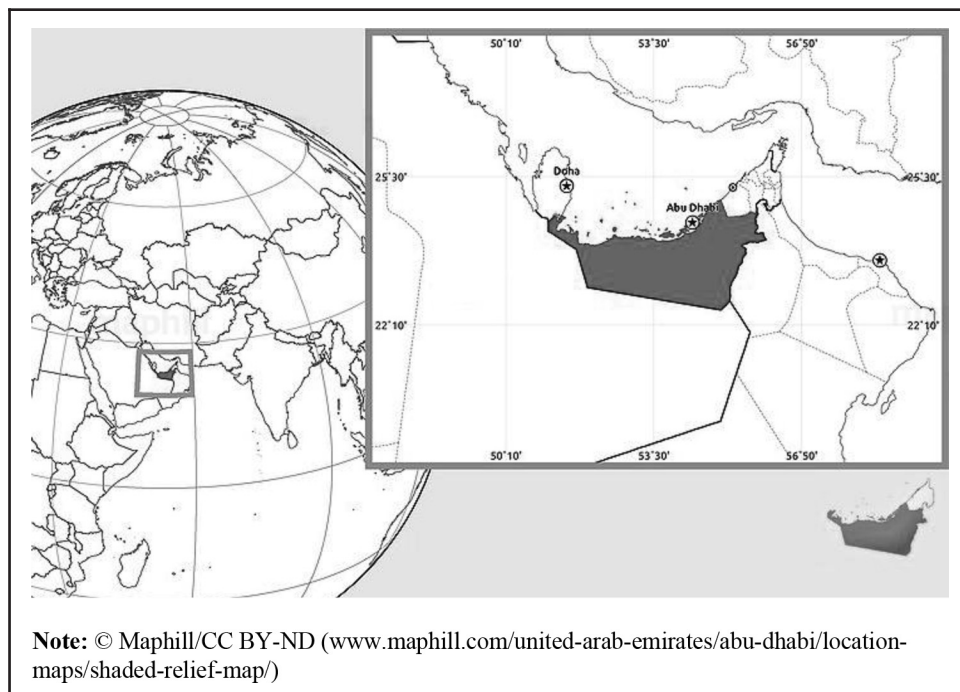
number of visitors to Abu Dhabi increased more than 250 times from 2001 to 2010, reaching 1.81 million visitors (Al Ameri, 2013).

Tourism development in Abu Dhabi is expected to affect residents' daily lives and influence residents' perceptions of the impacts of tourism in their communities. Expatriates are part of the UAE community, and their support of tourism development is equally important to that of national residents' support. Most research examines residents as a homogenous group (AbbasiDorcheh and Mohamed, 2013; Eraqi, 2007; Gursoy *et al.*, 2010; Hanafiah *et al.*, 2013; Musinguzi, 2012). Liu (2003) argues that local communities are not homogeneous masses of individuals, but contain deep divisions of class, status and power. Treating residents as a homogeneous group of individuals despite their differences is challenging for tourism planning and other tourism stakeholders because of disparate perceptions conveyed across resident groups. Extant studies suggest that individuals hold disparate perceptions of the same impacts of tourism at the same destination (Kim, 1992; Long and Kayat, 2011; Mason, 2016) which are attributed to demographics and personal traits (An, 2016). Although nationality is part of the demographics that influence residents' perceptions of the impacts of tourism, it is often overlooked (Hernández and Mercader, 2015). Nationality often serves as a proxy for cultural differences (Prayag and Ryan, 2012), and therefore influences individual perceptions of various impacts. Nationality is particularly important in the context of UAE for two reasons. First is the national-expatriate ratio, and second are the benefits provided from the government to national residents. Nationals represent less than 20 per cent of the population in Abu Dhabi. In 2015, the population reached 2.7 million residents, 81 per cent of whom were expatriates (SCAD, 2017). Nationals receive benefits that are unavailable to expatriate residents, such as free education from K-12 through to university (Godwin, 2006), free housing, land, interest-free loans up to US\$544,000 from the government (Abu Dhabi Housing Authority, 2017) and free health care under a health insurance programme for nationals (Abu Dhabi eGovernment Gateway, 2017). Although expatriate residents in the UAE do not receive these free services, they have access to education and health insurance and can own freehold properties in Abu Dhabi in designated investment zones (Reuters, 2014). This study examines perceptions of all residents in Abu Dhabi, both nationals and expatriates, regarding tourism's impacts, evaluating whether residents' nationalities influence their perceptions of the impacts of tourism and support for tourism development. The objectives are to: explore Abu Dhabi residents' perceptions from both nationals and expatriates concerning the impacts of tourism, examine Abu Dhabi residents' degree of support for tourism development and suggest management strategies for Abu Dhabi based on findings.

2. Study area

2.1 Emirate of Abu Dhabi

The UAE is located in the Middle East region of Asia, bordering Saudi Arabia and Oman, and is a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) country (see Figure 1). The UAE consists of seven emirates: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain, Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah. The UAE's economy went from being oil dependent for 85 per cent of its per-capita gross domestic product (GDP) in 1974 (SCAD, 2017) to 30 per cent in 2014. The UAE Minister of Economy announced a plan to reduce dependency on oil by 2021 so that its contribution to GDP is less than 20 per cent. The population of Abu Dhabi increased more than 139 times in the past 55 years, from 19,908 residents in 1960 to 2.8 million in 2015 (SCAD, 2017). Abu Dhabi is home to various nationalities that work, live and raise families, primarily from Asian countries such as India, Pakistan and the Philippines, and from the Middle East such as Egypt, Sudan and Yemen. Table I shows trends in Abu Dhabi's population from 1960 to 2015.

Figure 1 Map of Abu Dhabi**Table I** Abu Dhabi population estimates (1960-2015)

Year	Nationals		Expatriates		Total
	Population	(%)	Population	(%)	
2015	536,741	19	2,247,749	81	2,784,490
2010	433,788	22	1,533,871	78	1,967,659
2000	277,602	25	835,114	75	1,112,716
1990	168,525	24	545,177	76	713,702
1980	86,794	21	333,656	79	420,455
1970	26,071	39	40,642	61	66,713
1960	11,064	56	8,844	44	19,908

Source: Compiled from Statistics Center of Abu Dhabi [SCAD.ae (2017)], various years' statistics

The number of visitors to Abu Dhabi increased from 0.71 million in 2001 to 1.81 million in 2010 (Al Ameri, 2013). With steady growth, Abu Dhabi received 4.4 million visitors in 2016, in comparison to 4.1 million in 2015 (TCAAD, 2017c). The top 10 nationalities for hotel visitors in Abu Dhabi in 2016 were India, the UK, China, Philippines, Egypt, Germany, the USA, Jordan, Pakistan and Emiratis from outside Abu Dhabi. According to a hotel establishment report issued by the Abu Dhabi tourism authority during the first quarter of 2017, visitors from China, the UK, the USA and Germany prefer to stay in four- to five-star hotels, and visitors from India, Philippines and Egypt prefer two- to three-star hotels (TCAAD, 2017b). The business travel industry in Abu Dhabi for meetings, incentives, conference and exhibitions (MICE) reports an estimated 2.2 million visitors in 2016 (TCAAD, 2017c).

The plan for Abu Dhabi tourism (TCAAD, 2017a) focuses on three areas: creating infrastructure support and sustainable tourism industries in Abu Dhabi, promoting and preserving the culture and heritage of Abu Dhabi and attracting visitors and investors to enrich the lives of residents in Abu Dhabi by developing the emirate into a world-class tourism destination. In line with plans to attract visitors and preserve culture, many festivals

are held in Abu Dhabi during the year, such as the Mother of the Nation Festival, Qasr Al Hosn Festival and Sheikh Zayed Heritage Festival. Abu Dhabi hosts sporting events such as Formula One Etihad Airways Grand Prix in the iconic Yas Marina Circuit, Volvo Ocean Race and the Mubadala World Tennis Championship. The city has numerous islands that include five-star hotels and resorts such as Yas Island, Saadiyat Island, Al Maryah Island, Reem Island, Nurai Island and Delma Island.

3. Literature review

Tourism has become one of the fastest growing industries in the world, with internal tourists' arrivals increasing from 25 million globally in 1950 to 1.186 billion in 2015 (Highlights, 2016). Tourism development stimulates growth in communities, encourages business and investment, improves government services for the public sector, improves countries' images amongst other countries and supports international tolerance and understanding amongst people worldwide (Al Ameri, 2013). Many countries consider tourism a tool for economic development and a driver of economic diversification due to various benefits that tourism offers a community.

Interest in residents' perceptions of the impact of tourism is found in various parts of world, primarily as case studies in the USA (Andereck *et al.*, 2007; Kim *et al.*, 2013), Turkey (Türker and Öztürk, 2013), Japan (Miyakuni, 2012; Zamani-Farahani and Musa, 2008), South Korea (Choi, 2013), Vietnam (Long and Kayat, 2011), Thailand (Soontayatron, 2010), Jordan (Alhasanat and Hyasat, 2011), Greece (Pappas, 2008), India (Sherpa, 2011) and Egypt (Eraqi, 2007). Most of these studies categorize tourism impacts into social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts (Almeida-García *et al.*, 2016; Choi, 2013; Long and Kayat, 2011; Rivera *et al.*, 2015). The terms social and cultural impacts of tourism are used in research interchangeably, measured using a single variable called sociocultural impacts (Fredline *et al.*, 2003; King *et al.*, 1993). This study differentiates the two to offer greater understanding of tourism's impacts on both aspects. The impacts of tourism are often grouped in two aspects: positive and negative (Jurowski *et al.*, 1997). Positive impacts of tourism include improving quality of life, increasing recreational facilities, economic development, increasing availability of cultural activities and promoting cultural exchanges between residents and tourists (Gursoy *et al.*, 2010; Kim *et al.*, 2013; Rivera *et al.*, 2015; Soontayatron, 2010; Su *et al.*, 2005; Yu, 2011). Negative impacts include increases to social crimes, unpleasant crowding, environmental pollution, increased costs of living and inflation of property values (Dyer *et al.*, 2007; Eraqi, 2007; Jaafar *et al.*, 2015; Jurowski, 1994; Long and Kayat, 2011).

Residents' perceptions of tourism development have been the focus of several studies in recent years (García *et al.*, 2015; Gursoy *et al.*, 2010; Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2017; Sharpley, 2014). At most tourism destinations, increasing numbers of tourist arrivals challenge the daily routines of residents, and affect their quality of life (Kim *et al.*, 2013). The fundamental assumption is that residents' perceptions of the impacts of tourism influence their support for tourism development (Andereck *et al.*, 2007; Látková and Vogt, 2012; Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2017). Residents are primary stakeholders during sustainable development of tourism (Lundberg, 2011); they are part of the tourism industry in their communities because they are subjects to be viewed and interacted with by tourists, and their perceptions of tourism's impacts on their communities influence hospitality towards tourists. If residents become resentful of tourism development and activities in their communities, they drive tourists away by making them feel unwelcome (Liu, 2003). Understanding residents' perceptions of the impacts of tourism provides valuable information to government officials, tourism developers and policymakers when developing tourism strategies and services (Brida *et al.*, 2010). Most studies that investigate residents' perceptions of tourism's impacts focus on perceptions of local or national residents (Brunt and Courtney, 1999; Gursoy *et al.*, 2010; Zamani-Farahani and Musa, 2008). The number

of expatriates exceeds the number of local or national residents in many tourist destinations in many countries, such as Singapore, the UK, Spain and the UAE. Including all residents in tourism research provides information about different groups of individuals and how they perceive impacts of tourism in the countries in which they reside.

[Lopez and Mercader \(2015\)](#) investigate perceived impacts of tourism in Torrevieja, Spain, including those from national and non-national residents. The study suggests disparities of perception between national and non-national residents, as non-nationals have more positive perceptions of the economic impacts of tourism and more permeable perceptions of its sociocultural influences. National residents perceived greater negative environmental impacts of tourism in their communities. [Akkawi \(2010\)](#) conducted a study that includes national and expatriate residents to investigate residents' attitudes towards tourism development in Doha, Qatar, with results suggesting a distinction between national and expatriate residents regarding perceptions of changes to local services, because Qataris favoured changes to local services and considered them an improvement, while expatriates were not in favour of changes. In Qatar, national residents were given priority for employment opportunities in local services, and therefore experienced changes and benefits more than others. Disapproval of tourists' behaviours in public was expressed by both national and expatriate residents. [Almeida-García et al. \(2016\)](#) examine whether being a native resident affects perceptions of tourism impacts in Benalmadena, Spain. The results suggest that foreigners have the best perceptions of environmental, social, cultural, economic and overall impacts of tourism, and native residents the worst perceptions of environmental, social, cultural and overall impacts. [Almeida-García et al. \(2016\)](#) argue that the balance between the costs and benefits of tourism in Benalmadena favours foreigners more than native residents. Based on these findings, residents can hold disparate perceptions of tourism's impacts in the country in which they live, and one reason is nationality. Living conditions vary in the same country for residents based on nationality. Governments often provide free services and benefits to national residents, such as health care, education and priority for employment. It is, therefore, expected that national and expatriate residents hold disparate perceptions of the same impacts of tourism when living in the same destination.

4. Methodology

4.1 Data collection

Data were collected using a self-administrative questionnaire, conducted over four weeks during October and November 2016. The survey consisted of three sections, with the first capturing demographics. The second and third sections captured perceptions of tourism's impact and how these perceptions affect support for tourism development. The survey included eight independent latent constructs that examined national and expatriate respondents' perceptions of tourism's impacts, and one dependent, latent variable that examined support for tourism development. All nine latent variables were comprised of five items, derived from extant studies of residents' perceptions of tourism's social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts ([Brunt and Courtney, 1999](#); [Gursoy et al., 2010](#); [Kim et al., 2013](#); [Látková and Vogt, 2012](#); [Long and Kayat, 2011](#)). Because of the variety of attributes available in the literature, selection was based on common items applicable to all destinations, such as improvements to infrastructures and services. Similarly, attributes unsuitable to the context of UAE were excluded, such as nightlife. Items were measured using a seven-point, Likert-type scale anchored by strongly disagree and strongly agree, with 4 as a neutral point, to capture residents' perceptions of the four domains of tourism impacts.

The questionnaire was written in English and translated into Arabic, the official language of the UAE, using the translation-back translation method to ensure that both versions were equivalent ([Yousef, 2002](#)). A professional translation service was used to ensure the reliability of the translated versions ([Stylidis et al., 2014](#)). Both the original and translated surveys were pre-tested amongst colleagues with master's degrees or higher. The final version of the survey

was constructed after minor changes were incorporated based on comments received for both versions. The survey was available in two types: hard copy and an online version because research suggests that using multi-mode survey techniques improve the representativeness of the sample, without biasing other results (Yun and Trumbo, 2000). Snowball sampling was used to distribute 400 hard-copy surveys, of which 257 were returned and 27 rejected, yielding a response rate of 58 per cent. This sampling technique is recommended for studies in the Middle East because of the cultural sensitivity of participants (Ahmad and Saber, 2015). The online version was sent to 50 e-mails from personal contacts of residents in Abu Dhabi. These individuals received an e-mail inviting them to complete an online questionnaire and were asked to forward the online survey to friends and contacts. Social media were used to contact family members, relatives and colleagues, requesting participation in the study. For the online survey, 150 usable surveys were received. In total, 407 usable questionnaires were received and analyzed. Table II shows the differences in mean values across the two modes of responses, with the Mann-Whitney U-test (for all variables, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests were significant, suggesting that the normal distribution assumption required for a *t*-test was violated). It is clear from the statistical tests that all nine variables do not vary across the two response groups. All *p*-values were above 0.05, so *H*₀ failed to be rejected; the distribution of scores for the two groups was equal.

4.2 Definition of key terms

It was important to define several terms to provide clarity to the reader when discussing findings. These terms included nationals (or Emiratis), expatriates and residents. The term Emiratis refers to people holding Emirati citizenship; they are also known as locals in the UAE. This study uses nationals to refer to Emirati residents who hold Emirati citizenship and reside in the UAE. The terms Emirati and nationals are interchangeable in this study. Expatriate refers to individuals engaged in many forms of international experience (i.e. work and non-work) and includes international students, retirees, international business travellers and migrants (McNulty and Brewster, 2017). In the context of this study, the term refers to non-national individuals who reside in the UAE for any reason, regardless of their length of residency. Resident refers to an individual who resides in the country in a location adjacent to the destination area of the study (Jurowski, 1994). In this study, resident refers to individuals who reside in the UAE, regardless of their nationality and length of residency in the UAE.

5. Results

Participants included 407 respondents from 30 nationalities residing in Abu Dhabi. Expatriate residents were 298 respondents, and nationals 109. Most respondents were

Table II Comparing means between latent variables by survey return type (online and paper)

Latent variables	Group means		Test of normality		U ^b -test
	Online N = 150	Paper N = 257	K-S ^a test	Mann-Whitney	
Positive social impacts	5.8973	5.9603	0.104**	19,018.0	0.822
Negative social impacts	3.9547	3.8070	0.059**	17,960.5	0.250
Positive cultural impacts	5.6253	5.7214	0.107**	18,719.0	0.626
Negative cultural impacts	4.1840	4.1292	0.053**	18,386.5	0.437
Positive environmental impacts	5.6093	5.5658	0.112**	18,272.0	0.379
Negative environmental impacts	3.9720	3.9471	0.059**	19,232.5	0.970
Positive economic impacts	5.7893	5.9097	0.158**	17,765.5	0.185
Negative economic impacts	4.8187	4.8638	0.094**	18,725.5	0.631
Support for tourism development	5.6400	5.6638	0.135**	18,927.0	0.760

Notes: Means and standard deviations of a Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7), with 4 as a neutral point; ^aKolmogorov-Smirnov test; ^bMann-Whitney U-test; ***p* < 0.01

male (69.5 per cent). Expatriate respondents were 72.1 per cent male and 27.9 per cent female, and national respondents were 62.4 per cent male and 37.6 per cent female. The majority of respondents held bachelor's degrees or higher (61 per cent of the total respondents), of which 69.7 per cent were nationals and 73.1 per cent expatriates. This overrepresentation of bachelor's degree holders can result in biasedness towards highly educated respondents. Most nationals had been living in Abu Dhabi for more than 20 years, and 5.5 per cent fewer than 10 years. Most expatriates (62.7 per cent) had been living in Abu Dhabi for 10 years or more, and 37.3 per cent fewer than 10 years. Regarding nationalities, 298 participants were non-national residents from 30 nationalities, 40.8 per cent were Asian and 4.1 per cent were European or other. [Table III](#) summarizes the sample's sociodemographics.

[Table IV](#) shows the means and standard deviations of the 45 items for national and expatriate residents. The table also shows the Mann-Whitney U-test to analyze the difference in mean values between the groups. Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests revealed a violation of the normal distribution assumption required for *t*-tests. The Mann-Whitney U-test was used to compare differences between two independent groups when the dependent variable is either ordinal or continuous but not normally distributed ([Mann and Whitney, 1947](#); [Nachar, 2008](#)). The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. All Cronbach alpha coefficients were greater than the 0.7 threshold. Therefore, the scales were reliable and appropriate for further analysis ([Hair et al., 2006](#)).

The results show that 14 items had mean values between 3.5 and 4.5, suggesting neutral views of the items, primarily regarding negative social, environmental and cultural impacts. The findings in [Table IV](#) show several similarities and differences between perceptions from national and expatriate residents. Regarding positive social impacts of tourism, both national and expatriate residents agreed with all items, with higher means and lower standard deviations showing strong agreement with all positive social impacts (PSI1-PSI5). Regarding negative social impacts, nationality generated significant differences between the two groups, primarily for unpleasant crowding (NSI1) and friction between residents and tourists (NSI3), as national residents believed that tourism leads to these outcomes. Perceptions of the use of resources by tourists (NSI5) were also significantly different between the two groups, with nationals reporting higher values ($M = 4.13$) than expatriates ($M = 3.47$) did, though both reported neutral views of tourists' overuse of resources.

Table III Sociodemographics profiles ($n = 407$)

Variable	Category	Nationals (N)	Expatriates (N)*	Total
Gender	Male	62.4% (68)	72.1% (215)	283
	Female	37.6% (41)	27.9% (83)	124
Age	18-30	33.1% (36)	22.9% (68)	104
	31-49	55% (60)	50% (149)	209
	50 or above	11.9% (13)	27.2% (81)	94
Education	High school or less	14.7% (16)	10.4% (31)	47
	Technical education	15.6% (17)	16.4% (49)	66
	Bachelor's degree	55 (60)	53% (158)	218
	Master's degree and above	14.7% (16)	20.1% (60)	76
Length of residency	Fewer than 10 years	5.5% (6)	37.3% (111)	117
	10 years or more	94.5% (103)	62.7% (187)	290

Notes: *Nationalities: Afghani, 1; American, 1; Bangladeshi, 8; Comoros, 1; Czech, 1; Egyptian, 26; Emirati, 109; German, 1; Indian, 116; Irish, 2; Jordanian, 3; Kuwaiti, 1; Lebanese, 2; Libyan, 1; Moroccan, 1; Omani, 1; Pakistani, 20; Palestinian, 13; Filipino, 21; Polish, 1; Portuguese, 1; Romanian, 1; Saudi Arabian, 1; Somalian, 1; South African, 2; Sudanese, 61; Swiss, 1; Syrian, 3; British, 3; Turkish, 3

Table IV Differences of tourism development perceptions between national and expatriate residents in Abu Dhabi

Constructs/variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Global		Nationality		Expatriates		Test of normality K-S ^a test	U ^b -test
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Positive social impacts									
PSI1: Tourism improves the quality of life for the UAE residents		5.605	1.282	5.51	1.405	5.7	1.158	0.235**	15,267.5
PSI2: Tourism improves the positive image of the UAE		6.22	0.982	6.2	1.145	6.24	0.819	0.251**	15,546
PSI3: Tourism improves of the quality of service in restaurants, shops and hotels		6.17	0.930	6.19	0.986	6.15	0.874	0.241**	15,438
PSI4: Tourism development provides more recreational opportunities for the UAE residents		6.09	1.153	6.1	1.319	6.08	0.987	0.246**	14,694
PSI5: Tourism development makes the residents more satisfied with their living in the UAE	0.776	5.555	1.402	5.56	1.493	5.55	1.31	0.214**	15,608
Negative social impacts									
NSI1: Tourism causes unpleasant overcrowding of public and leisure spaces in the UAE		4.33	1.728	4.65	1.828	4.01	1.627	0.142**	12,646.5**
NSI2: Tourism causes security and crime problems		3.905	1.732	4.08	1.847	3.73	1.616	0.128**	14,376.5
NSI3: Increase in number of tourists in the UAE will lead to friction between residents and tourists		4	1.686	4.66	1.801	3.34	1.571	0.16**	9,449**
NSI4: Tourism contributes to social problems such as crime, drug use, prostitution and so forth in the UAE		4.015	1.760	4.13	1.856	3.9	1.663	0.118**	15,220.5
NSI5: UAE's recreational resources are overused by tourists	0.846	3.8	1.660	4.13	1.759	3.47	1.561	0.149**	12,776.5**
Positive cultural impacts									
PCI1: Tourism increases availability of cultural, historical and entertainment activities in the UAE		5.795	1.119	5.77	1.324	5.82	0.913	0.281**	15,482
PCI2: Meeting tourists from all over the world is definitely a life enriching experience		5.855	1.187	5.77	1.365	5.94	1.008	0.254**	15,889.5
PCI3: Tourism helps to preserve the cultural identity of the UAE		5.085	1.613	4.75	1.92	5.42	1.306	0.217**	13,445.5**
PCI4: Tourism stimulates cultural exchange in the UAE between the residents and the tourists		5.685	1.173	5.63	1.359	5.74	0.986	0.263**	16,229.5
PCI5: Tourism has increased residents' pride in the local culture in the UAE	0.836	5.77	1.316	5.76	1.533	5.78	1.099	0.263**	14,772.5
Negative cultural impacts									
NCI1: Tourists dressing styles is considered inappropriate and not conservative for the UAE		4.99	1.603	5.39	1.587	4.59	1.619	0.14**	11,490.5**
NCI2: The commercial demand of tourists causes changes in the style and forms of traditional arts and crafts in the UAE		4.5	1.583	4.83	1.649	4.17	1.516	0.145**	12,302**
NCI3: Current tourism activities that are available for tourists do not reflect the authentic culture of the UAE		4.285	1.686	4.45	1.858	4.12	1.514	0.131**	14,267*
NCI4: Tourism causes loss of traditional values and behavior patterns amongst UAE residents		3.99	1.757	4.23	1.884	3.75	1.629	0.127**	13,839.5*
NCI5: Tourism development causes disruption to the religious practices amongst the UAE residents	0.813	3.54	1.957	3.61	2.16	3.47	1.753	0.162**	16,009.5
Positive environmental impacts									
PEI1: Tourism development in the UAE promotes environmental sustainability		5.125	1.418	5.16	1.422	5.09	1.414	0.196**	15,928.5
PEI2: Tourism helps restoration of historical/cultural buildings and natural resources		5.59	1.292	5.61	1.374	5.57	1.21	0.25**	15,360
PEI3: Tourism stimulates local infrastructural development in the UAE	0.827	5.805	1.089	5.83	1.11	5.78	1.068	0.273**	15,635
(continued)									

(continued)

Table IV

Constructs/variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Global		Nationality		Nationality		Test of normality K-S ^a test	U ^b -test
		M	SD	Nationals M	Nationals SD	Expatriates M	Expatriates SD		
PEI4: Tourism development improves the physical appearance of the UAE		5.88	1.130	5.83	1.244	5.93	1.016	0.273**	16,106.5
PEI5: Tourism has improved the ecological environment of the UAE		5.575	1.300	5.68	1.346	5.47	1.253	0.23**	14,181.5*
<i>Negative environmental impacts</i>									
NEI1: Tourism greatly adds to traffic congestion		4.735	1.668	4.93	1.714	4.54	1.621	0.167**	13,979*
NEI2: Tourism increases environmental contamination (wastewater) in the UAE		4.08	1.747	4.27	1.778	3.89	1.716	0.124**	14,348
NEI3: The construction of hotels and other tourist facilities has destroyed the natural environment in the UAE		3.815	1.813	3.94	1.94	3.69	1.685	0.136**	15,097.5
NEI4: Tourism development leads to air and noise pollution in the UAE		3.64	1.738	3.65	1.853	3.63	1.622	0.138**	16,127
NEI5: Tourism activities increase littering in the UAE	0.884	3.755	1.838	3.77	1.975	3.74	1.7	0.14**	16,225
<i>Positive economic impacts</i>									
PEc11: Tourism creates desirable employment opportunities for residents in the UAE		5.4	1.422	5.15	1.557	5.65	1.287	0.245	13,259**
PEc12: Tourism is a good strategy for economy diversification in the UAE		5.925	1.126	5.95	1.197	5.9	1.054	0.262	15,107
PEc13: Tourism attracts more investment and project development to the UAE		6.08	1.025	6.05	1.1	6.11	0.95	0.239	16,053
PEc14: Tourism attracts more business opportunities for the UAE residents		5.865	1.245	5.77	1.399	5.96	1.09	0.26	15,598
PEc15: Tourism increases the amount of income going to local businesses in the UAE	0.879	5.82	1.229	5.66	1.403	5.98	1.054	0.256	14,534.5
<i>Negative economic impacts</i>									
NEc11: Tourism development increases the inflation in property values in the UAE		5.06	1.499	5.27	1.444	4.85	1.554	0.184	13,694.5*
NEc12: The price of food and other products in the UAE has increased because of tourism		5.05	1.555	5.39	1.491	4.71	1.618	0.175	12,188**
NEc13: Tourism development increases the cost of living in the UAE		5.185	1.499	5.35	1.462	5.02	1.536	0.175	14,231.5*
NEc14: Tourism development diverts funds from other economic development projects in the UAE		4.38	1.583	4.5	1.596	4.26	1.569	0.129	14,875.5
NEc15: The prices of services in the UAE have increased because of tourism development	0.861	5.015	1.518	5.14	1.481	4.89	1.555	0.193	14,753
<i>Support for tourism development</i>									
ST1: I believe that further tourism development would positively affect my quality of life in the UAE		5.39	1.328	5.41	1.396	5.37	1.26	0.214	15,533
ST2: I think that UAE should attract more tourists		5.565	1.439	5.47	1.659	5.66	1.218	0.249	16,100
ST3: I support future tourism development in the UAE		5.84	1.252	5.71	1.423	5.97	1.08	0.266	15,000
ST4: I think that tourism is the best strategy for economic diversification for the UAE		5.58	1.370	5.49	1.495	5.67	1.244	0.237	15,438.5
ST5: I believe that the overall impact of tourism development in the UAE is positive	0.889	5.705	1.236	5.58	1.416	5.83	1.055	0.266	15,211.5
Notes: Means and standard deviations of a Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7), with 4 as a neutral point; ^a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test; ^b Mann-Whitney U-test; ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$									

However, large standard deviations for these three items from national residents (1.82, 1.80 and 1.75) indicate a range of variability in responses regarding negative social impacts. This can be explained because Abu Dhabi's tourism contributes positively to the availability of cultural activities and preservation of cultural identity in the UAE. However, nationals have concerns regarding negative cultural impacts of tourism on their communities.

For positive cultural impacts of tourism, the results indicate that both groups agree with all of these impacts, with only one significant difference for PCI3. Expatriate residents strongly agreed that tourism preserves the cultural identity of the UAE ($M = 5.74$), while nationals, although they agreed, had greater variance ($SD = 1.92$) and lower means than expatriate residents did ($M = 4.75$). For perceptions of negative cultural impacts, the results were significantly different between the two groups for four items (NCI1-NCI4), with national residents having higher means for these items. Differences in perceptions regarding whether tourism development causes disruptions to the religious practices among the UAE residents were non-significant. With respect to perceptions of environmental impacts, the results indicate that both groups agreed with positive environmental impacts, with the only significant difference being for PEI5, as nationals reported greater agreement with improvements to the ecological environment of the UAE than expatriate residents did. These findings can be explained because most of the UAE's natural environment is desert, and most residents appreciate positive contributions of tourism development to improvements to the appearance of the physical environment and promoting sustainability tourism. For negative environmental impacts, a significant difference was found for the statement that tourism adds to traffic congestion in the UAE greatly (NEI1), with nationals reporting greater agreement than expatriates did.

Regarding positive economic impacts, the greatest difference was found for PEI1, as expatriate residents reported that tourism creates desirable employment for the UAE residents. [Lopez and Mercader \(2015\)](#) also found that non-nationals believe that tourism generates more work opportunities in communities for residents. Regarding negative economic impacts, there were significant differences for evaluation of inflation in property values (NECI1), price of food and products (NECI2) and cost of living (NECI3), as national residents believed that tourism development causes these effects. These findings indicate that tourism development in Abu Dhabi contributes to positive economic tourism impacts that all residents recognize. No significant differences between the two groups regarding support for tourism development were found. Both national and expatriate residents showed high support, especially for future tourism development in the UAE. However, expatriate residents reported slightly greater means for support of tourism development. These findings can be explained because nationals are more sensitive to the negative impacts of tourism, especially regarding negative cultural impacts.

6. Discussion

This study explores residents' perceptions regarding the impacts of tourism at a destination where expatriates exceed national residents, and in this case, Abu Dhabi, where expatriates represent the majority of the population. The results suggest that nationality influences perceptions of tourism's impacts. Abu Dhabi residents were grouped in two categories for this study: nationals and expatriates – with findings contributing to deeper understanding of factors that influence residents' perceptions of tourism's impacts. The results show that nationals perceive negative social, cultural and economic impacts more negatively than expatriates do. These findings accord with those who found that native conditions of residents are strong predictors of attitudes towards the impacts of tourism, as natives have more unfavourable attitudes towards economic and sociocultural impacts of tourism than foreigners do in Spain, which contradicts another study conducted in Spain from [Lopez and Mercader \(2015\)](#), who found no significant difference of sociocultural and negative economic impacts between national and non-national residents. The findings suggest that all residents recognize positive social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts of tourism development, and they support tourism development in Abu Dhabi, which is promising for the emirate's future tourism development.

7. Theoretical contribution

The primary theoretical contribution of this study comes from exploring the influence of nationality on residents' perceptions of the impacts of tourism, an important factor to consider at multicultural tourism destinations, especially where the number of expatriates represent the majority of residents. In this study, national and expatriate residents reported differences in their perceptions of the impacts of tourism in Abu Dhabi, suggesting that residents in the same community can hold different views of the same impacts, based on nationality. The study differentiates social and cultural impacts to provide better understanding of the impacts. This study contributes to the literature through inclusion of 30 nationalities, which provided diverse views of the impacts of tourism.

8. Managerial implications

Abu Dhabi is a multicultural tourism destination that has become home to various nationalities. It is important for tourism stakeholders and policymakers in Abu Dhabi to plan tourism development strategies by considering this diversity, given rapid changes to the population. The findings suggest that tourism development in Abu Dhabi resulted in impacts that are perceived both positively and negatively by residents, and that the nationalities of residents influence these perceptions. Although both groups of residents agreed to both negative and positive impacts of tourism, the results show that national residents are more sensitive to negative social and cultural impacts of tourism. These findings can be explained by the fact that Abu Dhabi is an Arab and Muslim country, and national residents are part of a conservative culture and community. Therefore, tourism stakeholders and policymakers in Abu Dhabi should preserve cultural activities and promote culture awareness amongst tourists and residents by issuing policies and marketing campaign that raise awareness amongst tourists regarding cultural sensitivity towards inappropriate public behaviours, dress codes and respecting personal space in public. However, it is crucial for tourism stakeholders and policymakers to understand the difference between the two groups, and what factors are sensitive to each group, to address the issue constructively based on each group's needs.

To meet the economic concerns of residents, tourism stakeholders and policymakers should provide tourism activities for residents during off-seasons at reduced rates, or through promotional discounted packages, allowing residents to appreciate tourism development at reasonable costs. This incentive allows both groups to enjoy the benefits of tourism development, without feeling that it is an expensive destination that they cannot afford. An additional effect would be an increase in the number of visitors to tourism facilities during off-seasons, especially during summer. More business opportunities in the tourism industry should be available to residents, so they can benefit from tourism development. Providing training to nationals to encourage them to work in the tourism industry would increase the economic benefits that nationals receive from tourism, and thereby improve perceptions of tourism's impacts.

9. Limitations and future research

Lack of extant studies in this area of research limits comparison opportunities, but offers a base for future studies in the UAE from which other emirates can benefit. Although this study examines perceptions of residents who belong to one of two groups, it does not explain deviations in the perceptions of national and expatriate residents, or within perceptions of nationals, due to large standard deviations. This study does not consider factors other than nationality that influence perceptions of tourism, such as culture, as expatriate residents are from different parts of the world, including Arab and Muslim residents. However, they did not share the same perceptions as national residents. More research on this topic is required. This study uses a quantitative method, though it would be useful to use mixed methods to explore other factors that influence perceptions.

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