

# Cultural differences and conflicts in tourism: a case study of dubai essay sample...

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



Culture determines human behaviour and shows differences on how people do things and receive world. People are not consciously aware of their culture before they come across foreign culture. Foreign culture set situations where people feel uncomfortable which helps them to understand cultural differences. Elements generating cultural differences are such as language, religion and economics (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Two societies and their cultures are brought together by tourism which is called guest-host relationship. Three types of encounters are identified between host and guest: tourist purchasing goods or services from host, being side by side for example on the beach and being face-to-face in order to change information or ideas.

The greater the differences between economic, cultural and social factors are between tourists and local people, the more likely the relationship will be more unequal and less balanced. Difficulty in relationship between host and guest is usually arisen from the lack of knowledge, understanding or sensitivity from tourists' side to local culture and customs (Sharpley, 1999). Conflicts between cultures happen at the interpersonal and structural level even when tourists are hedonistic sun seeker in their environmental bubble. Conflicts are created from cultural differences that lead to differences in interactional behaviours and misunderstandings in interpretation (Reisinger & Turner, 2003).

Tourists bring their own customs and habits to the destination and rarely are aware of the cultural shock they cause for the locals. Especially in poorer countries the image of Western tourists can be based on unreal tv-shows

which cause expectations to be too high and result to bitterness (Dluzewska, 2008)

As there are different cultures the expectations and meanings of rules also differ across cultures. Rules that are accepted in one culture may not be in another culture. This can cause to misunderstandings and misinterpreting of the rules in other culture. This often leads to difficulties in interaction with hosts, create confusion, generate tension and conflicts. Breaking the rules in the destination is common amongst tourists either because they ignore them or they are unaware of them (Reisinger & Turner, 2003: 139).

#### Case study of Dubai

Cultural conflicts are likely to happen in Country like United Arab Emirates because of the Western tourists and Muslim hosts have such noticeable cultural differences. Many Muslim countries feel that Westernised tourists are behaving unacceptably and incompatible with Islamic religion and way of life. Legislation in the destination can differ enormously from tourists' own country and this cause conflicts because of tourists' unawareness or ignorance.

Dubai is Muslim country and it follows Islamic laws. As Islam is the official religion it is forbidden to criticise or distribute any material against the religion. It is forbidden to practise any form of other religion besides Islam in public areas. During the holy month of Ramadan it is forbidden to eat public from sunrise to sunset, so dining must be done in hotel. Also criticising any of the seven emirates' ruling families is prohibited.

In Dubai you can get sentence of imprisonment from homosexuality, affairs outside marriage, intoxication and kissing in public places. Also public dancing is forbidden and there are strict regulations about dressing in different places. Abusive language and indecent dressing can lead into troubles with the authorities. Alcohol can be used only in definite areas so except these areas it is forbidden to be intoxicated. Also travellers who make stopover are expected to obey these laws. Serious misconduct can lead to be convicted to death penalty.

Dluzewska's research shows that there are differences on the level of knowledge that travellers have about the cultural norms in Dubai. The highest level of knowledge was amongst USA and the biggest travelling countries from Europe such as United Kingdom, Germany and France. Some interviewees in this study did not believe some mentioned rules and were under the impression that if they would do something inappropriate then people would point out their mistake before getting into trouble. The knowledge is not only based on nationality but for example the type of holiday seemed to have big influence. Mass tourists usually were poorly educated and were not aware of the social norms due to this they also caused more dysfunctions, whereas backpackers and exclusive tourists had higher level of knowledge and caused less dysfunction (Dluzewska, 2008).

Shopping malls have posters to advice to the appropriate behaviour. In Abu Dhabi police has started to give local decency guidelines to tourists. These kinds of actions could decrease tourists' lack of knowledge.