

Tourists' cultural competence: A cosmopolitan perspective among Asian tourists

Jo-Hui Lin^a, Daisy X.F. Fan^b, Sheng-Hsiung Tsaur^a, Yun-Ru Tsai^{a,*}

^a Department of Marketing and Tourism Management, National Chiayi University, Taiwan

^b Department of People & Organisations, Business School at Bournemouth University, UK

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ABSTRACT

Cultural tourism has received increasing attention. Tourists play a crucial role in constructing rewarding intercultural experiences and cultural understanding. The current study explored the concept of tourists' cultural competence from a cosmopolitan perspective and proposed a framework for understanding the mechanism of tourists' interactions with cultural experience environment. A total of 33 participants were interviewed and data were analyzed using grounded theory. Cultural openness, understanding, consciousness, and participation were identified as elements of tourists' cultural competence, which can facilitate positive cultural behavior. This research contributes to the literature of cosmopolitanism and tourists' cultural behavior. Managerial implications for tourist management and education are also discussed.

1. Introduction

The tourism industry is one of the most rapidly growing industries globally (Mbaiwa & Sakuze, 2009). However, its sustainability is at risk from multiple shocks that threaten resident livelihoods and cultural values (Ponting & O'Brien, 2014; Zhang, Fan, Tse, & King, 2017). Tourism, as a social phenomenon, is a series of processes, activities, and results derived from the interactions between tourists, operators, governments, local communities, and the surrounding environment (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009). It causes socio-cultural changes to host societies, including changes in value systems, traditional lifestyles, relationships, individual behaviors, and community structures (Ratz, 2002). Therefore, the relationship between tourism factors and local development is a crucial social and cultural concern (Cohen, 1972).

Regarding the threat that the Taiwanese aboriginal "Harvest Festival" might be an event only for tourist entertainment, Taiwanese aboriginal singer Chang Chen-Yue had publicly expressed his concerns: "Harvest Festival is an extremely important part of cultural heritage, not just a tourist activity. The government does not emphasize 'respecting the culture; ' it only cares about tourism. Sorry that we dance for our ancestors and elders; we do not dance for tourists, so we only welcome tourists with a heart of respect!" (CNA NEWS, 2014). This reflects the commercialization of Harvest Festival. The aboriginal "sacrificial"

meaning and "taboo" considerations have been ignored, leaving only the image of singing, dancing, and drinking. Another example is Bali, an Indonesian island that has gained massive popularity as an international destination. This island is also known as the "island of 1000 temples" and religion plays an important role in the local life. In 2016, a tourist wearing bikini performed a downward dog yoga position for pictures in front of a Balinese temple. In 2017, a tourist took a picture of herself posing seductively in front of Bali's Mount Agung volcano. In 2018, a tourist sat on the Linggih Padmasana shrine at Puhur Lutur Batukaru temple and provoked the criticism on social media. Due to the increasing amount of disrespectful behaviors from the tourists, in 2018, Bali authorities have pledged to make new rules for visiting temples and to stop disrespectful behaviors of tourists. "The temples need to be reserved since they are the spirits of Bali's cultures and customs"; "We are too open with tourists, so too many come. The quality of tourists is now different from before" said by the deputy governor of Bali (Coconuts Bali, 2018; MailOnline, 2018). These news indicate that interactions among different societies naturally occur, thus increasing the contacts among different cultures (Fennell, 2006; Henderson, 2003). Tourists lacking cultural competence could offend local culture and cause negative cultural impacts.

In tourism settings, a cultural gap often exists between tourists and destination communities (Yu, Weiler, & Ham, 2002). Tourism is by

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: linjohui@mail.ncyu.edu.tw (J.-H. Lin), dfan@bournemouth.ac.uk (D.X.F. Fan), shenght@mail.ncyu.edu.tw (S.-H. Tsaur), attilatsai@gmail.com (Y.-R. Tsai).

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nature socially interactive (Fennell, 2006), which increases the opportunities for different cultures to interact (Henderson, 2003). Socio-cultural impacts of tourism result from the interactions between “hosts,” or local people, and “guests,” or tourists (Smith, 1995). Tourists interact with service staff, tour leaders, other tourists, and local people (Campos, Mendes, do Valle, & Scott, 2016; Minkiewicz, Evans, & Bridson, 2014; Prebensen & Foss, 2011; Weiler & Black, 2015). Additionally, the interactions are not limited to people. Tourists also interact with objects in experience environment, such as: exhibitions, heritage sites, events, even atmosphere or overall servicescape (Bertella, 2014; Campos et al., 2016; Daengbuppa, Hemmington, & Wilkes, 2006; Minkiewicz et al., 2014; Prebensen & Foss, 2011). Therefore, the evaluation of cultural interaction in this study is based on tourists’ reaction when they encounter people/objects with different cultural features. To promote the socio-cultural sustainability of tourism, destination managers are keen to minimize the negative socio-cultural tourism impacts (Lu & Nepal, 2009), and enhance cultural exchange experiences between tourists and residents.

Tourists are the main actors in such cultural exchanges. Depending on their cross-cultural competence, either cultural conflicts or mutual understanding can be stimulated, thus influencing both local people and tourists (Reisinger, 2009; Tsaur, Yen, & Teng, 2018; Ye, Zhang, & Yuen, 2013). The attitudes and behaviors a tourist demonstrates when interacting with different cultural environments not only are associated with tourists’ satisfaction with their experiences and attitudes toward the destination but also potentially enhance residents’ local pride and respect for local culture (Gu & Ryan, 2012; Pizam, Uriely, & Reichel, 2000). Although tourist behavior management and education are highlighted in sustainable tourism, and various studies and declarations have explored responsible and ethical tourist behavior (Ap & Crompton, 1998; Gios, Goio, Notaro, & Raffaelli, 2006; Lee, Jan, & Yang, 2013; Nowaczek & Smale, 2010; Ramdas & Mohamed, 2014; World Tourism Organization, 1999; World Travel and Trade Council, 2003), relatively few studies have focused on tourists’ cultural competencies, which enable people to interact appropriately and efficiently with different cultural environments, especially in a global mobility setting.

Cosmopolitanism refers to “a sense of belonging to the world” and being a “global citizen” (Salazar, 2010; Schueth & O’loughlin, 2008). Although cosmopolitanism has often been understood from a philosophical perspective, research on cosmopolitanism has shifted from an abstract to a practical level, more attention is focused on how people perform as cosmopolitans in their lives (Swain, 2009). Tourism creates an ideal context for investigating the practice of cosmopolitanism in a global mobility setting involving cultural exchange (Johnson, 2014; Swain, 2009). Tourists can play the role of “tourist citizens” and improve relations between countries (Holmes, 2001; Molz, 2005). Cultural tourists can practice cosmopolitanism by pursuing cultural experiences, aesthetic sensations, novelty, and social bonds, and by undertaking the responsibility and obligation to preserve local culture and society (Featherstone, 2002). Although tourist behavior has been adequately studied, the specific cultural competencies demonstrated by cosmopolitan tourists have rarely been investigated.

Therefore, the following questions have been raised: what specific cultural competencies can a tourist demonstrate during cultural tourism? How can a cultural tourist practice as a cosmopolitan? This study applied cosmopolitanism as a theoretical framework to interpret the sociological phenomenon of cultural interactions and competencies. It aims to identify the specific cosmopolitan cultural competencies demonstrated by tourists from a cosmopolitanism perspective and therefore conceptualizes cosmopolitan tourists. Furthermore, this study proposes a framework to systematically interpret how tourists interact appropriately and efficiently with different cultural environments in a global mobility setting.

2. Literature review

2.1. Tourist behavior and socio-cultural sustainability

Because of growing awareness of the impacts on local society driven by tourism development, the concept of sociocultural sustainability has become a crucial concern for both destination managers and tourism researchers globally (Zhang et al., 2017). The United Nations Environment Programme and World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2005) define sustainable tourism as “the tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities.” To promote the socio-cultural sustainability of tourism, destination managers must minimize its negative socio-cultural impacts, and enhance tourists’ satisfaction as well as the long-term competitiveness and economic development of destinations (Lu & Nepal, 2009).

The socio-cultural impacts of tourism on local society are not necessarily negative. Tourism provides opportunities for meeting different people and learning about other cultures. The positive impacts of tourism include mutual understanding between different cultures and promoting cultural exchanges (Ap & Crompton, 1998). The United Nations Environmental Programme and the World Tourism Organization (UNEP & UNWTO) (2005) also proposes that facilitating “intercultural understanding and tolerance” is a direction for sustainable tourism development. In other words, the sustainable development of tourism requires engagement and respect within and between stakeholders of tourism. Therefore, tourism is an ideal environment for studying cultural possibilities (Johnson, 2014). Tourism has opportunities to preserve local culture and promote understanding of cultural diversity (Zhang et al., 2017).

Many studies have investigated how tourist behavior influences tourism destinations regardless of economic, social, or cultural impacts. These studies analyze the thoughts and reactions of tourism impacts and cover both residents and tourists. However, as Brougham and Butler (1981) argue, the interactions between prerequisites (such as landscapes and policies), tourists, and residents lead to tourism impacts. In other words, tourism impacts occur after tourists’ cultural interactions. Therefore, tourists’ cultural interactions and their attitude or behavior when tourism contact occurs are the root causes of tourism impacts.

Tourist behavior has always been a focus in tourism research. Within sustainable tourism, responsible behavior as well as the management of tourists’ behavior are highlighted. In the ecotourism field, studies examine how tourists interact with natural environments. For example, Lee et al. (2013) develop a scale to measure environmentally responsible behaviors from the perspective of community-based tourists. Nowaczek and Smale (2010) developed the Ecotourist Predisposition Scale to effectively explain and evaluate tourists’ ecotourism predisposition. In addition, several studies have investigated tourists’ environmental knowledge, sensitivity, and attitudes (Cheng & Wu, 2015; Gios et al., 2006; Ramdas & Mohamed, 2014). However, relatively few studies have investigated tourists’ behaviors or attitudes toward different cultures.

Regarding tourist interactions with cultural environments, some studies have argued that tourists should respect and appreciate different local cultures and have proposed behavior codes for different cultural situations. The United Nations Environmental Programme and the World Tourism Organization (UNEP & UNWTO) (2005) proposal for a “Global Code of Ethics for Tourism” argues that “the understanding and promotion of the ethical values common to humanity, with an attitude of tolerance and respect for the diversity of religious, philosophical, and moral beliefs, are both the foundation and the consequence of responsible tourism.” Ap and Crompton (1998) argued that the positive impacts of tourism include mutual understanding and cultural exchange promotion. However, few researchers have taken a holistic approach to understanding tourists’ responsible cultural behavior when they interact with different cultural environments.

2.2. Tourism as the practice of cosmopolitanism

The word “cosmopolitanism” is derived from the ancient Greek words *kosmos* (universe) and *polis* (city) (Salazar, 2010). Cosmopolitanism refers to “a sense of belonging to the world,” whereas a cosmopolitan is a “global citizen” (Salazar, 2010; Schueth & O’loughlin, 2008). The notion of cosmopolitanism appeared in political philosophy during the Enlightenment era, which often refers back to the philosopher Immanuel Kant who promoted political ideas about global governance, citizenship, and cultural aspects of relationships that depend on the kindness of strangers (Swain, 2009). In contrast to nationalism, warfare, and ethnic hatred, cosmopolitanism is often related to elitism, travel, world peace, multiculturalism, and humanitarianism (Swain, 2009). The relationship between tourism and cosmopolitanism has been discussed. As Bruner (1991) stated, “The benefits of travel—that it is broadening, that it leads to a more cosmopolitan perspective, and that exposure to other cultures enhances world understanding and facilitates world peace.” Tourism is generated from interactions in which cultural gaps often exist between tourists and hosts (Yu et al., 2002). In addition, a cosmopolitan is concerned with cultural translation across borders (Mignolo, 2002), and claims that world citizenship is achieved through “a cultural or aesthetic disposition toward difference.” In other words, cultural exchange involving mobility, international travel, and certain dispositions (such as openness and global sense) is essential in both tourism and cosmopolitanism (Johnson, 2014). Therefore, tourism cultivates cosmopolitans (Swain, 2009) and forms an ideal context for investigating cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitanism is often considered on a conceptual level from a philosophical, moral, or cultural perspective (Swain, 2009). Beck (2002) describes cosmopolitanism as an abstract “kingdom of the air.” However, scholars have begun to explore how cosmopolitanism is performed in people’s everyday lives (Molz, 2006; Swain, 2009). For example, on the basis of critical cosmopolitanism and feminist philosophy to analyze literature and researchers’ own experiences, Swain (2009) argues that cosmopolitanism can be experienced, embodied, and performed in tourism by tourists, the toured, and researchers. Molz (2005; 2006; 2007) uses a similar approach based on the concept of “actually existing cosmopolitanisms” to understand the practice of cosmopolitanism. She analyzes the narratives of round-the-world travelers from their websites and focuses on cosmopolitan citizenship (2005), cosmopolitan bodies (2006), and culinary tourists (2007) to explore tourists’ cosmopolitan traits. Furthermore, Schueth and O’loughlin (2008) use the expression “belonging to the world as a whole” in the World Values Survey to measure cosmopolitanism. Their results demonstrate that neither gender nor religion is significantly correlated to cosmopolitanism, whereas education and age are; that is, younger and highly educated people are more cosmopolitan.

Research on cosmopolitanism has shifted from an abstract to a practical level, and more attention is devoted to how people perform as cosmopolitans. In addition, tourists have the potential to become cosmopolitans (Molz, 2006; Swain, 2009). “Tourist citizens” become a contemporary form to perform global citizenship (Holmes, 2001). The cosmopolitan is a cultural tourist pursuing experiences, aesthetic sensations, novelty, and social bonds while performing duties and obligations (Featherstone, 2002). Although the role of the tourist as a cosmopolitan practitioner has received increasing attention, the specific competencies demonstrated by tourists in practicing cosmopolitanism remain underrepresented in the literature.

2.3. Tourists’ cultural competence from a cosmopolitan perspective

To effectively interact with people from different cultural backgrounds, individuals must develop cultural competence (Tsaor & Tu, 2019). Cultural competence refers to “the skills and abilities that an individual needs in order to interact appropriately and efficiently with persons from a different culture” (Scherle & Nonnenmann, 2008). With

cultural competence, individuals can distinguish between cultural differences and use their cultural knowledge to adjust their own behaviors to interact more effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds (Tsaor & Tu, 2019).

Vertovec and Cohen (2002) identify six perspectives on cosmopolitanism: (a) a socio-cultural condition, (b) a type of philosophy or worldview, (c) a political project for building transnational institutions, (d) a political project for recognizing multiple identities, (e) an attitudinal or dispositional orientation, and (f) a mode of practice or competence. All six approaches are related to the tourism industry (Swain, 2009). Scholars demonstrate the applicability of the last two approaches in understanding the traits and competencies of actors engaged in tourism (Salazar, 2010; Scherle & Nonnenmann, 2008). For example, Urry (1995) asserts that cosmopolitanism is related to extensive mobility, openness to others, and risk taking, and cosmopolitans reflect aesthetically as connoisseurs. Molz (2006) argues that the cosmopolitan can be imagined as “a cultural or aesthetic disposition toward difference—a sense of tolerance, flexibility, and openness toward otherness that characterizes an ethics of social relations in an interconnected world.”

Moreover, Swain (2009) considered the tourism industry to be part of a socio-cultural condition of mobility in which tourists may develop intellectual and aesthetic orientations toward cultural difference. Such orientations can be understood as cosmopolitan practices or traits, including mobility, consumption, curiosity, risking encounters with the “other,” aesthetic reflection, openness to the other’s culture, and the skill of semiotic interpretation. Interchangeably used, Johnson (2014) proposes “cultural literacy” as a philosophical platform for studying cosmopolitanism. Cultural literacy provides individuals with abilities to negotiate with different cultures, which represent a similar domain with cultural competence. He divides cultural literacy into three dimensions, an individual’s cognition, behavior, and affect, and argues that cultural literacy is a useful tool for analyzing the manifestation of tourists and explain tourist behavior, responses, and mannerisms in adapting to and accepting cultural difference.

Few studies have explored the effects of tourist intercultural competence. Ye et al. (2013) explore the antecedents of perceived discrimination of tourists, and indicate that intercultural competence moderates the relationship between perceived cultural distance and anticipated discrimination. Tourists with relatively high intercultural competence present a negative correlation between perceived cultural distance and anticipated discrimination. Their study adapts a socio-cultural adaptation scale to measure intercultural competence of tourists that includes four items, namely understanding locals’ world view, seeing things from the locals’ perspective, adapting to local etiquette, and communicating with people. Tsaor et al. (2018) indicate that the intercultural competence of tourists is inversely related to tourist–resident conflict. These studies consider intercultural competence from a social adaptation perspective, which emphasizes empathy toward locals. However, adoption is only one aspect of cultural competence and does not apply to every tourist type. The aim of the current study is to enrich the understanding of cultural competence based on the landscape of cosmopolitanism and provide a holistic theory to explain tourists’ cultural competence in tourism contexts.

Studies have demonstrated that frontline employees in the tourism industry, especially tour guides, must demonstrate specific cultural competencies (Cheok, Hede, & Watne, 2015; Scherle & Nonnenmann, 2008; Tsaor & Tu, 2019; Yu et al., 2002). Scherle and Nonnenmann (2008) conceptualize tour guides as “cosmopolitan” because they require intercultural competence to act as mediators between different cultures. Yu et al. (2002) presents a framework for the cultural competence of Chinese tour guides that includes knowledge, attitudes (empathy for both visitors and hosts), and communication skills. They define the cultural competence of tour guides as “a general assessment of tour guide effectiveness in intercultural communication and mediation” that includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors. Tsaor and Tu

(2019) developed a scale for tour leaders' cultural competence and identified 10 factors: understanding the local travel environment, cross-cultural communication and interaction skills, understanding local culture, language ability, understanding local life habit, understanding cultural backgrounds of tour members, cultural empathy, cultural affinity, cultural mediation, and cultural adaptability.

Discourse on cosmopolitan and cultural competence is valuable in tourism research. Cosmopolitanism involves a moral perspective that serves as the philosophical base for ethics in tourism development, and frames tourists' ethical and responsible behaviors in an interconnected world (Molz, 2006; Shawn, 2009). Additionally, cosmopolitanism also involves intellectual and aesthetic reactions when people encounter different cultures (Molz, 2006; Shawn, 2009; Urry, 1995). Cultural competence is an approach to study cosmopolitanism (Swain, 2009; Vertovec & Cohen, 2002), and can be positioned as a fundamental principle of cosmopolitanism (Johnson, 2014). Several studies developed the conceptualization and measurement of cultural competencies for frontline workers in the tourism industry, such as tour leaders and hotel employees, but relatively few systematically explored the specific competencies that tourists could perform during international travel from a holistic perspective. Therefore, this study aims to explore the cultural competencies that cultural tourists demonstrate during their tours, and gain understanding of cosmopolitan tourists through their practice of cultural competencies. Overall, cosmopolitan cultural competencies require tourists to demonstrate a set of abilities to interact appropriately and efficiently with different cultural backgrounds in a global mobility setting, which deserves a proper philosophical base and systematic investigation.

3. Research method

The current study adopted the postpositivist paradigm. A qualitative grounded theory approach was used. Postpositivist grounded theory acknowledges the fluid nature of reality and involves skepticism about the idea that we can learn about the world with certainty (Matteucci & Gnoth, 2017). Through combining deductive and inductive reasoning and using a systematic set of procedures, grounded theory advocates establishing theory from empirical data; researchers can categorize concepts and propositions from raw data without theoretical assumptions and then develop the theory (Matteucci & Gnoth, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Cosmopolitanism involves a "large, ancient, rich, and controversial set of political ideas, philosophies, and ideologies" (Beck, 2002). Hence, grounded theory offers tourism researchers a procedure for deeply understanding tourist behavior, comparing concepts between theory and data, and generating holistic theories with conceptual density (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

3.1. Data collection and analysis

Theoretical sampling was adapted to collect data. As this study explored the cosmopolitan cultural competencies of cultural tourists in a global mobility setting, international cultural tourists were selected as the research participants. In the first stage, tourists with international tourism experience were selected using purposive sampling to develop rich categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Based on the data collected in the first stage, backpackers were found to have more opportunities to interact with locals. Therefore, in the second stage, backpackers were selected based on the following criteria (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Maoz, 2007): (1) preferring interactions with the locals and other tourists; (2) flexible travel plan which are arranged by themselves; (3) preferring informal and participatory activities; and (4) looking forward to understanding and experiencing the authentic culture and lifestyle. In the third stage, both independent and group cultural tourists were recruited to enrich the meaning of each category and clarify the relationships between categories. Regarding the theory building and sample selection, main concepts obtained from the analysis process,

such as respecting, appreciating, understanding, and participating were used to conduct theoretical sampling. The participants were selected based on the need of theory development. For example, respecting is an important factor when tourists contact with local residents and communities, and enter religious heritage sites (Coconuts Bali, 2018; Jamal & Camargo, 2014; Lee et al., 2013; MailOnline, 2018; Tsaour et al., 2018). Research memo also indicated that: "Participants that enter locals' daily life boundary, and contact with residents, are most likely to have interflow with residents' lifestyle and spiritual belief." Therefore, tourists who entered local communities, aboriginal areas, or religious heritage sites were selected to develop the categories related to respect and openness. Initial categories established from stage 1 and 2 were refined in this stage. Categories with conceptual density were developed until theory saturation. Finally, collecting diverse cases (e.g., respondents with different occupations, ages, nationalities) as the confirmatory cases increased the variability.

Data collection and analysis processes were implemented simultaneously by selecting appropriate respondents on the basis of the theory construction requirements and stopping when theory saturation was reached. Interview took average 37 min. As shown in Table 1, 33 Asian respondents were interviewed. First, data were collected from non-structured interviews to explore numerous categories. Participants were asked to respond to the following questions: How do you deal with different cultural situations during a tour? What are your cognitive, feelings, and behaviors? Then, a semi-structured interview was gradually developed based on the findings of the non-structured interviews to explore categories, increase the density of categories and confirm the relations between categories. Semi-structured interview questions included: (a) How do you gather information and understand the knowledge of different cultures? (b) How do you demonstrate your curiosity, appreciation, respect, enjoyment, or openness during encounters with different cultures? (c) Have you or other tourists showed uncomfortable, unaccustomed, resistant or other negative competence during encounters with different cultures? (d) How do you participate in or experience local cultures? (e) How do you view your relationship with different cultures? All interviews were conducted in Mandarin, Chinese which is the mother language of all the respondents.

Data was analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Open coding is a process of "breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The data was broken down into distinct units of meaning to identify the discrete concepts (Tan, Kung, & Luh, 2013). A rich pool of concepts was generated in this process. For example: "I will do my best to comply with their rules (complying with the rules). These rules are usually explained by tour guides or on notification boards (following the direction); they are easy to comply with. In addition, we will try not to disturb others (not to disturb), such as by staying quiet while watching (staying quiet) or turning off the flash (turning off the flash)" (Participant 11). Subsequently, concepts were compared and similar ones were grouped together. This process is termed as "categorizing," which generates initial sub-categories at a higher and more abstract level (Mehmetoglu & Altinay, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Table 2 presents an example for categorizing.

The next step of coding is the axial coding procedure, where data are put together in new ways to generate tentative statements of relationships among phenomena (Mehmetoglu & Altinay, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Tan et al., 2013). The "coding paradigm" proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) can be used in axial coding to explicitly or implicitly shape the categories and clarify relations between codes, which includes "phenomena," "conditions," "strategic actions/interactions," and "consequences" (Daengbuppa et al., 2006; Kelle, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For example, "respect and tolerance toward differences," "compliance with cultural rules," and "concern for the privacy and dignity" were grouped into sub-category "Respect and compliance." Moreover, the condition (context of global mobility and cultural diversity, as well as the role of destinations), and consequence

Table 1
Interviewee profiles.

	Gender	Age	International travel experience	Main traveling forms	Education	Occupation	Nationality
1	Female	20–29	>10	Group travel, different continents	Undergraduate	Restaurant	Taiwan
2	Male	20–29	4	Independent and group travel, mostly in Asia	Undergraduate	Bank	Taiwan
3	Male	50–59	>10	Independent and group travel, different continents	Postgraduate	Doctor	Taiwan
4	Male	30–39	>10	Independent travel, mostly in Asia, especially Japan	Undergraduate	Tutoring institution	Taiwan
3	Male	30–39	1	Little travel experience	Undergraduate	student	Taiwan
6	Female	20–29	5	Independent travel, Asia and Europe	Undergraduate	School teacher	Taiwan
7	Female	20–29	>10	Independent travel, Asia, Europe, and North America, study abroad	Undergraduate	Teacher	Taiwan
8	Male	20–29	>10	Independent travel, mostly in Asia, especially Southeast Asia	Postgraduate	NPO	Malaysia
9	Female	20–29	2	Experienced in domestic independent travel, mostly in Asia	Postgraduate	Tourist center	Taiwan
10	Female	30–39	6	Independent and group travel, experienced in ecotourism, Asia and Europe	Undergraduate	Tutoring institution	Taiwan
11	Female	20–29	>10	Independent and group travel, different continents	Undergraduate	Dessert chef	Taiwan
12	Female	30–39	6	Independent travel and experienced in domestic independent travel	Postgraduate	TV host	Taiwan
13	Female	20–29	2	Little travel experience, mostly in Asia	Undergraduate	Student	Taiwan
14	Female	30–39	>10	Independent travel, Asia, Europe, and North America	Postgraduate	Writer	Taiwan
15	Male	20–29	8	Independent travel, mostly in Europe	Postgraduate	student	Taiwan
16	Male	50–59	>10	Group travel, Asia and Europe	High school	Argriculture	Taiwan
17	Male	30–39	4	Independent travel, Asia and Europe	Undergraduate	Museum	Taiwan
18	Male	40–49	>10	Group travel, domestic tour guide, Asia and Europe	High school	Tour guide	Taiwan
19	Male	30–39	>10	Group travel, domestic tour guide, Asia and Europe	Undergraduate	Tour guide	Macao
20	Female	30–39	7	Independent travel and group travel, Asia and Europe	Undergraduate	Administration	Taiwan
21	Female	50–59	>10	Group travel, Asia and Europe	Undergraduate	School teacher	Mainland, China
22	Male	30–39	>10	Independent travel, Asia and Europe	Undergraduate	Cruise	Malaysia
23	Male	30–39	3	Independent travel, mostly in Asia	Undergraduate	Sales manager	Mainland, China
24	Female	30–39	>10	Independent travel and group travel, Asia, Europe, and North America	Undergraduate	University teacher	Taiwan
25	Female	40–49	>10	Independent travel and group travel, Asia and Europe	Postgraduate	Teacher	Mainland, China
26	Male	20–29	>10	Independent travel, mostly in Asia, especially Korea	Undergraduate	International trade	Mainland, China
27	Male	30–39	>10	Independent travel and group travel, Asia and Europe	Undergraduate	Advertising	Malaysia
28	Male	30–39	>10	Independent travel, Asia, Europe, and North America	Undergraduate	Architect	Malaysia
29	Male	30–39	>10	Group travel, Asia and Europe, mostly in Europe	Undergraduate	Manufacturing	Mainland, China
30	Female	30–39	7	Independent travel, Asia and Europe, mostly in Europe	Postgraduate	Student	Mainland, China
31	Male	20–29	>10	Independent travel and group travel	Undergraduate	Student	Mainland, China
32	Female	30–39	>10	Independent travel and group travel	Undergraduate	Travel agency	Mainland, China
33	Male	30–39	>10	Independent travel and most in Europe	Postgraduate	Hospitality	Hong Kong

Table 2
An example for categorizing in open coding.

Concepts from raw data	Category
Respect to cultural value	Respect and tolerance toward differences
Respect to heritage	
Toleration	
Not to criticize	Compliance with cultural rules
Learning cultural norms	
Complying with the rules	
Following the instruction	Concern for the privacy and dignity
Not to disturb locals	
Staying quiet	
Acting carefully	
Observation	

(positive cultural behavior) were also considered. In addition, research memo was used to understand the boundary of categories. For example, memos indicated that: “respect and tolerance are basic requirements for a tourist, even if a tourist demonstrates these abilities, they could still be an outsider or observer, who does not engage in cultural exchange.” “Blending in local cultures or life does not imply that a tourist is enjoying the local atmosphere, they might just follow the others’ behavior, or try

not to act in a wrong way. However, it is also different from respect only. These tourists believe that, since they have traveled all the way to an unfamiliar country, they should at least try to adapt to the local life.” Therefore, “blending in local cultures and customs,” “blending in local life” and “responding flexibly” were categorized as “flexibility and blending in” sub-category and grouped into “cultural openness” core category.

In the final stage of coding, selective coding was adopted, representing a process of identifying and choosing the core category, connecting categories systematically, and developing the theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Tan et al., 2013). The “coding paradigm” and research memos helped this study develop the theoretical framework. As a result, the eleven sub-categories of cultural competencies were integrated into four core categories, namely cultural openness, understanding, consciousness, and participation. Moreover, the theoretical framework of tourists’ cultural competence was interpreted through three level, namely border conservation, border interflow, and border crossing level. The results of coding are shown in Table 3.

3.2. Trustworthiness of research

In qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four

Table 3
Summary of coding results.

Sub-categories	Categories	Core categories
Respect and tolerance toward differences Compliance with cultural rules Concern for the privacy and dignity	Respect and compliance	Cultural openness /Border conservation level
Being open minded Accepting different culture	Openness toward diversity	
Blending in local cultures and customs Blending in local life Responding flexibly	Flexibility and blending in	
Gathering information Receiving the information from service providers	Gathering travel information	Cultural understanding /Border interflow level
Understanding local culture Understanding background story	Understanding cultural background	
Standing in local people's shoes Reflecting on tourist's own culture Learning the cultural advantages	Empathy and reflection	
Awareness of cultural difference Comparing cultural difference	Sensitivity to cultural differences	Cultural consciousness /Border interflow level
Curiosity to local culture and lifestyle Preference for novel culture Enjoying the cultural difference	Curiosity to cultural differences	
Appreciating local lifestyle Appreciating cultural feature Appreciating local products	Aesthetic appreciation	
Interacting with locals Opinion exchange with locals	Interactions with locals	Cultural participation /Border interflow level
Participating in cultural activity Taking a hands-on approach Willingness to try local products	Participation in local activities	
Cultural identification Heritage conservation Cultural consumption Sharing with friends	Positive cultural behavior	

criteria of trustworthiness, namely dependability, transferability, credibility, and confirmability, to replace reliability and validity in quantitative studies. This study adopted the following methods to enhance the trustworthiness of research results: (a) methodology: by following the steps of grounded theory, a constant comparative analysis was adopted during the data collection and analysis processes, and confirmatory cases were investigated to increase confirmability; (b) data triangulation: interviews were conducted at multiple times and places, and participants from different areas in Asia were recruited; (c) researcher triangulation: two researchers performed separate analysis procedures for the same data and discussed the differences, such as categorization of coding, relationships between categories, and the distinction between cognition and behavior, which were followed by mutual comparisons and negotiated outcomes. In addition, the researchers invited two colleagues from the university to read all the text and identify any neglected units of analysis; (d) interviewer triangulation: researchers contacted the participants and clarified the transcripts during the data

analysis process. Moreover, findings were viewed by three interviewers for confirmation; (e) theoretical triangulation: multiple perspectives, such as cosmopolitanism, responsible tourist behavior, and sustainable tourism were considered during data analysis. This paper adopted these five methods to enhance the dependability, credibility, and confirmability of the research results. In addition, transferability was considered by providing detailed descriptions of the research design and sampling method.

4. Results and discussion

This study explored tourists' cosmopolitan cultural competencies through the experiences of tourists interacting with different cultural environments. The findings revealed four core competencies: cultural openness, understanding, consciousness, and participation. A three-level framework was proposed to construct the performance of cultural competencies and their positive outcomes. Negative competencies were also provided.

4.1. Core competence 1: cultural openness

This category is related to the normative orientation of tourists' cosmopolitan cultural competencies. It represents how tourists treat the relationship between guest and host cultures, according to which they behave appropriately.

4.1.1. Respect and compliance

Respect involves avoiding criticism of local culture, acting carefully, and concerning locals' feelings. When tourists encounter a culture that they are unfamiliar with, respect is a basic element of tourists' cultural competencies, which prevents a tourist from ignoring the feelings or social values of locals mostly by mistake. As a participant remarked:

"Respect is very important. You must be very careful when dealing with those things because if you do something that is inappropriate in a culture that you are unfamiliar with, you may hurt feelings or destroy relationships (between guests and hosts)" (Participant 8).

In addition, when a tourist travels in an unfamiliar environment, it is important to comply with local rules, and follow the instructions of tour guides or notifications from service providers. As a participant noted:

"I will do my best to comply with their rules. These rules are usually explained by tour guides or on notification boards. They are easy to comply with. In addition, we will try not to disturb others, such as by staying quiet while watching, or turning off the flash" (Participant 11).

Previous studies also indicated that tourists must respect the local people, traditions, cultures, and socio-cultural value systems of the host community (Donohoe, 2011; Nowaczek & Smale, 2010; Ye et al., 2013). Moreover, tourists must follow local laws, have concerns for the privacy and dignity of locals, and obtain consent before entering spaces or taking pictures (Donohoe, 2011).

4.1.2. Openness toward diversity

During a tour, tourists encounter destinations that are different from their familiar environments. A tourist with cultural competence understands that those differences are not absolutely right or wrong but are only different lifestyles. As respondents said:

"There are so many ways to live, just as there are so many ways to build a house. You can refer to others' (lives). Life in your country is not necessarily the best; every country has its advantages. Tourists need to hold a certain degree of tolerance and openness" (Participant 11).

"If you only want to stick to the criteria of your country, preserve your own pace, time arrangements, and food preferences, you should have stayed in your country" (Participant 1).

Therefore, a cosmopolitan tourist should have an open mind (United Nations Environmental Programme and the World Tourism Organization (UNEP & UNWTO), 2005), be open to cultural diversity (Johnson, 2014; Swain, 2009; Urry, 1995), and tolerate cultural differences (Molz, 2005; 2006). In this manner, they can connect with different cultures and further understand the cultural background as well as appreciate the cultural aesthetics of locals.

4.1.3. Flexibility and blending in

Tourists also require the flexibility to adjust their behavior patterns to the local cultural environments. Some tourists learn new skills to blend into the local surroundings, such as new languages, clothing, religious beliefs, or social values. As a respondent mentioned:

"Tourists must cultivate the concept of blending into the local culture, whether on a shallow or a deep level ... I will learn a few sentences of the local languages, such as greetings or thank you, which will make the locals more kind and familiar with me" (Participant 20).

Specifically, flexibility competence is related to repressing the insistence on lifestyle derived from the home culture, avoiding disturbing the local pace and observing others before taking actions. Molz (2006) mentioned, such tourists are "like chameleons, adapting and blending as best they can into the various environments they pass through." As a participant remarked:

"I respect the differences of the local culture. Moreover, I want to blend in. Because I am the one who enter an unfamiliar place, I feel that I could follow their ways in such situation" (Participant 14).

4.2. Core competence 2: cultural understanding

This category is related to cognitive and intellectual orientation. It refers to how tourists gather travel information, understand local cultural backgrounds, and further empathize and reflect different cultural contexts.

4.2.1. Gathering travel information

The ability to gather travel information makes a trip smoother by not only making cultural knowledge and experience easier to obtain but also reducing the likelihood of offending local people or behaving inappropriately. As a respondent described:

"Nowadays, it is very easy to obtain information, such as from books or the internet. Tourists can read many introductions (of destinations) from travel writing or guidebooks. You can also gather information from the tourist center in the destination" (Participant 10).

Tourists should collect related information to respond to different situations that may arise during their trips, such as those related to hotel and airline reservations, regulations, customs, geography, and knowledge of travel security (Tsaur, Yen, & Chen, 2010). High-quality travel information helps visitors plan their trips and select accommodations, transportations, activities, or package tours, thereby enhancing the quality of tourism experiences and reducing uncertainty (Hassan, Zainal, & Mohamed, 2015).

4.2.2. Understanding cultural background

Different cultures must have reasons for how they are presented. As an outsider, the tourist should understand the unique context of such cultural backgrounds to evoke acceptance and empathy toward the host culture. As a participant expressed:

"I thought that the development of their culture, or how they became the status that they presented to us, must imply their own reasons and processes. Therefore, I would try to understand how such culture has developed. I would like to learn something like this (cultural background)" (Participant 24).

Tourism promotes mutual understanding among people and societies when encounters occur (Ap & Crompton, 1998; Molz, 2005; United Nations Environmental Programme and the World Tourism Organization (UNEP & UNWTO), 2005). Therefore, exploring history and cultural heritage and learning about cultural backgrounds, customs, rituals, and ways of life are essential for tourists (Gnoth & Zins, 2013; Lee et al., 2013; Nowaczek & Smale, 2010).

4.2.3. Empathy and reflection

Beyond understanding, cosmopolitan tourists can demonstrate a higher level of competence in empathy and reflection. Such empathy and reflection processes involve standing in local people's shoes, reflecting on tourists' own culture and learning the cultural advantages. These competences could enhance deep and mutual understanding and promote cultural exchange. As participants reported:

"We need to empathize with local cultural contexts and empathy is not just respect. Respect means not to offend, but empathy requires going deeper to understand the reasons why local people are acting like this" (Participant 5).

"Tourists should stand at their (local people's) point of view! Be empathetic ... compare the differences and interpret the local culture based on their own life experiences; discuss the similarities and differences" (Participant 21).

Past studies also mentioned that tourists could exhibit empathy by considering local people's perspectives and seeing the world through local people's eyes (Gnoth & Zins, 2013; Tsaur et al., 2018; Ye et al., 2013). Moreover, after the comparison between home and foreign cultures, the knowledge of a destination's culture enables tourists to reflect on their original ideas (Urry, 1995).

4.3. Core competence 3: cultural consciousness

This category is related to affective and aesthetic orientation. It refers to how tourists are sensitive to cultural differences, demonstrate curiosity toward novel cultures, and further develop aesthetic appreciation based on personal consciousness.

4.3.1. Sensitivity to cultural differences

Tourists' sensitivity to cultural differences refers to their awareness of the differences between their own culture and a destination's culture. Tourists observe details to identify the uniqueness of local cultures. Sensitivity is the basic element for a cosmopolitan tourist to demonstrate curiosity and develop aesthetic taste. As one participant described:

"I also noticed the wooden board they used; they adopted a technique of accumulating the boards sized approximately 20 cm. I had not seen that technique in Taiwan" (Participant 12).

Research has discussed cultural sensitivity in ecotourism to minimize impacts to natural and cultural environments (Donohoe, 2011) and has explored environmental sensitivity to facilitate environmentally responsible behavior (Cheng & Wu, 2015; Ramdas & Mohamed, 2014).

4.3.2. Curiosity to cultural differences

Curiosity refers to tourists' interests in different cultures. Curiosity provides the momentum for exploring a new culture, thereby initiating cultural exchange. Tourists prefer to travel to destinations where the culture is different, or the people are from different ethnic groups; they seek the excitement of novelty by contacting new cultures. As a

respondent noted:

“I want to get out of my comfort zone to learn about different cultures and get in touch with people from all over the world” (Participant 2).

Sometimes, these tourists may display a willingness to take risks by traveling with no preplanned routes in a foreign country, which corresponds to previous studies on cosmopolitan (Molz, 2006; Swain, 2009; Urry, 1995). This is reported by a participant:

“I really like to have a night without planned activities; I want to walk around the place where I stay, walk around downtown casually, and observe the life of other people, ...to see and to feel. I feel that it is very interesting to walk and see slowly” (Participant 8).

4.3.3. Aesthetic appreciation

Aesthetic appreciation refers to the ability of tourists to make aesthetic judgments to discover the beauty and uniqueness entailed in a destination's cultural artifacts, heritages, ceremonies, lifestyles, and even landscapes. This process creates positive images in the tourists' minds and becomes a memorable cultural experience. Adopting an aesthetic disposition toward differences based on aesthetic taste and judgment is crucial for a cosmopolitan tourist (Molz, 2006; Urry, 1995). For example, participants noted:

“I felt the scene was quite beautiful. There was a ritual in which people were patted with some kind of fan. We couldn't understand it at all, and no one explained to us, but I appreciated the smoothness of their movements. I stayed there for a long time” (Participant 6).

“I spent a lot of time appreciating the architecture and artifacts and experiencing their historical stories and cultural implications one by one. I stayed there for eight hours, just like I had walked into another world, and I felt that I had some connection with these works” (Participant 15).

4.4. Core competence 4: cultural participation

This category refers to tourists' orientation to participate in social or cultural activities, including the preference to participate in social interactions or local activities.

4.4.1. Interactions with locals

Social contact is an effective means of promoting cultural exchanges. This subcategory refers to a tourist's willingness and ability to interact with local people. As a participant mentioned:

“He (a travel companion) held the idea that ‘we are all earth people,’ that is, we shouldn't be limited by the concept of ‘a country.’ You can make friends with anyone. When he felt that someone's (a street performer) music was good, he just decided to talk to him; they talked about the music or something, and then the conversation began” (Participant 14).

Interacting with locals is a crucial factor in evaluating cultural tourists' behavior (Gnoth & Zins, 2010; Nowaczek & Smale, 2010; Tsaour et al., 2018; Ye et al., 2013). Typically, tourists spend a short period in a destination and often travel in a cultural bubble (Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Tavitiyaman, 2017). However, the traits of cosmopolitan tourists include an attempt to travel outside of the bubble (Swain, 2009) and a predisposition to interact with locals.

4.4.2. Participation in local activities

This subcategory refers to a tourist's willingness and ability to participate in local activities. Taking part in local customs and activities and experiencing local food, shelter, clothing, and life are a major part of

cultural tourism (Gnoth & Zins, 2010). Local activities provide a lively atmosphere for tourists to understand local knowledge and appreciate cultural aesthetics, thereby creating a platform to obtain deep cultural experiences and promote cultural exchange.

“I didn't just travel around each attraction; I tried to live in that place so I can see more of their people and things. I went to their shopping mall and participated in local activities and special cultural festivals” (Participant 24).

4.5. Negative competencies

This study explored tourist competencies to identify a suitable means for tourists to interact with local societies. However, the attitude and behavior tourists demonstrate may not always be positive. Interviewees reported the following negative experiences: (1) *Criticism*: some tourists are accustomed to criticizing when they are coping with a culture that they do not like. (2) *Unconcern*: some tourists lack interest in different cultures. They prefer shopping and relaxing rather than learning about the cultural background or heritage or experiencing a different lifestyle. (3) *Damage*: some respondents mentioned that some tourists exhibited unethical behaviors, such as spitting or damaging local heritage sites. (4) *Superiority*: some tourists feel superior when they are coping with a different culture. (5) *Egoism*: some tourists are demanding and only care about their own rights. Such behaviors may hurt the fairness of cultural consumption. As respondents said:

“Some tourists criticized; tourists do not necessarily have to accept the local culture because everyone has their own preference, but the bottom line is that tourists should not criticize local cultures” (Participant 10).

“Some tourists were too noisy. They always cared for trivial things, argued for their rights, and wanted to take advantage (of local people), ... (Some tourists) despised others' culture; they felt that their culture was nobler than others'; those people were misbehaving in a foreign country, ... they always asked the tour guide about shopping; they told the tour guide that they did not want to go (to the Milan Cathedral); they only wanted to go to the shopping street ... I think many people still do not have the interest of experiencing different cultures when they visit a foreign country” (Participant 11).

4.6. Conceptual framework for cosmopolitan cultural competencies of tourists

The findings of this study were used to propose a conceptual framework for understanding the mechanism of cosmopolitan cultural competencies and positive cultural behavior. The “coding paradigm” and research memos helped this study develop the theoretical framework through selective coding. The framework is under a general tourism condition of global mobility and cultural diversity, and sets cultural competence as actions of tourists, and positive cultural behaviors as consequences. In addition, research memos indicated that: “during the tour, tourists will encounter cultural differences in a destination. A higher degree of cultural distance brings a higher degree of cultural shock. To cope with this, tourists have to demonstrate a higher level of cultural openness to tolerate the cultural disparity and maintain the mutually respectable relationship between guests and hosts. It also enhances the difficulty to blend in.” “Understanding and appreciation create a positive impression on local culture in tourists' minds, thereby stimulate the positive reactions. The performance of cosmopolitan cultural competence stimulates positive cultural behaviors.” As a result, cultural openness, understanding, consciousness, and participation were established as core categories. Moreover, as shown in Fig. 1, the theoretical framework of tourists' cultural competence was interpreted through three levels, namely border conservation, border interflow, and

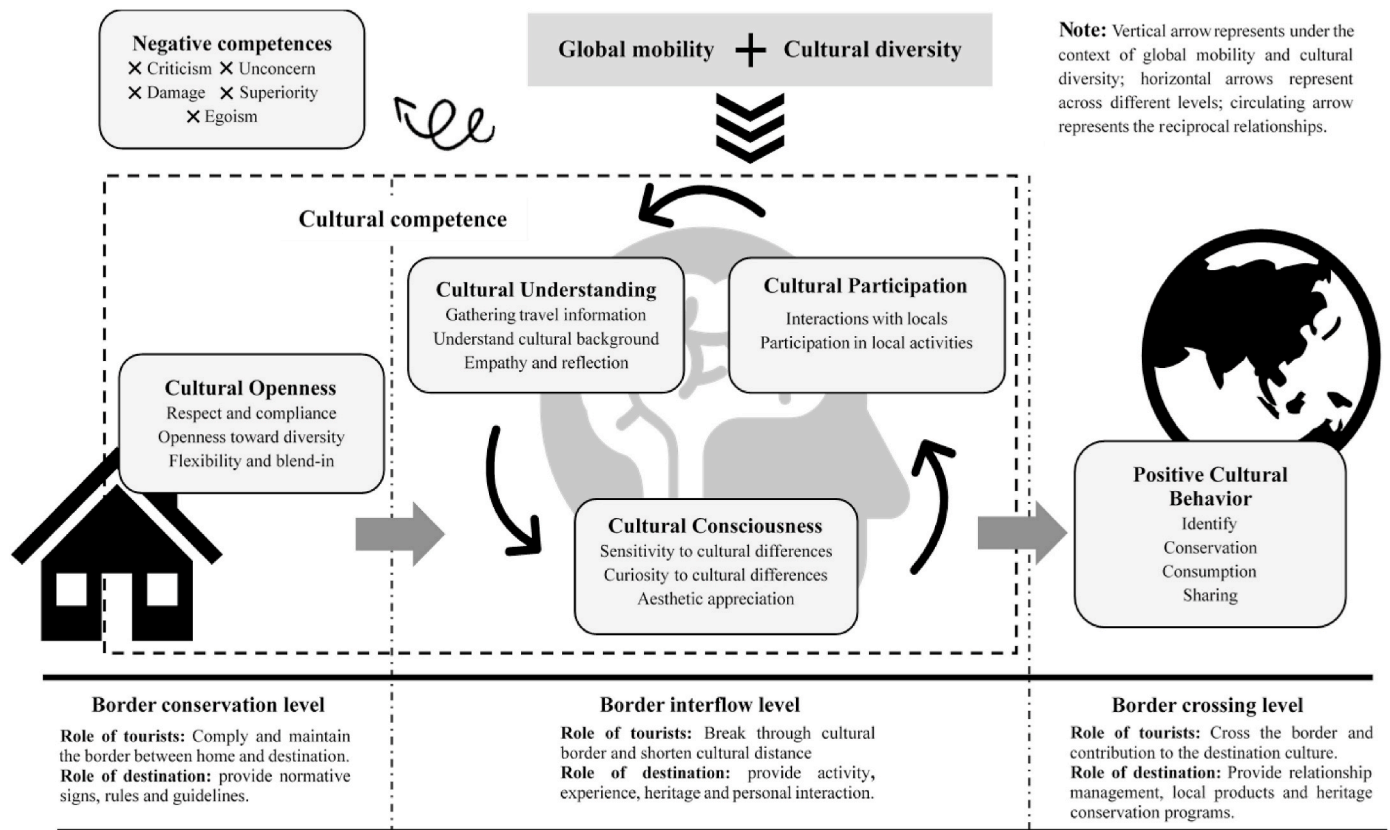


Fig. 1. A conceptual framework for cosmopolitan cultural competences of tourists.

border crossing level. Border conservation refers to the normative aspect of cultural competence. The objective of this level is to establish a mutually respectful relationship and minimize the negative impacts on locals; therefore, cultural borders are distinguished and maintained. In this level, the role of the destination is to provide normative signs, rules, and guidelines to assist tourists. At the border interflow level, tourists break through cultural borders and shorten cultural distance by exhibiting cultural understanding, consciousness, and participation competence. The role of the destination is to provide activities, experiences, heritage sites, and personal interactions in this level.

Finally, the performance of cultural understanding, consciousness, and participation may shorten cultural distances and create a positive impression of local culture in tourists' minds, thereby stimulating positive reactions. Positive cultural behaviors are the outward reactions stimulated by cultural competence and refer to the active engagement and contribution provided by tourists after they interact with different cultures. Tourists may step across cultural borders, generate identity toward local culture, and contribute to local culture by being willing to encourage to local conservation efforts, consuming local products, and sharing positive impressions within their network. The role of the destination in this level is to provide relationship management, local products, and heritage conservation programs. Border crossing derives but differs from the interflow level (namely in cultural understanding, consciousness, and participation processes). Positive cultural behavior emphasizes reactions or consequences that benefit local cultures. For example, cultural participation in this study refers to the willingness to join local activities; however, it does not necessarily imply that tourists identify with locals or conserve local heritage. In other words, the border crossing level can achieve cultural exchange and mutual benefits.

4.7. Discussion

The concepts proposed here have been dispersedly mentioned in

several discussions. The focus of cosmopolitanism research has shifted from abstract to practical levels (Swain, 2009), which necessitates understanding the specific competencies of tourists as cosmopolitans. This study provided a comprehensive framework and empirical evidence to conceptualize the tourist as a cosmopolitan practitioner. Moreover, on the basis of elements obtained from interviews, this study conceptualized a cosmopolitan tourist as a tourist who demonstrates cultural competence toward cultural differences, and such competence enables him/her to decrease the discomfort from cultural distance and stimulate positive cultural behaviors when encountering different cultures. Cultural competence here includes openness to respect and compliance, tolerance toward diversity and the flexibility to blend in; understanding travel information and cultural backgrounds and further empathizing and reflecting; the consciousness of being sensitive and curious of other cultures and developing aesthetic appreciation; as well as the ability to interact with locals and participate in local activities.

Researchers have debated whether all tourists or only traveled elites can be cosmopolitans (Hannerz, 2004). The results of this study revealed that cultural competence can be applied to a broader group of tourists, including both independent and group cultural tourists. For example, a tourist with a higher social status or education level can cultivate better cultural knowledge, sensitivity, and aesthetic taste, thereby more easily exhibiting cultural understanding and consciousness toward different cultures. Moreover, a group tourist with few opportunities of personal contact with locals can still demonstrate their cultural competence by following the guidelines and learning local stories provided by tour guides or brochures. In addition, tourists with lower interest in learning cultural knowledges or less opportunities to interact with locals, should still demonstrate basic and normative aspects of cultural competence to avoid causing negative effects toward locals. Multiple types and extents of performing cultural competence in different tourism settings are possible, all of which refer to the practice of cosmopolitan tourism.

The present study had a few differences with cosmopolitanism

discourse. Studies on cosmopolitanism have emphasized the concept of risk taking (Molz, 2006; Swain, 2009; Urry, 1995). Although the results of this study indicate that curiosity of different cultures is a crucial component of cultural competence, only a portion of participants exhibited a risk-taking orientation. This study applied cultural competence concept to a broader group of tourists, while these competencies can be performed differently among individuals. The willingness to take risks depends on the type of tourist, which corresponds with past research; individual tourists, especially backpackers who prefer local facilities, are more willing to take risks than group tourists are (Williams & Baláz, 2013). Moreover, studies have discussed the adaptability of cosmopolitans (Johnson, 2014; Molz, 2006). This study found that tourists typically do not attempt to adapt to local life. By contrast, because trips are short and variable, rather than adapting to local life, tourists attempt to experience different cultures as much as possible in a short time. As a result, tourists demonstrated more tolerance during travel than in their normal life.

Few studies have discussed how tourists cope with different cultures. In the ecotourism field, studies discuss the normative responsible behavior of tourists (Donohoe, 2011; Lee et al., 2013; Nowaczek & Smale, 2010). In addition, researchers have considered cultural competence as having cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions (Johnson, 2014; Tsaur & Tu, 2019; Yu et al., 2002). On the basis of the theory of cosmopolitanism, this study developed a framework that combined normative, cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects to develop a multidimensional and holistic construct to portray how tourists cope with different cultural environments.

The results of this study reflect and clarify the nature of competence. Cultural competence is related to but conceptually distinct from other tourist behavior constructs. In particular, it differs from tourists' attitude and motivation constructs. Attitudes are general evaluations based on beliefs or affective reactions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). By contrast, cultural competence involves not only general evaluative judgments about different cultures but also the specific abilities a tourist can have. Cultural competence differs from affective constructs such as motivation. Cultural competence involves not only tourists' desires but also normative implications. In other words, even if tourists show no interest in a different culture, they must still have a basic level of cultural competence (namely cultural openness).

5. Conclusions

Because of the rapid expansion of tourism, particularly in Asia, socially sustainable development has become a challenge for destinations (Zhang et al., 2017). Tourists play central roles in minimizing negative cultural impacts, constructing a rewarding intercultural experience, and having cultural understanding. On the basis of cosmopolitanism, the current study explored the cultural competence of tourists by using a qualitative grounded theory approach; 33 interviews were conducted. This study provided a multidimensional understanding of cultural competence and proposed a three-level framework to determine the performance and positive consequences related to cultural competence.

From an academic perspective, this study applies cosmopolitanism philosophy as theoretical framework to interpret the sociological phenomenon of cultural interactions and competencies, thereby contributes to cosmopolitanism and tourist behavior literature. First, this paper responds to research on cosmopolitanism by using the competence approach to understand cosmopolitanism in practice (Johnson, 2014; Molz, 2006; Salazar, 2010; Scherle & Nonnenmann, 2008; Swain, 2009). The essence of cultural competence was identified in the tourism context. Empirical evidence was provided to support cultural competence as a useful tool for studying cosmopolitanism and understanding tourists' behavior toward different cultural systems (Johnson, 2014); furthermore, tourists were conceptualized as cosmopolitans. In addition, both positive and negative competencies were addressed in one framework to highlight the contradistinctions, which have received

insufficient attention in the literature. Furthermore, this study proposed a framework to understand the mechanism of cultural competence and its consequences systematically, thereby contributing to ongoing efforts in tourist behavior research. Pragmatically, the results of the current research can provide a holistic view to understand how tourists interact with different cultures, thus providing insights for establishing a suitable pattern for social and cultural exchanges between tourists and destinations and promoting sustainable tourism development.

From a practical perspective, this study has implications for destination management. First, understanding cultural competence provides insights for destination management organizations (DMOs) to formulate suitable and specific norms based on local culture and customs. Some behavior codes have been proposed by non-profit organizations (NPOs) and DMOs and are typically presented as abstract general principles and specific behavioral norms. The current study provides a theoretical basis for clarifying the mechanism among tourists and bridges the gap between general principles and specific behaviors. Second, destinations can employ educational programs (such as exhibits in visitor centers, brochures, on-site activities, and guiding services) to motivate tourists to learn, enjoy, and participate or improve tourists' weaker aspects of cultural competence. Third, the results of this study provide tourism operators with a framework to identify competence differences among tourists for conducting market segmentation and designing travel activities (or products) according to the competence requirement of local tourism resources and the competence characteristics of target tourists. Finally, the results can be used to assist tourists in self-evaluating their characteristics of cultural competence and improving their weak aspects to ensure a smooth trip.

Some limitations should be noted in the study. First, the interactions involve tourists, local people, destination management organizations, and service providers. The use of tourists' perspectives limited the findings of this study. Future research can consider the perspectives of residents, destination managers, and staff to refine the constructs. Moreover, interestingly, negative competencies reported by participants were based on their observations of other tourists, rather than their own. Self-reported approach may limit this finding. Therefore, the negative cultural competence with other approaches deserves future investigation. Second, as a qualitative research, conclusions generated from Asian regions may require further testing in other cultural contexts. Third, this research did not distinguish among different tourist types. Future research is invited to test the typology of tourists based on cultural competence. Finally, because cultural competence can be stimulated by managerial factors, such as tour guides or travel information, the mechanism of cultivating cultural competence also warrants future investigation.

Impact statement

This study has implications for destination management regarding tourist management and education as well as for promoting the social and cultural sustainability of destinations. First, understanding cultural competence provides insights for destination management organizations (DMOs) to formulate suitable and specific norms based on local culture and customs. Second, destinations can employ educational programs (such as exhibits in visitor centers, brochures, on-site activities, and guiding services) to motivate tourists to learn, enjoy, and participate or improve tourists' weaker aspects of cultural competence. Third, the results of this study provide tourism operators with a framework to identify competence differences among tourists for conducting market segmentation and designing travel activities (or products) according to the competence requirement of local tourism resources and the competence characteristics of target tourists. Finally, the results can be used to assist tourists in self-evaluating their characteristics of cultural competence and improving their weak aspects to ensure a smooth trip.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Jo-Hui Lin: Supervision, Conceptualization, Funding acquisition.
Daisy X.F. Fan: Supervision, Writing - review & editing, Methodology.
Sheng-Hshung Tsaor: Conceptualization, Methodology. **Yun-Ru Tsai:** Investigation, Writing - original draft.

Declarations of competing interest

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Sheng-Hshung Tsaur is a Professor in Department of Marketing and Tourism Management, National Chiayi University, Taiwan. He has published over 50 refereed papers in the areas of tourism, recreation, and hospitality management.



Yun-Ru Tsai is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Marketing and Tourism Management, National Chiayi University, Chiayi City, Taiwan. His research interests include destination management and consumer behavior. (corresponding, email address: attilatsai@gmail.com)



Jo-Hui Lin received her PhD from the Graduate Institute of Management at Ming Chuan University in Taipei, Taiwan. She is currently an Associate Professor in Department of Marketing and Tourism Management, National Chiayi University. Her research interests are in human resource management, consumer behavior and tourism marketing.



Daisy X.F. Fan is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of People & Organisations, Business School at Bournemouth University, UK. Her research interests include tourist-host social contact, ageing and wellbeing, tourists' ethnocentrism, cultural distance and cruise travel.