

Foreword

Marketing research in Tourism, especially with a focus on a special region, is often approached from a solely functionalist perspective. Based on often out-dated theories, constructs are made applicable and hypotheses are tested without consideration of context or the dynamics of change. Especially in the realm of intercultural marketing, even current literature is grounded in long trodden stereotypes and a positivist paradigm of generalisation. Addressing these shortfalls in theory and literature, the author Verena Schwaighofer embarks on a qualitative, triangulated study on the intercultural artefacts in tourism marketing in the UAE.

The broader topic of this study make up marketing activities, especially image-creating and transferring activities of the United Arab Emirates. The subject is the influence of a personal cultural background and perspective, as well as the pre-set expectations of the marketing manager on the design and content of marketing material used for image creation and transfer. Using a Gap-analysis foundational assumptions are compared to the actual cultural image and its transfer.

For this purpose, Verena Schwaighofer sets up a deeply rooted qualitative study with a sociological background. Using an extensive Content-analysis and open interviews, data is collected on topics such as Religion, the role of women in society, body-language, traditions, diet and cuisine and on a meta level the cultural capital built by the “Sharjha”. Hofstede’s cultural dimensions are first critically examined and later used as a structuring framework for the evaluation of the data, without adapting its functionalist approach. The gained insights are often eye opening, especially from the view of European readers, when their picture of the “Arab culture” and the related stereotypes are challenged.

Besides a wide-ranging evaluation, discussion and appraisal of the data and the underlying context, the author elaborates on early explanatory models to elucidate the obvious difference between intention and perception in regional image transfer.

For this reason, the author examines the loss and resulting absence of an own distinct cultural identification within the UAE inhabitants. This feeling of loss may well be the result of other dominant influences of various cultures brought with by migrant labourers in the UAE, and the idiosyncratic over-emphasizing of only a few cultural artefacts, distorting the complexity and structural integrity of an UAE culture. As such, migrant labourers and the perceived loss of an own cultural identity are a truly global phenomenon, and insights gained in this context may therefore have high relevance to similar situations in other regions. Thus this thesis can serve as a connecting link to future research in this area, research that is drawing not upon functionalists’ generalisations, but upon respect and the will to understand phenomena in an alien context.

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