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# Worker and consumer face-off on cultural distance and satisfaction

Yasin Boylu, Asli D.A. Tasci and William C. Gartner

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – *The purpose of this paper is threefold: measure the differences in importance of cultural values between Turkish hosts and European guests; measure perceived cultural difference (distance) to see if importance of cultural values are commensurate with cultural distance perception; and identify potential influence of perceived cultural distance on job satisfaction for Turkish service providers (hosts) and trip satisfaction for European consumers (guests).*

**Design/methodology/approach** – *A survey research was conducted in tourist towns in the Southwest part of Turkey to gather data from Turkish hosts (service providers) and European tourists. Two stepwise regression analyses were conducted to assess the magnitude of the relative impact of several variables on job satisfaction for hosts and trip satisfaction for guests.*

**Findings** – *Although results revealed differences in cultural values, cultural distance perception and satisfaction, the stepwise regression analyses did not reveal any influence of perceived cultural distance on satisfaction for either hosts or guests.*

**Research limitations/implications** – *The findings of this study may not apply to all tourism consumption settings since respondents were surveyed in a general tourism setting context rather than limiting them to a certain consumption setting such as a restaurant, a hotel or a cruise ship.*

**Originality/value** – *By shedding light on cultural distance and its influence on both demand and supply side aspects, this study addresses a long-neglected aspect in literature. Although several studies provide discussions on the impact of culture on both service providers' and consumers' attitude and behavior, there is a lack of empirical studies on the relationship between cultural distance and satisfaction.*

**Keywords** *Culture, Turkey, Tourism, Job satisfaction*

**Paper type** *Research paper*

## Introduction

Culture is one of the factors distinguishing groups from one another, especially physically distant groups. It is more of an interest for tourism academia and practitioners due to the inherent nature of tourism consumption in bringing consumers to close contact with people of different cultures or subcultures. Culture can be defined at different levels encompassing different layers of groups of people. It can be defined as national culture at a macro layer, the whole group of a geographic entity, namely a country (Erez and Earley, 1993). At the national level, culture is shared by most people over long periods of time while subcultures might exist within this dominant culture, based on the ethnic and religious background, location, age, or other factors that can change in time (Hofstede, 1980).

Several studies provide discussions on the impact of culture on both service providers and consumers on factors such as satisfaction. On the service providers' side, the relationship between job satisfaction and cultural distance or fit is investigated (Furnham and Walsh, 1990; Kristof, 1996; Lovelace and Rosen, 1996; Powell, 1998; Testa *et al.*, 2003). On the consumers' side, decision making, product choice and satisfaction are also correlated with

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culture and cultural distance or fit (Assael, 1987; Crotts and Erdmann, 2000; Pizam and Sussmann, 1995; Reisinger and Turner, 2002a, 2002b; You, O'Leary and Deegan, 2003; Weiermair, 2000; Weiermair and Fuchs, 1999). However, there is a lack of empirical studies measuring cultural distance and its influence on satisfaction of both demand and supply sides, namely consumer satisfaction and worker satisfaction. Since travel consumption involves social encounters with intense interaction between service providers and consumers, cultural distance and its influence on both workers and consumers need to be measured to foresee and remedy potential problems.

The current study aims to fill this void, using an international tourism destination, Turkey, as the case in point. Turkey serves mostly European tourist markets due to their geographic closeness. Turkey and Europe have a long shared history of relationships; however, Turkey and Turkish people endure a rather biased and stereotypical image in European markets (Ger, 1991, 1997; Tasci *et al.*, 2007). "The contemporary image of Turkey is still shadowed by stereotypes dating from the Ottoman Empire, with connotations of mostly medieval wars and political events, accentuated by cultural and religious differences between Turkey and the western world" (Tasci *et al.*, 2006, p. 82). Thus, the purpose of the current study is threefold:

1. to measure the differences in importance of cultural values between Turkish hosts European guests;
2. to measure perceived cultural difference (distance) to see if importance of cultural values are commensurate with cultural distance perception; and
3. identify potential influence of perceived cultural distance on job satisfaction for Turkish service providers (hosts) and trip satisfaction for European consumers (guests).

## Literature review

### *Culture and consumer behavior*

Hofstede (1991, p. 5) defines national culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another". Hofstede (1980) and his colleagues (Hofstede and Bond, 1988) have developed five dimensions of national culture using an instrument called the Values Survey Module or VSM:

1. "power distance (a tolerance for class differentials in society);
2. individualism (the degree to which welfare of the individual is valued more than the group);
3. masculinity (achievement orientation, competition, and materialism);
4. uncertainty avoidance (intolerance of risk); and
5. the Confucian dynamic, or long-term orientation (stability, thrift, respect for tradition and the future)" (see Crotts and Erdmann, 2000, p. 412).

Using these dimensions, Hofstede (1991) revealed that Asian cultures are different from Western cultures because their scores are significantly different on these dimensions; Asians having high scores in long-term orientation, collectivism and power distance, while the Western societies displaying an opposite tendency on these dimensions as well as uncertainty avoidance. Beside geographic orientation, sociodemographic variables are also potential to be influential on cultural orientations; for example, Yetim and Yetim (2006) found that the level of education is related with individualistic aspects of cultural orientations.

Weiermair (2000) furthers the complexity of the culture concept by adding another dimension to the argument in tourism context, namely "tourism culture", which is the end product of tourists' national, regional and subcultures and workers' national, regional and organizational culture. This new culture has the sediments of all other cultures involved but also has its own unique character that governs the unique dynamics of the service interface in tourism.

Several studies provide discussions on the impact of culture on consumer behavior such as tourist perception, expectation, decision making and product choice (Assael, 1987; Pizam and Sussmann, 1995; You *et al.*, 2000; Weiermair, 2000). Culture has been defined as the underlining factor of people's stereotyping other groups of people (Boissevian and Inglott, 1979; Brewer, 1978; Pi-Sunyer, 1977). Weiermair (2000, p. 399) states that "tourists' expectations of specific levels of service quality in tourism partly stem from their own culture and prior socialisation, which can predispose them to interpret factors influencing tourism destination choice and destination experience from a distinctive perspective". Reisinger and Turner (2002a, p. 401, 2002b) argue that culture, with its intricate relationships with several other constructs, can be a defining factor in people's perceptions, impressions and interpretations about other places as well as people in those places. Weiermair asserts that "not only choices of tourism destinations and activities, but also the subsequent tourism behavior, are subject to cultural biases".

Culture is seen as an important agent of bias, especially in formation of country images. Although Dann (1993) questions the accuracy of national stereotypes, differences and similarities in cultures of different groups of people seem to determine the level of stereotyping. In the context of destination image, Young (1999) proposes that ordinary places are shaped into tourist places with symbolic meanings some of which are attributed by place producers (destination promoters) and some by destination consumers (visitors). Young (1999) combines these two perspectives, intersecting at differing levels into a model, which explicitly reveals that places are socio-cultural inventions with socio-cultural meanings. Weiermair (2000) postulates that authentic physical attributes of a destination may constitute the least biased images of a destination, while stereotypes or cultural "halos" are potentially the strongest biases influencing tourists' travel choices. Nonetheless, Reisinger and Turner (2002a, b) conclude that "cultural differences are very useful constructs for international tourism promotion, and they can provide very accurate criteria for targeting and positioning. As a result, tourism marketers should take into account the cultural backgrounds of international tourists to identify specific profiles of the market segment and determine how a destination should position itself in the international marketplace to appeal to international tourists".

Crotts and Erdmann (2000) tested Hofstede's dimension on 983 respondents of the in-flight Survey of Overseas Visitors to the United States, specifically those respondents from UK, Germany, Japan, Brazil and Taiwan, controlling for previous visitation, purpose of the trip, occupation, and age. Their findings provided positive evidence to Hofstede's theory of culture, "that national culture influences consumer's willingness to report dissatisfaction", providing insights to the tourism industry that "firms who serve visitors from countries where assertive behavior is encouraged should expect lower average satisfaction measures when compared to visitors from less masculine societies" (Crotts and Erdmann, 2000, p. 417).

### *Cultural values*

There are several aspects of culture, especially within tourism context. Reisinger and Turner (2002b, p. 347) define culture and its relationship to tourism as "differences and similarities in values, rules of behavior, and perceptions, which influence interpersonal contact between international tourists and hosts and their satisfaction with each other". Of these aspects of culture, values are of particular importance. Value in cultural context is defined as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (Rokeach, 1973, p. 5). Values are purported to define attitudes and rules of behavior (Samovar and Porter, 1988), perceptions, needs and motivations (Bailey, 1991) standards of conduct (Williams, 1968) conflict resolution and decision making (Rokeach, 1973). Different cultures have different values (Segall, 1986), influencing leisure and travel behavior including destination visitation and activity involvement (Pitts and Woodside, 1986).

Hofstede (1980) proposes that a worker's nationality plays a significant role in shaping his/her values. Pizam *et al.* (1997) specifically focus on values aspect of culture and define them as blanket elements of beliefs and norms shared by a group of people, separating them from other groups of people. Otaki *et al.* (1986) argue that these blanket values are gained in the early ages of human beings, which is purported to resist changing during the later ages (Hofstede, 1991). Pizam and Sussmann (1995) and Pizam and Reichel (1996) claim that these shared values continue influencing human beings both in their normal living environments and temporary environments in travel instances.

#### *Cultural distance and worker satisfaction*

Worker's job satisfaction, namely a worker's appraisal of his/her job or job experiences (Locke, 1983) has interested many researchers due to its importance in employee performance and its presumed correlates such as customer satisfaction (Hallowell *et al.*, 1996; Hartline and Ferrell, 1996; Hellman, 1997; Testa *et al.*, 2003). Job satisfaction is postulated to be influenced by many factors, including demographic characteristics such as age and tenure (Kacmar and Ferris, 1989; Lynn *et al.*, 1996), gender (Mason, 1995), socio-cultural characteristics of employers (Yetim and Yetim, 2006), training and award at the work place (O'Neill, 1997), and education level (Kutz *et al.*, 1990).

Another factor assumed to affect job satisfaction is the level of fit or congruence between the characteristics of a worker and the factors related to the work environment (Assouline and Meir, 1987; Furnham and Walsh, 1990; Knoop, 1994; Kristof, 1996; Powell, 1998). One of these factors of fit or congruence is related to a worker's culture. Erez and Earley (1993) purport that culture shapes individuals' cognitive schema, thus ascribing meaning and values to motivational factors and guiding choices, commitments, and standards of behavior. Researchers investigated the relationship between job satisfaction and fit between national and organizational culture (Testa *et al.*, 2003), and between worker values and organizational values (Furnham and Walsh, 1990; Kristof, 1996; Lovelace and Rosen, 1996; Powell, 1998). A few studies conclude that cultural congruence leads to greater job satisfaction due to comfort and familiarity facilitated by people with similar cultural characteristics (Furnham and Walsh, 1990; Milliken and Martins, 1996). The existing theories on cultural diversity or cultural congruence in the work environment such as, the tokenism argument by Kanter (1997) and the heterogeneity argument by Tsui *et al.* (1992), leads one to conclude that cultural misfit between service providers and tourists may lead to stress and discomfort for workers due to potential perception of foreignness, unfamiliarity, and uncertainty, thus lowering job satisfaction.

#### *Cultural distance and tourist satisfaction*

Weiermair (2000) postulates that cultural proximity or cultural distance can influence not only destination image and familiarity but also tourist attitudes, expectations and perceptions. There are two competing theories about cultural similarity, fit or congruence, (or difference, misfit or distance), and its influence on tourist behavior. Some researchers propose that cultural similarity rather than difference induces destination choice (Ng *et al.*, 2007). This proposition makes sense based on the similarity-attraction hypothesis, that people are attracted to similar others (Byrne and Nelson, 1965). Several others also provide the argument that supports this proposition; more specifically, Weiermair (2000, p. 399) states that "tourists (customers) in new environments with different cultures may lack the social support system and networks which mediate service environments within their own culture". Thus, several researchers argue that cultural difference, misfit or distance between tourists and hosts of a place may lead to cultural conflicts, culture shock, risk perception, uncertainty, stress and anxiety, resulting in dissatisfaction (Lepp and Gibson, 2003; Spradley and Philips, 1972; Wei *et al.*, 1989; Weiermair, 2000).

On the other hand, a counter argument also exists; some suggest that cultural differences, rather than similarities may be the reason of destination choice (McKercher and du Cros, 2003; O'Leary and Deegan, 2003). Weiermair and Fuchs' (1999) study found a negative relationship between cultural proximity and tourist satisfaction with certain service quality

dimensions. Findings let these researchers make a general statement that cultural proximity leads to tourists' being more critical in their perception and judgment of the service, thus increasing the likelihood of dissatisfaction, while cultural distance results in tourists' being less demanding and more tolerant of the potential service or product failures, thus increasing the likelihood of dissatisfaction. Cultural misfit, incongruence, difference or distance creates a "zone-of-tolerance" in tourists, especially when authentic features of service quality such as food and entertainment were concerned. However, service quality features that are mostly related with tourists' basic needs such as freedom of choice, security, and public transportation did not benefit from tourist's zone-of-tolerance for culturally distant service settings. Thus, coining the term of "a global travel culture" that has been formed by increased travel experience, Weiermair (2000) identifies "converging quality demands" that have become universal service requirements, especially expected by frequent and experienced travelers.

## Methods

A survey research was conducted in touristic towns in the Southwest part of Turkey to gather data from Turkish hosts (service providers) and European tourists. The criterion of selection for service providers was face to face interaction with tourists while conducting their daily business activities. Service providers included a wide range of workers in the tourism industry, ranging from hotel owners and managers to taxi drivers, who were intercepted at work places to conduct face-to-face interviews. Tourists from several European countries were intercepted at several tourist spots to be interviewed face-to-face as well. A total of 889 surveys were collected, 490 from Turkish service providers and 339 from European tourists.

The questionnaire was prepared in two versions, one for hosts and one for guests. Although questionnaires included several items related with culture, perception, satisfaction, experience, and sociodemographics; a few variables are analyzed for the purposes of this study including, cultural values, cultural difference perception, trip satisfaction for guests, job satisfaction for hosts, and sociodemographics. In both versions of the questionnaire, the incremental numeric value of the scales were corresponding with incremental semantic values as well (i.e. 1 = least, 7 = most). For both hosts and guests, cultural value items included 19 Likert scales (1 = not important at all, 7 = extremely important), originally developed by Reisinger and Turner (2002a, b). Cultural difference (distance) perception was measured using a single 10-point item (1 = totally different, 10 = totally similar), asking tourists to rate the level of similarity between their own culture and Turkish culture and asking hosts to rate the level of similarity between their own culture and European culture. A 10-point satisfaction scale (1 = not satisfied at all, 10 = extremely satisfied) was also used to assess tourists' satisfaction from their trip in Turkey and workers' satisfaction from their job. For both cultural distance perception and satisfaction items, a 10-point scale was preferred to receive wider variance in data without concern for respondent fatigue and thus potential bias. Sociodemographics for both hosts and guests included age, gender, marital status and the level of education. The host questionnaire also included questions about tourism education, job category, work experience, experience in tourism and experience with face to face interaction with tourists. The guest questionnaire also included questions about profession category, nationality, the main purpose of the trip to Turkey, reasons for choosing Turkey for the trip, the amount of previous visits to Turkey and the duration of stay in Turkey. These additional questions for hosts and guests were included for their potential effect on satisfaction for both guests and hosts.

Descriptives, frequencies, *t*-test, and stepwise regression tools of SPSS 11.0 were used to analyze the data. *T*-test was used to compare hosts and guests on their importance ratings of the multi-item (19) Likert scale of cultural values and on the single item of cultural distance perception. Since the satisfaction item was a different construct for hosts and guests, job satisfaction for hosts and trip satisfaction for guests, the descriptives for these constructs were provided without comparison tests. However, two stepwise regression analyses were



conducted to assess the magnitude of the relative impact of several variables on job satisfaction for hosts and trip satisfaction for guests, modeled as follows:

$$SAT_i = \beta_{1-n} + \varepsilon_i$$

where:

$SAT_i$  = satisfaction level of individual (host or guest) $_i$ ;

$\beta_{1-n}$  = coefficients of independent variables 1- $n$ ; and

$\varepsilon_i$  = the error term for individual $_i$ .

The stepwise regression model defined for hosts included satisfaction from job as the dependent variable while the independent variables investigated for potential influence on job satisfaction included cultural difference perception along with work experience, experience in tourism, experience with face to face interaction with tourists, the level of education and tourism education, job category, age, gender, and marital status. Similarly, the stepwise regression model defined for guests included satisfaction from trip to Turkey as the dependent variable while the independent variables investigated for potential influence on trip satisfaction included cultural distance perception along with the main purpose of the trip to Turkey, reasons for choosing Turkey for the trip, the amount of previous visits to Turkey and the duration of stay in Turkey, profession category, nationality, the level of education, age, gender, and marital status. The purpose of the stepwise regression analysis was to determine the statistical significance and relative influence of each independent variable as a determinant of guests' trip and hosts' job satisfaction. One could argue that both guests' trip satisfaction and hosts' job satisfaction are potentially related with many other factors besides those included in this study; however, the subject of this study is limited to culture, assuming all else to be constant.

Since a few independent variables in both models were categorical, they were recoded as dummy variables with the values of 0 and 1. The number of dummy variables for each categorical variable is one less than the number of categories it has, which was conducted to avoid singular matrix problem in the regression analysis. Some variation was lost in the respondents' nationality variable since smaller categories were collapsed into the "Other" category. Because of the dropout in the sample due to missing values in some variables used in regression, the number of cases included in regression analyses is less than the original sample size.

## Results

Table I displays the descriptives of a few sociodemographic variables used to describe the host population for the purposes of this study. As can be seen from Table I, the sample group of hosts was about 29 years old, on average, and dominated by males (74 percent), single people (63 percent) and secondary school graduates (44 percent) although the portion of those with university degrees was unexpectedly high (30 percent). A little over half of the host respondents had some level of tourism education, mostly at the high school level. The plurality of the host respondents was hotel personnel ranging from management to front office employees, followed by salespeople, restaurant personnel and travel agency personnel. Since the criterion for inclusion in the study was face-to-face interaction with tourists while conducting daily job duties, a wide range of other service providers such as taxi drivers and airport ground service providers were also included as reflected in the "other" job category (33 percent). The host sample had 10 years of total work experience, on average, 8 years being in tourism industry with face-to-face interaction with tourists on daily basis.

Table II displays the descriptives of a few sociodemographic variables used to describe the guest population for the purposes of this study. As can be seen from Table II, the sample group of guests was about 39 years old, on average and narrowly dominated by females (49 percent), married people (46 percent) and university graduates (42 percent). Over half of the

**Table I** Sociodemographic characteristics of Turkish host respondents

<i>Sociodemographics</i>	<i>Mean or %</i>
Age (mean)	29.4
<i>Gender (%)</i>	
Female	23.5
Male	74.3
<i>Marital status (%)</i>	
Single	62.7
Married	28.6
Other	6.5
<i>Education (%)</i>	
Secondary school	44.3
Vocational school	15.3
University	30.2
Other	5.5
<i>Tourism education (%)</i>	
High school	27.8
Vocational school	15.3
Graduate degree	18.2
Master's or PhD	0.6
<i>Job (%)</i>	
Salesperson	16.3
Hotel personnel	25.9
Restaurant personnel	15.1
Travel agency personnel	6.9
Other	33.1
<i>Work experience (mean years)</i>	
Total work experience	10.0
Work experience in tourism industry	8.4
Work experience with face to face interaction with tourists	8.0

guest respondents are British people residing in the UK or other countries, more likely to be professionals (30 percent) followed by business owners, retirees or students. About 72 percent of the guest sample was repeat visitors of Turkey, with about eight previous Turkey trips, and four other country trips within five years, on average. Their visit purpose is more likely to be for pleasure (76 percent), taken for the reasons of low cost (15 percent), friends and relatives (15 percent), culture (9 percent) and some various other reasons. They are traveling with groups of 8 and visiting Turkey for 12 days, on average.

Table III displays descriptives of both Turkish host and European guest respondents' responses to the single item of cultural difference (distance) perception, 19 cultural value scale items and their satisfaction level, job satisfaction for Turkish hosts and trip satisfaction for European guests. Both groups placed about 5 and above ratings, on average, for all values, which signals the still continuing importance of values for both cultures. However, the most important and least important values were different for Turkish hosts and European guests. On the 7-point importance scale, Turkish hosts rated the value of "an exciting life (a stimulating, active life)" lowest (4.98) while they rated "family security (taking care of loved ones)" highest (6.36), on average. The European guests' least important rating (5.06) belonged to "salvation (saved, eternal life)" and the most important rating (6.37) belonged to "freedom (independence, free choice)" on average. Since the results of the independent samples t-test revealed significant differences between Turkish hosts and European guests only for the values of "an exciting life" and "salvation", it can be concluded that the host and guest populations are significantly different on the least important values, namely "an exciting life" for hosts and "salvation" for guests, but similar on the most important values, namely "family security" for hosts and "freedom for guests.



**Table II** Sociodemographic characteristics of European guest respondents

<i>Sociodemographics</i>	<i>Mean or %</i>
Age (mean)	39.2
<i>Gender (%)</i>	
Female	49.4
Male	44.9
<i>Marital status (%)</i>	
Single	24.1
Married	45.9
Other	25.6
<i>Education (%)</i>	
Secondary school	34.1
University graduate	42.4
Master's or PhD	8.3
Other	5.0
<i>Residence (% of top 4 responses)</i>	
UK	53.1
Holland	10.3
Germany	7.5
Other (includes several European countries with minimal counts)	29.1
<i>Nationality (% of top 4 responses)</i>	
British	52.4
Dutch	7.8
German	7.5
Other	34.3
<i>Profession (%)</i>	
Professional	30.1
Business owner	18.5
Retired	13.3
Student	11.8
Other	19.6
<i>Trip experience</i>	
Previous visit to Turkey (Yes %)	72.2
Number of previous visits to Turkey (mean)	7.7
Number of countries visited for vacation purposes in the last 5 years (mean)	4.4
<i>The main purpose of trip to Turkey (%)</i>	
Pleasure	76.4
Other	14.6
<i>The most important reason for choosing Turkey for this trip (%)</i>	
Low cost	15.5
Friends and relatives	15.5
Culture	9.0
Other	29.4
Number of days in Turkey on this trip	11.5
Number of people in the travel group	7.9

Of the 19 cultural value scales included in this study, 13 received significantly different ratings of importance from Turkish hosts and European guests, ten of them being higher for Turkish hosts, on average. More specifically, Turkish hosts placed significantly higher importance for the values of "a sense of accomplishment", "a world of beauty", "equality", "inner harmony", "national security", "salvation", "self-respect", "social recognition", "wisdom", and "environment". On the other hand, European guests placed significantly higher importance for the values of "an exciting life", happiness, and "pleasure".

These differences in importance of cultural values would be expected to cause a perception of cultural difference (distance) between Turkish hosts and European guests. Expectedly, the two groups were significantly different in their perception of similarity between Turkish and European cultures. Both Turkish hosts' and European guests' similarity ratings were

**Table III** Comparison of importance of cultural values, cultural difference (distance) perception, and satisfaction between Turkish hosts and European guests

	<i>n</i>	<i>Hosts</i> <i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Guests</i> <i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-test</i> <i>Sig. 2-tailed</i>
<i>Cultural values</i> <sup>b</sup>							
A comfortable life (a prosperous life)	488	5.34	1.232	397	5.46	1.166	0.138
An exciting life (a stimulating, active life)	483	4.98	1.302	395	5.22	1.157	0.005*
A sense of accomplishment (contribution)	488	5.92	0.971	387	5.45	1.082	0.000*
A world of peace (free of war and conflict)	486	6.31	0.976	396	6.20	1.068	0.099
A world of beauty (beauty of nature, arts)	488	6.16	0.973	396	5.71	1.099	0.000*
Equality (brotherhood, equal opportunity)	486	6.22	0.999	390	6.00	0.997	0.001*
Family security (taking care of loved ones)	488	6.36	0.913	394	6.34	0.877	0.729
Freedom (independence, free choice)	487	6.28	0.937	396	6.37	0.824	0.156
Happiness (contentedness)	488	6.11	0.996	394	6.28	0.870	0.008*
Inner harmony (free of inner conflict)	486	6.08	1.082	392	5.87	1.087	0.004*
Mature love (sexual and spiritual intimacy)	484	5.69	1.166	394	5.62	1.196	0.383
National security (protection from attack)	481	6.30	0.969	393	6.06	1.070	0.001*
Pleasure (an enjoyable leisurely life, fun)	485	5.32	1.263	395	5.73	0.986	0.000*
Salvation (saved, eternal life)	473	5.58	1.194	385	5.06	1.485	0.000*
Self-respect (self-esteem)	486	6.20	0.988	390	5.95	1.031	0.000*
Social recognition (respect, admiration)	488	5.62	1.181	395	5.39	1.219	0.004*
True friendship (close companionship)	486	6.12	1.068	394	6.03	0.985	0.204
Wisdom (knowledge, understanding of life)	485	6.06	0.977	393	5.73	1.018	0.000*
Environment (clean, pure, unspoilt)	489	6.29	0.897	399	6.05	0.990	0.000*
Level of similarity between your culture and European (or Turkish) culture <sup>a</sup>	343	3.55	2.146	264	4.89	2.003	0.000*
Level of satisfaction with job (or trip) <sup>c</sup>	401	7.34	2.099	357	8.44	1.434	–
Valid <i>n</i> (listwise)	283			216			

**Notes:** \* Significant difference between the two cultures; <sup>a</sup> 1 = Totally different, 10 = Totally similar; <sup>b</sup> 1 = Not important at all, 7 = Extremely important; <sup>c</sup> 1 = Not satisfied at all, 10 = Extremely satisfied

below the mid-point on the 10-point Likert scale (3.55 and 4.89, respectively). Furthermore, European guests' similarity rating was significantly higher than that of Turkish hosts, on average. In other words, Turkish hosts perceive more cultural distance than European guests. This difference in cultural distance perception is commensurate with the differences in importance of cultural values. Most of the values received significantly different ratings from the two groups, Turkish hosts giving more importance to about half of the values than their European counterparts.

Based on the postulations and results of the previous research on the subject matter, the above-mentioned differences in importance of cultural values and different perceptions of cultural distance can signal differing levels of satisfaction gained from the interactions between these presumably different cultures, Turkish culture being the service provider and European culture being the service receiver. As expected, the satisfaction levels were different for the two groups; although both groups' ratings were above the mid-point on the 10-point Likert scale, job satisfaction for hosts (7.34) was much lower than trip satisfaction for guests (8.44), on average. As was mentioned before, hosts' job satisfaction and guests' trip satisfaction are conceptually different constructs; therefore, a comparison test of significance was not applied.

The stepwise regression analyses were employed to investigate the magnitude of the relative influence of cultural distance perception and other potentially influential sociodemographic and previous experience-related variables on trip satisfaction for European guests and job satisfaction for Turkish hosts. Tables IV and V display the descriptives and frequencies of dependent and independent variables in the regression models for hosts and guests, respectively.

The stepwise regression analysis results for the host group are displayed in Table VI; as can be seen from the table, when estimated for hosts, after two iterations of estimates using the

**Table IV** Descriptives and frequencies of variables included in the regression analysis for Turkish hosts

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean or %</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>Dependent variable</i>			
Satisfaction with job (mean)	7.26	2.121	301
<i>Independent variables</i>			
Age (mean)	29.65	8.125	301
Gender <sup>a</sup> (% of female) 1 = female, 0 = male	0.22	0.414	301
<i>Marital status<sup>b</sup></i>			
Single (%) 1 = single, 0 = others	0.63	0.483	301
Married (%) 1 = married, 0 = others	0.29	0.456	301
<i>Level of education<sup>c</sup></i>			
Secondary school graduate (%) 1 = secondary school graduate, 0 = others	0.46	0.499	301
Vocational school graduate (%) 1 = vocational school graduate, 0 = others	0.14	0.347	301
University graduate (%) 1 = university graduate, 0 = others	0.32	0.468	301
Tourism education <sup>d</sup> (% Yes) 1 = has received some level of tourism education, 0 = others	0.57	0.496	301
<i>Job category<sup>e</sup></i>			
Salesperson (%) 1 = salesperson, 0 = others	0.15	0.354	301
Hotel personnel (%) 1 = hotel personnel, 0 = others	0.25	0.433	301
Restaurant personnel (%) 1 = restaurant personnel, 0 = others	0.16	0.364	301
Travel agency personnel (%) 1 = travel agency personnel, 0 = others	0.03	0.180	301
Total work experience (mean)	10.17	7.094	301
Work experience in tourism industry (mean)	8.19	5.715	301
Work experience with face to face interaction with tourists (mean)	7.75	5.662	301
Level of similarity between your culture and Europeans' culture	3.56	2.123	301

**Notes:** <sup>a</sup> A dummy variable was not created for "Male" to avoid the singular matrix problem in the regression analysis; <sup>b</sup> A dummy variable was not created for "Other" group to avoid the singular matrix problem in the regression analysis; <sup>c</sup>: A dummy variable was not created for the "Other" group to avoid the singular matrix problem in the regression analysis; <sup>d</sup> A dummy variable was created only to define existence of tourism education; <sup>e</sup>: A dummy variable was not created for the "Other" group to avoid the singular matrix problem in the regression analysis; No modification was necessary for continuous variables

two-tailed *t*-test, only one of the ten independent variables was found to be significantly influential on job satisfaction for hosts, with a very small  $R^2$  value (0.054). Surprisingly, perception of cultural distance was not significant in influencing the job satisfaction for Turkish hosts. Furthermore, when estimated for European guests, neither cultural-distance perception nor the other ten independent variables were found to be significantly influential on trip satisfaction.

### Conclusions and implications

The results of this study reveal that Turkish host and European guests have differences in cultural values, as well as perception of cultural difference (distance). Since all 19 values still hold above the mid-point importance on the 7-point Likert scale used in this study, these values seem to be still playing an important role in both cultures. Although these cultures provided similar rating levels for the most important values, they are significantly different in the least important values. The least important value for Turkish hosts is "an exciting life (a stimulating, active life)", while it is "salvation (saved, eternal life)" for the European guests.

**Table V** Descriptives and frequencies of variables included in the regression analysis for European guests

Variables	Mean or %	SD	n
<i>Dependent variable</i>			
Satisfaction with trip to Turkey (mean)	8.61	1.307	148
<i>Independent variables</i>			
Age (mean)	40.60	14.127	148
Gender <sup>a</sup> (% of female) 1 = female, 0 = male	0.46	0.500	148
<i>Marital status<sup>b</sup></i>			
Single (%) 1 = single, 0 = others	0.30	0.459	148
Married (%) 1 = married, 0 = others	0.49	0.502	148
<i>Level of education<sup>c</sup></i>			
Secondary school graduate (%) 1 = secondary school graduate, 0 = others	0.39	0.489	148
University graduate (%) 1 = university graduate, 0 = others	0.47	0.501	148
Master's or PhD. (%) 1 = master's or PhD, 0 = others	0.08	0.274	148
<i>Profession category<sup>d</sup></i>			
Professional (%) 1 = professional, 0 = others	0.34	0.475	148
Business owner (%) 1 = business owner, 0 = others	0.22	0.413	148
Retired (%) 1 = retired, 0 = others	0.14	0.343	148
Student (%) 1 = student, 0 = others	0.10	0.294	148
<i>Nationality of the respondents<sup>e</sup></i>			
British (%) 1 = British, 0 = others	0.62	0.488	148
Dutch (%) 1 = Dutch, 0 = others	0.04	0.198	148
German (%) 1 = German, 0 = others	0.07	0.263	148
Main purpose of trip to Turkey <sup>f</sup> (% of pleasure) 1 = pleasure, 0 = others	0.88	0.328	148
<i>Reasons for choosing Turkey<sup>g</sup></i>			
Low cost (%) 1 = low cost, 0 = others	0.22	0.413	148
Friends and relatives (%) 1 = friends and relatives, 0 = others	0.21	0.403	148
Culture (%) 1 = culture, 0 = others	0.07	0.263	148
Number of previous visits to Turkey (mean)	6.52	7.819	148
Number of days spent in Turkey on this trip (mean)	9.65	13.403	148
Level of similarity between your culture and Turkish people's culture	4.80	2.000	148

**Notes:** <sup>a</sup> A dummy variable was not created for "Male" to avoid the singular matrix problem in the regression analysis; <sup>b</sup> A dummy variable was not created for "Other" group to avoid the singular matrix problem in the regression analysis; <sup>c</sup> A dummy variable was not created for the "Other" group to avoid the singular matrix problem in the regression analysis; <sup>d</sup> A dummy variable was not created for the "Other" group to avoid the singular matrix problem in the regression analysis; <sup>e</sup> A dummy variable was not created for the "Other" group to avoid the singular matrix problem in the regression analysis; <sup>f</sup> A dummy variable was not created for the "Other" group to avoid the singular matrix problem in the regression analysis; <sup>g</sup> A dummy variable was not created for the "Other" group to avoid the singular matrix problem in the regression analysis; No modification was necessary for continuous variables

**Table VI** Results of stepwise regression analysis for Turkish hosts

Model fit Variables	Adj. $R^2 = 0.054$ ; $f = 18.137$ ; $\alpha = 0.000$					
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	$\alpha$	<i>T</i>
(Constant)	6.532	0.208		31.384	0.000	
Total work experience	0.072	0.017	0.239	4.259	0.000	1.000

In addition, 13 of the 19 values used in this study received significantly different levels of importance from hosts and guests. Ten of these values with different levels of importance received significantly higher importance ratings from Turkish hosts, on average. These values that are more important for the hosts are "a sense of accomplishment", "a world of

beauty”, “equality”, “inner harmony”, “national security”, “salvation”, “self-respect”, “social recognition”, “wisdom”, and “environment”. The three values received higher levels of importance from the guests are “an exciting life”, “happiness”, and “pleasure”. These results reflect more of group-oriented and essentialist tendencies of the Turkish culture as opposed to the individualistic and hedonist tendencies of the European culture. As Hofstede (1991) revealed, Asian cultures are different from Western cultures, Asians placing more importance on long-term orientation, masculinity, collectivism and power distance, while the Western societies displaying an opposite tendency. Despite the fact that Turkish people have been mingling with European civilizations for centuries, the results signal that Turkish culture still has more of an Asian tendency rather than Western tendency in cultural values.

Results also reveal that Turkish hosts and European guests are significantly different in their perception of cultural distance between Turkish and European cultures. Both groups’ ratings were below the mid-point on the 10-point Likert scale, signaling more of a difference, misfit or distance perception than similarity, fit or congruence perception. The differences in importance of cultural values were expectedly reflected in hosts’ and guests’ perception of cultural distance between Turkish and European cultures. Furthermore, Turkish hosts provided more importance to about half of the values as well as lower ratings on cultural similarity perception than their European counterparts. Hence, the level of importance placed on cultural values must be reflected in daily activities, behavior and attitude, leading hosts and guests to make a healthy assessment of cultural fit or distance.

This difference between Turkish hosts’ and European guests’ ratings on cultural distance perception could be explained in different ways. If European guests’ rating is taken as more representative of the objective reality, the explanation could be that tourists have a more realistic assessment of Turkish and European cultures because they have the first hand contact with both cultures within their natural settings, while Turkish hosts have a pseudo-real assessment because they are limited to their contact with the European culture that takes place in the Turkish culture setting. On the other hand, if Turkish hosts’ rating is taken as more representative of the objective reality, the explanation could be that tourists have a less realistic comparison between Turkish and European cultures because they have a shallow contact with the Turkish culture since their experiences are confined to resort vacations that take place within highly standardized hospitality establishments away from the normal Turkish culture setting.

With the differences in importance of most values as well as perception on cultural distance, it was not surprising to also find different levels of host satisfaction from job and guest satisfaction from trip. This finding was commensurate with the previous research cited before. Both host satisfaction from job and guest satisfaction from trip are presumably intertwined with intense interactions between these presumably different cultures. In this particular case, both host and guest satisfaction was above the mid-point on the 10-point Likert scale, however, lower for Turkish hosts, on average. European hosts were significantly higher on cultural similarity ratings, which could also be a reason for their higher ratings on trip satisfaction. However, can it be concluded that perception of cultural similarity, or smaller cultural distance, reveals better satisfaction rates? The results of the stepwise regression used to find the potential influence of cultural distance perception on satisfaction for both hosts and guests revealed a negative response to this question. Only one of the ten independent variables including cultural distance perception along with a few selected sociodemographic and experience-related variables was found to be significantly influential on job satisfaction for hosts, while none of the 11 independent variables was found to be significantly influential on trip satisfaction for guests. These findings are against the postulations and findings of the most previous research on cultural distance and its influence on job satisfaction for workers and trip satisfaction for tourists.

This anomaly in findings could be explained by Weiermair’s (2000) theory of “tourism culture”, the unique conglomerate product of tourists’ national, regional and subcultures and workers’ national, regional and organizational cultures. Maybe this new culture formed in tourism consumption settings, with its own unique character and dynamics of the service

interface, provides a different set of expectations for both sides, free of the conventional culture and expectations that come with it. The nature of tourism industry both requires and offers cultural diversity rather than uniformity both on the demand and supply side of the picture. Tourists of various cultural backgrounds end up meeting in the same place with a labor force that needs to be supported by workers from other nationalities to meet the requirement of a multicultural service interface. Thus, yet another challenge exists in tourism industry: the necessity of a multinational labor force. As stated by Devine *et al.* (2007), local service providers may not possess the necessary skills to deal with people from different cultures, which may lead to feelings of threat from unfamiliar situations (Torrington and Hall, 2002). Thus, cultural diversity training is suggested to educate the service personnel and improve the service environment (Wood, 2004). In addition, the labor support gained from the natives of tourists' nationalities may ease service encounter for both tourists and domestic workers. Therefore, cultural difference or distance in tourism products may be expected by default, thus providing a level of readiness for uncertainty and saving satisfaction from negative influences in the end.

### Limitations and suggestions

The findings of this study may not apply to all tourism consumption settings since respondents were surveyed in a general tourism setting context rather than limiting them to a certain consumption setting such as a restaurant, a hotel or a cruise ship. Culture is especially important at the consumption stage of the travel experience, which involves service and social encounters with extensive human interface of complex, intense and dyadic interaction between service providers and consumers. Service providers' cultural awareness may play an important role in not only reducing the cultural conflicts (Reisinger and Turner, 2002a) but also strengthening the brand equity of specific products, with people being a very important factor in a brand's competitive advantage (O'Neill, 1997). Therefore, cultural similarities and differences between hosts and guests of certain consumption settings may play a critical role in the success of the end state, namely job satisfaction for service providers and trip satisfaction for consumers. Future studies can be conducted taking specific product consumption settings such as a hotel and comparing the service providers and consumers on culture, cultural distance perception and satisfaction. Results would guide managers in providing intercultural management skills and know-how for the interface specific to their service setting.

The results of the study reveal no influence of variables included as independent variables presumed to have potential influences on hosts' satisfaction from job and guests' satisfaction from trip. One could assume that, all else being equal, perception of cultural difference, misfit or distance would have an influence on both job satisfaction for hosts and trip satisfaction for guests; however, the results of this study do not support this assumption. Also, except for the total work experience for hosts, none of the sociodemographic or experience related variables were found to be influential on satisfaction for either hosts or guests. Future studies need to replicate this study to validate these results in different settings.

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