

# Tourists' cultural competence: A cosmopolitan perspective among Asian tourists

## 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.

*Keywords:* cosmopolitan tourists, cultural competence, cultural tourism, tourism contact.

## 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 1,000 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

43 of tourists is now different from before” said by the deputy governor of Bali (Coconuts Bali,  
44 2018; MailOnline, 2018;). These news indicate that interactions among different societies  
45 naturally occur, thus increasing the contacts among different cultures (Fennell, 2006;  
46 Henderson, 2003). Tourists lacking cultural competence could offend local culture and cause  
47 negative cultural impacts.

48 In tourism settings, a cultural gap often exists between tourists and destination  
49 communities (Yu, Weiler, & Ham, 2002). Tourism is by nature socially interactive (Fennell,  
50 2006), which increases the opportunities for different cultures to interact (Henderson, 2003).  
51 Socio-cultural impacts of tourism result from the interactions between “hosts,” or local people,  
52 and “guests,” or tourists (Smith, 1995). Tourists interact with service staff, tour leaders, other  
53 tourists, and local people (Campos et al., 2016; Minkiewicz, Evans, & Bridson, 2014; Weiler  
54 & Black, 2015; Prebensen & Foss, 2011). Additionally, the interactions are not limited to people.  
55 Tourists also interact with objects in experience environment, such as: exhibitions, heritage  
56 sites, events, even atmosphere or overall servicescape (Bertella, 2014; Campos et al., 2016;  
57 Daengbuppha, Hemmington, & Wilkes, 2006; Minkiewicz et al., 2014; Prebesen & Foss, 2011).  
58 Therefore, the evaluation of cultural interaction in this study is based on tourists’ reaction when  
59 they encounter people/objects with different cultural features. To promote the socio-cultural  
60 sustainability of tourism, destination managers are keen to minimize the negative socio-cultural  
61 tourism impacts (Lu & Nepal, 2009), and enhance cultural exchange experiences between  
62 tourists and residents.

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

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

89 Therefore, the following questions have been raised: what specific cultural competencies

90 can a tourist demonstrate during cultural tourism? How can a cultural tourist practice as a  
91 cosmopolitan? This study applied cosmopolitanism as a theoretical framework to interpret the  
92 sociological phenomenon of cultural interactions and competencies. It aims to identify the  
93 specific cosmopolitan cultural competencies demonstrated by tourists from a cosmopolitanism  
94 perspective and therefore conceptualizes cosmopolitan tourists. Furthermore, this study  
95 proposes a framework to systematically interpret how tourists interact appropriately and  
96 efficiently with different cultural environments in a global mobility setting.

## 97 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 98 2.1. *Tourist behavior and socio-cultural sustainability*

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

109 The socio-cultural impacts of tourism on local society are not necessarily negative.  
110 Tourism provides opportunities for meeting different people and learning about other cultures.  
111 The positive impacts of tourism include mutual understanding between different cultures and  
112 promoting cultural exchanges (Ap & Crompton, 1998). The UNWTO (2011) also proposes that  
113 facilitating “intercultural understanding and tolerance” is a direction for sustainable tourism  
114 development. In other words, the sustainable development of tourism requires engagement and  
115 respect within and between stakeholders of tourism. Therefore, tourism is an ideal environment  
116 for studying cultural possibilities (Johnson, 2014). Tourism has opportunities to preserve  
117 local culture and promote understanding of cultural diversity (Zhang et al., 2017).

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

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

135       Regarding tourist interactions with cultural environments, some studies have argued that  
136 tourists should respect and appreciate different local cultures and have proposed behavior codes  
137 for different cultural situations. The UNWTO (1999) proposal for a “Global Code of Ethics for  
138 Tourism” argues that “the understanding and promotion of the ethical values common to  
139 humanity, with an attitude of tolerance and respect for the diversity of religious, philosophical,  
140 and moral beliefs, are both the foundation and the consequence of responsible tourism.” Ap and  
141 Crompton (1998) argued that the positive impacts of tourism include mutual understanding and  
142 cultural exchange promotion. However, few researchers have taken a holistic approach to  
143 understanding tourists’ responsible cultural behavior when they interact with different cultural  
144 environments.

## 145 *2.2. Tourism as the practice of cosmopolitanism*

146       The word “cosmopolitanism” is derived from the ancient Greek words kosmos (universe)  
147 and polis (city) (Salazar, 2010). Cosmopolitanism refers to “a sense of belonging to the world,”  
148 whereas a cosmopolitan is a “global citizen” (Salazar, 2010; Schueth & O’Loughlin, 2008).  
149 The notion of cosmopolitanism appeared in political philosophy during the Enlightenment era,  
150 which often refers back to the philosopher Immanuel Kant who promoted political ideas about  
151 global governance, citizenship, and cultural aspects of relationships that depend on the kindness  
152 of strangers (Swain, 2009). In contrast to nationalism, warfare, and ethnic hatred,  
153 cosmopolitanism is often related to elitism, travel, world peace, multiculturalism, and  
154 humanitarianism (Swain, 2009). The relationship between tourism and cosmopolitanism has  
155 been discussed. As Bruner (1991) stated, ““The benefits of travel—that it is broadening, that it  
156 leads to a more cosmopolitan perspective, and that exposure to other cultures enhances world  
157 understanding and facilitates world peace.” Tourism is generated from interactions in which  
158 cultural gaps often exist between tourists and hosts (Yu et al., 2002). In addition, a cosmopolitan  
159 is concerned with cultural translation across borders (Mignolo, 2002), and claims that world  
160 citizenship is achieved through “a cultural or aesthetic disposition toward difference.” In other  
161 words, cultural exchange involving mobility, international travel, and certain dispositions (such  
162 as openness and global sense) is essential in both tourism and cosmopolitanism (Johnson,  
163 2014). Therefore, tourism cultivates cosmopolitans (Swain, 2009) and forms an ideal context  
164 for investigating cosmopolitanism.

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

180       Research on cosmopolitanism has shifted from an abstract to a practical level, and more  
181 attention is devoted to how people perform as cosmopolitans. In addition, tourists have the

182 potential to become cosmopolitans (Molz, 2006; Swain, 2009). “Tourist citizens” become a  
183 contemporary form to perform global citizenship (Holmes, 2001). The cosmopolitan is a  
184 cultural tourist pursuing experiences, aesthetic sensations, novelty, and social bonds while  
185 performing duties and obligations (Featherstone, 2002). Although the role of the tourist as a  
186 cosmopolitan practitioner has received increasing attention, the specific competencies  
187 demonstrated by tourists in practicing cosmopolitanism remain underrepresented in the  
188 literature.

### 189 *2.3. Tourists’ cultural competence from a cosmopolitan perspective*

190 To effectively interact with people from different cultural backgrounds, individuals must  
191 develop cultural competence (Tsaur & Tu, 2019). Cultural competence refers to “the skills and  
192 abilities that an individual needs in order to interact appropriately and efficiently with persons  
193 from a different culture” (Scherle & Nonnenmann, 2008). With cultural competence,  
194 individuals can distinguish between cultural differences and use their cultural knowledge to  
195 adjust their own behaviors to interact more effectively with people from different cultural  
196 backgrounds (Tsaur & Tu, 2019).

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

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

221 Few studies have explored the effects of tourist intercultural competence. Ye et al. (2013)  
222 explore the antecedents of perceived discrimination of tourists, and indicate that intercultural  
223 competence moderates the relationship between perceived cultural distance and anticipated  
224 discrimination. Tourists with relatively high intercultural competence present a negative  
225 correlation between perceived cultural distance and anticipated discrimination. Their study  
226 adapts a socio-cultural adaptation scale to measure intercultural competence of tourists that  
227 includes four items, namely understanding locals’ world view, seeing things from the locals’  
228 perspective, adapting to local etiquette, and communicating with people. Tsaur et al. (2018)

229 indicate that the intercultural competence of tourists is inversely related to tourist–resident  
230 conflict. These studies consider intercultural competence from a social adaptation perspective,  
231 which emphasizes empathy toward locals. However, adoption is only one aspect of cultural  
232 competence and does not apply to every tourist type. The aim of the current study is to enrich  
233 the understanding of cultural competence based on the landscape of cosmopolitanism and  
234 provide a holistic theory to explain tourists’ cultural competence in tourism contexts.

235 Studies have demonstrated that frontline employees in the tourism industry, especially tour  
236 guides, must demonstrate specific cultural competencies (Cheok, Hede & Watne, 2015; Scherle  
237 & Nonnenmann, 2008; Tsaur & Tu, 2019; Yu et al., 2002). Scherle and Nonnenmann (2008)  
238 conceptualize tour guides as “cosmopolitan” because they require intercultural competence to  
239 act as mediators between different cultures. Yu et al. (2002) presents a framework for the  
240 cultural competence of Chinese tour guides that includes knowledge, attitudes (empathy for  
241 both visitors and hosts), and communication skills. They define the cultural competence of tour  
242 guides as “a general assessment of tour guide effectiveness in intercultural communication and  
243 mediation” that includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors. Tsaur and Tu (2019)  
244 developed a scale for tour leaders’ cultural competence and identified 10 factors: understanding  
245 the local travel environment, cross-cultural communication and interaction skills,  
246 understanding local culture, language ability, understanding local life habit, understanding  
247 cultural backgrounds of tour members, cultural empathy, cultural affinity, cultural mediation,  
248 and cultural adaptability.

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

### 266 3. RESEARCH METHOD

267 The current study adopted the postpositivist paradigm. A qualitative grounded theory  
268 approach was used. Postpositivist grounded theory acknowledges the fluid nature of reality and  
269 involves skepticism about the idea that we can learn about the world with certainty (Matteucci  
270 & Gnoth, 2017). Through combining deductive and inductive reasoning and using a systematic  
271 set of procedures, grounded theory advocates establishing theory from empirical data;  
272 researchers can categorize concepts and propositions from raw data without theoretical  
273 assumptions and then develop the theory (Matteucci & Gnoth, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).  
274 Cosmopolitanism involves a “large, ancient, rich, and controversial set of political ideas,

275 philosophies, and ideologies” (Beck, 2002). Hence, grounded theory offers tourism researchers  
276 a procedure for deeply understanding tourist behavior, comparing concepts between theory and  
277 data, and generating holistic theories with conceptual density (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

### 278 *3.1. Data collection and analysis.*

279 Theoretical sampling was adapted to collect data. As this study explored the cosmopolitan  
280 cultural competencies of cultural tourists in a global mobility setting, international cultural  
281 tourists were selected as the research participants. In the first stage, tourists with international  
282 tourism experience were selected using purposive sampling to develop rich categories (Strauss  
283 & Corbin, 1998). Based on the data collected in the first stage, backpackers were found to have  
284 more opportunities to interact with locals. Therefore, in the second stage, backpackers were  
285 selected based on the following criteria (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Maoz, 2007): (1)  
286 preferring interactions with the locals and other tourists; (2) flexible travel plan which are  
287 arranged by themselves; (3) preferring informal and participatory activities; and (4) looking  
288 forward to understanding and experiencing the authentic culture and lifestyle. In the third stage,  
289 both independent and group cultural tourists were recruited to enrich the meaning of each  
290 category and clarify the relationships between categories. Regarding the theory building and  
291 sample selection, main concepts obtained from the analysis process, such as respecting,  
292 appreciating, understanding, and participating were used to conduct theoretical sampling. The  
293 participants were selected based on the need of theory development. For example, respecting is  
294 an important factor when tourists contact with local residents and communities, and enter  
295 religious heritage sites (Coconuts Bali, 2018; Jamal & Camargo, 2014; Lee et al., 2013;  
296 MailOnline, 2018; Tsaur et al., 2018). Research memo also indicated that: “Participants that  
297 enter locals’ daily life boundary, and contact with residents, are most likely to have interflow  
298 with residents’ lifestyle and spiritual belief.” Therefore, tourists who entered local  
299 communities, aboriginal areas, or religious heritage sites were selected to develop the categories  
300 related to respect and openness. Initial categories established from stage 1 and 2 were refined  
301 in this stage. Categories with conceptual density were developed until theory saturation. Finally,  
302 collecting diverse cases (e.g., respondents with different occupations, ages, nationalities) as the  
303 confirmatory cases increased the variability.

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

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



322 Data was analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Open  
 323 coding is a process of “breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and  
 324 categorizing data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The data was broken down into distinct units of  
 325 meaning to identify the discrete concepts (Tan, Kung, & Luh, 2013). A rich pool of concepts  
 326 was generated in this process. For example: “I will do my best to comply with their rules  
 327 (complying with the rules). These rules are usually explained by tour guides or on notification  
 328 boards (following the direction); they are easy to comply with. In addition, we will try not to  
 329 disturb others (not to disturb), such as by staying quiet while watching (staying quiet) or turning  
 330 off the flash (turning off the flash)” (Participant 11). Subsequently, concepts were compared  
 331 and similar ones were grouped together. This process is termed as “categorizing,” which  
 332 generates initial sub-categories at a higher and more abstract level (Mehmetoglu & Altinay,  
 333 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Table 2 presents an example for categorizing.

334

Table 2 An example for categorizing in open coding

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

335 The next step of coding is the axial coding procedure, where data are put together in new  
 336 ways to generate tentative statements of relationships among phenomena (Mehmetoglu &  
 337 Altinay, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Tan et al., 2013). The “coding paradigm” proposed by  
 338 Strauss and Corbin (1998) can be used in axial coding to explicitly or implicitly shape the  
 339 categories and clarify relations between codes, which includes “phenomena,” “conditions,”  
 340 “strategic actions/interactions,” and “consequences” (Daengbuppha et al., 2006; Kelle, 2007;  
 341 Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For example, “respect and tolerance toward differences,” “compliance  
 342 with cultural rules,” and “concern for the privacy and dignity” were grouped into sub-category  
 343 “Respect and compliance.” Moreover, the condition (context of global mobility and cultural  
 344 diversity, as well as the role of destinations), and consequence (positive cultural behavior) were  
 345 also considered. In addition, research memo was used to understand the boundary of categories.  
 346 For example, memos indicated that: “respect and tolerance are basic requirements for a tourist,  
 347 even if a tourist demonstrates these abilities, they could still be an outsider or observer, who  
 348 does not engage in cultural exchange.” “Blending in local cultures or life does not imply that a  
 349 tourist is enjoying the local atmosphere, they might just follow the others’ behavior, or try not  
 350 to act in a wrong way. However, it is also different from respect only. These tourists believe  
 351 that, since they have travelled all the way to an unfamiliar country, they should at least try to  
 352 adapt to the local life.” Therefore, “blending in local cultures and customs,” “blending in local  
 353 life” and “responding flexibly” were categorized as “flexibility and blending in” sub-category  
 354 and grouped into “cultural openness” core category.

355 In the final stage of coding, selective coding was adopted, representing a process of  
 356 identifying and choosing the core category, connecting categories systematically, and  
 357 developing the theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Tan et al., 2013). The “coding paradigm” and  
 358 research memos helped this study develop the theoretical framework. As a result, the eleven

359 sub-categories of cultural competencies were integrated into four core categories, namely  
 360 cultural openness, understanding, consciousness, and participation. Moreover, the theoretical  
 361 framework of tourists' cultural competence was interpreted through three level, namely border  
 362 conservation, border interflow, and border crossing level. The results of coding are shown in  
 363 Table 3.

364 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	<b>Cultural openness/</b> 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	<b>Cultural understanding/</b> 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	<b>Cultural consciousness/</b> 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	<b>Cultural participation/</b> 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	<b>Positive cultural behavior/</b> Border crossing level

365 *3.2. Trustworthiness of research*

366 In qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria of trustworthiness,  
 367 namely dependability, transferability, credibility, and confirmability, to replace reliability and  
 368 validity in quantitative studies. This study adopted the following methods to enhance the  
 369 trustworthiness of research results: (a) methodology: by following the steps of grounded theory,  
 370 a constant comparative analysis was adopted during the data collection and analysis processes,  
 371 and confirmatory cases were investigated to increase confirmability; (b) data triangulation:  
 372 interviews were conducted at multiple times and places, and participants from different areas  
 373 in Asia were recruited; (c) researcher triangulation: two researchers performed separate analysis  
 374 procedures for the same data and discussed the differences, such as categorization of coding,  
 375 relationships between categories, and the distinction between cognition and behavior, which

376 were followed by mutual comparisons and negotiated outcomes. In addition, the researchers  
377 invited two colleagues from the university to read all the text and identify any neglected units  
378 of analysis; (d) interviewer triangulation: researchers contacted the participants and clarified  
379 the transcripts during the data analysis process. Moreover, findings were viewed by three  
380 interviewers for confirmation; (e) theoretical triangulation: multiple perspectives, such as  
381 cosmopolitanism, responsible tourist behavior, and sustainable tourism were considered during  
382 data analysis. This paper adopted these five methods to enhance the dependability, credibility,  
383 and confirmability of the research results. In addition, transferability was considered by  
384 providing detailed descriptions of the research design and sampling method.

## 385 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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

### 391 *4.1. Core competence 1: cultural openness.*

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

#### 395 *4.1.1. Respect and compliance*

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

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

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

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

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

#### 414 *4.1.2. Openness toward diversity*

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

418 “There are so many ways to live, just as there are so many ways to build a house. You can  
419 refer to others’ (lives). Life in your country is not necessarily the best; every country has its  
420 advantages. Tourists need to hold a certain degree of tolerance and openness” (Participant  
421 11).

422 “If you only want to stick to the criteria of your country, preserve your own pace, time  
423 arrangements, and food preferences, you should have stayed in your country” (Participant  
424 1).

425 Therefore, a cosmopolitan tourist should have an open mind (UNWTO, 1999), be open to  
426 cultural diversity (Johnson, 2014; Swain, 2009; Urry, 1995), and tolerate cultural differences  
427 (Molz, 2005; 2006). In this manner, they can connect with different cultures and further  
428 understand the cultural background as well as appreciate the cultural aesthetics of locals.

#### 429 *4.1.3. Flexibility and blending in*

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

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

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

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

#### 444 *4.2. Core competence 2: cultural understanding*

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

##### 448 *4.2.1. Gathering travel information*

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

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

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

461 *4.2.2. Understanding cultural background*

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

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

469 Tourism promotes mutual understanding among people and societies when encounters  
470 occur (Ap & Crompton, 1998; Molz, 2005; UNWTO, 1999). Therefore, exploring history and  
471 cultural heritage and learning about cultural backgrounds, customs, rituals, and ways of life are  
472 essential for tourists (Gnoth & Zins, 2013; Lee et al., 2013; Nowaczek & Smale, 2010).

473 *4.2.3. Empathy and reflection*

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

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

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

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

490 *4.3. Core competence 3: cultural consciousness*

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

494 *4.3.1. Sensitivity to cultural differences*

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

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

501 Research has discussed cultural sensitivity in ecotourism to minimize impacts to natural  
502 and cultural environments (Donohoe, 2011) and has explored environmental sensitivity to

503 facilitate environmentally responsible behavior (Cheng & Wu, 2015; Ramdas & Mohamed,  
504 2014).

#### 505 *4.3.2. Curiosity to cultural differences*

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

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

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

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

#### 518 *4.3.3 Aesthetic appreciation*

519 Aesthetic appreciation refers to the ability of tourists to make aesthetic judgments to  
520 discover the beauty and uniqueness entailed in a destination's cultural artifacts, heritages,  
521 ceremonies, lifestyles, and even landscapes. This process creates positive images in the tourists'  
522 minds and becomes a memorable cultural experience. Adopting an aesthetic disposition toward  
523 differences based on aesthetic taste and judgment is crucial for a cosmopolitan tourist (Urry,  
524 1995; Molz, 2006). For example, participants noted:

525 "I felt the scene was quite beautiful. There was a ritual in which people were patted with  
526 some kind of fan. We couldn't understand it at all, and no one explained to us, but I  
527 appreciated the smoothness of their movements. I stayed there for a long time" (Participant  
528 6).

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

#### 533 *4.4. Core competence 4: Cultural participation*

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

##### 536 *4.4.1. Interactions with locals*

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

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

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

#### 549 *4.4.2. Participation in local activities*

550 This subcategory refers to a tourist's willingness and ability to participate in local activities.  
551 Taking part in local customs and activities and experiencing local food, shelter, clothing, and  
552 life are a major part of cultural tourism (Gnoth & Zins, 2010). Local activities provide a lively  
553 atmosphere for tourists to understand local knowledge and appreciate cultural aesthetics,  
554 thereby creating a platform to obtain deep cultural experiences and promote cultural exchange.

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

#### 558 *4.5. Negative competencies*

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

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

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

#### 580 *4.6. Conceptual framework for cosmopolitan cultural competencies of tourists*

581 The findings of this study were used to propose a conceptual framework for understanding  
582 the mechanism of cosmopolitan cultural competencies and positive cultural behavior. The  
583 "coding paradigm" and research memos helped this study develop the theoretical framework  
584 through selective coding. The framework is under a general tourism condition of global  
585 mobility and cultural diversity, and sets cultural competence as actions of tourists, and positive  
586 cultural behaviors as consequences. In addition, research memos indicated that: "during the  
587 tour, tourists will encounter cultural differences in a destination. A higher degree of cultural  
588 distance brings a higher degree of cultural shock. To cope with this, tourists have to demonstrate

589 a higher level of cultural openness to tolerate the cultural disparity and maintain the mutually  
590 respectable relationship between guests and hosts. It also enhances the difficulty to blend in.”  
591 “Understanding and appreciation create a positive impression on local culture in tourists' minds,  
592 thereby stimulate the positive reactions. The performance of cosmopolitan cultural competence  
593 stimulates positive cultural behaviors.” As a result, cultural openness, understanding,  
594 consciousness, and participation were established as core categories. Moreover, as shown in  
595 Figure 1, the theoretical framework of tourists’ cultural competence was interpreted through  
596 three level, namely border conservation, border interflow, and border crossing level. Border  
597 conservation refers to the normative aspect of cultural competence. The objective of this level  
598 is to establish a mutually respectful relationship and minimize the negative impacts on locals;  
599 therefore, cultural borders are distinguished and maintained. In this level, the role of the  
600 destination is to provide normative signs, rules, and guidelines to assist tourists. At the border  
601 interflow level, tourists break through cultural borders and shorten cultural distance by  
602 exhibiting cultural understanding, consciousness, and participation competence. The role of the  
603 destination is to provide activities, experiences, heritage sites, and personal interactions in this  
604 level.

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



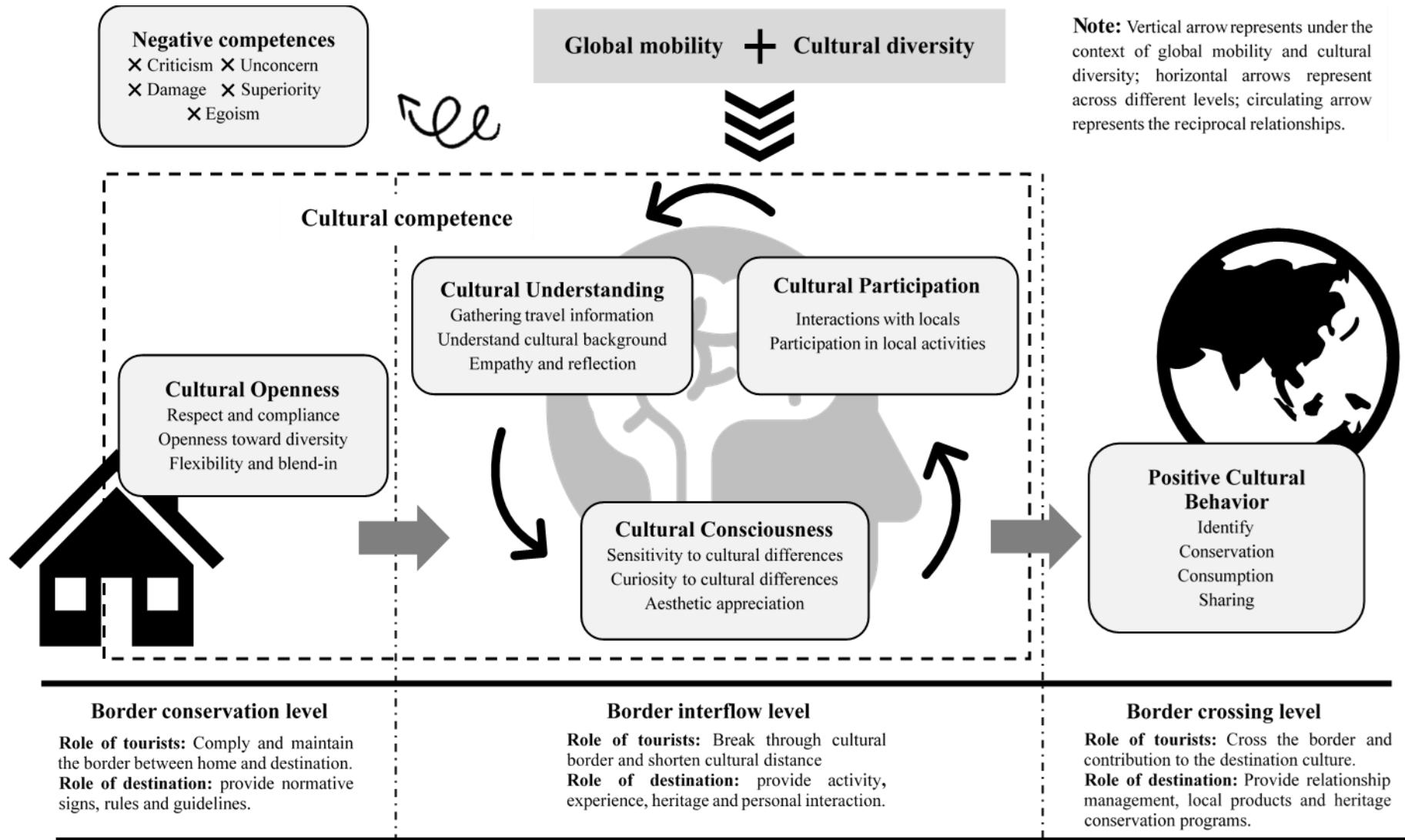


Figure 1. A conceptual framework for cosmopolitan cultural competences of tourists

621 *4.7. Discussion*

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

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

648 The present study had a few differences with cosmopolitanism discourse. Studies on  
649 cosmopolitanism have emphasized the concept of risk taking (Molz, 2006; Swain, 2009; Urry,  
650 1995). Although the results of this study indicate that curiosity of different cultures is a crucial  
651 component of cultural competence, only a portion of participants exhibited a risk-taking  
652 orientation. This study applied cultural competence concept to a broader group of tourists, while  
653 these competencies can be performed differently among individuals. The willingness to take  
654 risks depends on the type of tourist, which corresponds with past research; individual tourists,  
655 especially backpackers who prefer local facilities, are more willing to take risks than group  
656 tourists are (Williams & Baláz, 2013). Moreover, studies have discussed the adaptability of  
657 cosmopolitans (Johnson, 2014; Molz, 2006). This study found that tourists typically do not  
658 attempt to adapt to local life. By contrast, because trips are short and variable, rather than  
659 adapting to local life, tourists attempt to experience different cultures as much as possible in a  
660 short time. As a result, tourists demonstrated more tolerance during travel than in their normal  
661 life.

662 Few studies have discussed how tourists cope with different cultures. In the ecotourism  
663 field, studies discuss the normative responsible behavior of tourists (Donohoe, 2011; Lee et al.,  
664 2013; Nowaczek & Smale, 2010). In addition, researchers have considered cultural competence  
665 as having cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions (Johnson, 2014; Tsaur & Tu, 2019;  
666 Yu et al., 2002). On the basis of the theory of cosmopolitanism, this study developed a  
667 framework that combined normative, cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects to develop a

668 multidimensional and holistic construct to portray how tourists cope with different cultural  
669 environments.

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

## 679 5. CONCLUSIONS

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

688 From an academic perspective, this study applies cosmopolitanism philosophy as  
689 theoretical framework to interpret the sociological phenomenon of cultural interactions and  
690 competencies, thereby contributes to cosmopolitanism and tourist behavior literature. First, this  
691 paper responds to research on cosmopolitanism by using the competence approach to  
692 understand cosmopolitanism in practice (Johnson, 2014; Molz, 2006; Salazar, 2010; Scherle &  
693 Nonnenmann, 2008; Swain, 2009). The essence of cultural competence was identified in the  
694 tourism context. Empirical evidence was provided to support cultural competence as a useful  
695 tool for studying cosmopolitanism and understanding tourists' behavior toward different  
696 cultural systems (Johnson, 2014); furthermore, tourists were conceptualized as cosmopolitans.  
697 In addition, both positive and negative competencies were addressed in one framework to  
698 highlight the contradistinctions, which have received insufficient attention in the literature.  
699 Furthermore, this study proposed a framework to understand the mechanism of cultural  
700 competence and its consequences systematically, thereby contributing to ongoing efforts in  
701 tourist behavior research. Pragmatically, the results of the current research can provide a holistic  
702 view to understand how tourists interact with different cultures, thus providing insights for  
703 establishing a suitable pattern for social and cultural exchanges between tourists and  
704 destinations and promoting sustainable tourism development.

705 From a practical perspective, this study has implications for destination management. First,  
706 understanding cultural competence provides insights for destination management organizations  
707 (DMOs) to formulate suitable and specific norms based on local culture and customs. Some  
708 behavior codes have been proposed by non-profit organizations (NPOs) and DMOs and are  
709 typically presented as abstract general principles and specific behavioral norms. The current  
710 study provides a theoretical basis for clarifying the mechanism among tourists and bridges the  
711 gap between general principles and specific behaviors. Second, destinations can employ  
712 educational programs (such as exhibits in visitor centers, brochures, on-site activities, and  
713 guiding services) to motivate tourists to learn, enjoy, and participate or improve tourists' weaker

714 aspects of cultural competence. Third, the results of this study provide tourism operators with  
715 a framework to identify competence differences among tourists for conducting market  
716 segmentation and designing travel activities (or products) according to the competence  
717 requirement of local tourism resources and the competence characteristics of target tourists.  
718 Finally, the results can be used to assist tourists in self-evaluating their characteristics of cultural  
719 competence and improving their weak aspects to ensure a smooth trip.

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

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