

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CONTACT BETWEEN PERCEIVED CULTURAL DISTANCE AND TRAVEL ATTITUDE

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Abstract: The ambiguous effect of cultural distance on travel attitude and tourist behaviours has long been debated, and the implications are vital to the success of achieving a sustainable tourist-host relationship. The current study, by introducing a multi-dimensional perspective of the social contact, explored both the direct and indirect effects of perceived cultural distance on travel attitude. The mediating role of tourist-host social contact was also confirmed. The study found that the relationship between perceived cultural distance and travel attitude is “contact elastic”. Results could offer empirical supports to the co-existence of the paradoxical effects of cultural distance on travel attitude. Implications were also provided to policy-makers, practitioners, and local communities regarding achieving a sustainable tourist-host bond. **Keywords:** consumer behaviour, social contact, perceived cultural distance, travel attitude, tourist-host relationship, social sustainability