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Bikini or Burkini? The role of swimwear and age as determinants of beach interaction with others

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Abstract

The paper examines the influence of age and similarity in appearance to other customers on one's attitude to a resort, patronage and interactive intentions. In-depth interviews were conducted with ten resort guests, followed by a factorial between-subjects experiment on 189 young females using written scenarios along with sketches. The data were analysed from a dual-perspective depending on the subjects' preferences for either a burkini or a bikini by means of MANCOVA. The patronage and interactive intentions to other customers among those who preferred bikini swimsuits were found to be influenced by similarity in appearance only when unknown customers were young. The attitude to the resort and patronage intentions among customers who preferred burkini swimsuits were found to be unaffected by differences in appearance. Burkini-wearing females considered similarity in appearance as most important, followed by the age of unknown customers when they formed their interactive intentions toward others.

Keywords: Similarity in appearance; Customer-to-customer interactions; Compatibility management; Elderly customers; Heterogeneous customers; Resorts; Beach experience

1 Introduction

“Woman kicked out of Dubai swimming pool for wearing burkini” ([Young, 2017](#))

“Egypt's bikini vs. burkini battle heats up” ([Mekky, 2017](#))

Value co-creation in tourism “is always a collaborative and interactive process” ([Eid & El-Gohary, 2015](#)), because tourism involves social encounters ([Carlson, Rahman, Rosenberger, & Holzmüller, 2016](#); [Özdemir & Yolal, 2017](#)). The presence of and interactions with other customers are key determinants of tourists' experience ([Her & Seo, 2018](#)), resort choice ([Konu, Laukkanen, & Komppula, 2011](#)), and the co-creation of value ([Yin & Poon, 2016](#)). In contrast, when other tourists are felt to be incompatible with oneself, they may cause social distance ([Joo et al., 2018](#)), disturbance and the co-destruction of value ([Cai, Lu, & Gursoy, 2018](#)).

Although targeting a well-defined market segment is an important strategy, the profit motive when excess capacity appears may motivate tour operators and resort managers to attract heterogeneous segments ([Alserhan et al., 2018](#); [Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Lin, 2017](#)). Heterogeneity may stem from differences in age ([Kim & Lee, 2012](#)), culture, language ([Özdemir & Yolal, 2017](#)), ethnicity, travel motives ([Nyaupane, Timothy, & Poudel, 2015](#)), religion ([Klein & Kantor, 2018](#)), travel budgets ([Torres, 2015](#)), backgrounds, lifestyle ([Line, Hanks, & McGinley, 2018](#)) and behaviours ([Miao & Mattila, 2013](#)). Notably, we have a limited and fragmented understanding of this topic, though the body of literature is growing.

With the increasing numbers of Muslim travellers, many non-Muslim countries (e.g. New Zealand) are targeting them by responding to their needs (e.g. by making halal food available) ([Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2018](#)), ending up with a very heterogeneous mix of travellers. Heterogeneity may also arise when Muslim countries host international tourists ([Din, 1989](#)). Tensions between tourists and Muslim residents (in e.g. the Maldives) have started to attract greater attention in the tourism literature ([Alserhan et al., 2017](#); [Shakeela & Weaver, 2018](#)). These intolerance issues seem to arise, for example, in Egypt, among domestic tourists, whose ideologies may differ (i.e. their outlook may be secular or religious) ([Mekky, 2017](#)) or whose religious intensity may be great or small ([Zamani-Farahani & Musa, 2012](#)). Heterogeneity between domestic tourists and residents was found to be greater than between international tourists and residents ([Joo et al., 2018](#)). Tensions over customers' preferences in swimsuits, as an aspect heterogeneity, have drawn the attention of the international press (e.g. the Telegraph, the BBC and the Independent in the UK) to report, support or criticise the bans imposed sometimes by resorts, e.g. in Egypt, on burkinis, as Islamic swimsuits ([Mekky, 2017](#)) and sometimes by governments, e.g. in France ([Osborne, 2016](#)). In the Olympic Games of 2016, photos of Egyptian athletes wearing burkinis and the hijab competing against German players in their bikinis were the centre of debate (e.g. [Cohen, 2016](#)) in the international press (e.g. the New York Times). Unexpectedly, Sports Illustrated, a popular US sports magazine, featured a Muslim supermodel wearing a burkini in its annual swimsuit issue, triggering another wave of debate ([Sini, 2019](#)). These debates may also extend to the social media ([Osborne, 2016](#)) reflecting a clash over identities between secular and religious views ([Cohen, 2016](#)). However, in tourism research these tensions are under-represented.

The physical appearance of other customers is quite influential in shaping a tourist's focal experience ([Hyun & Han, 2015](#)). To tap into this important construct, prior research has drawn on an aggregate measure of physical

appearance of other unknown customers (e.g. [Hanks & Line, 2018](#); [Hwang & Han, 2017](#); [Hyan & Han, 2015](#)) with little insight into specific aspects (e.g. clothing style) of appearance (e.g. [Choi & Mattila, 2016](#) **Please make sure that Choi and Mattila (2016) not 2015**) that cause favourable intentions, such as the intention to revisit, or unfavourable ones. To remedy this, [Yin and Poon \(2016\)](#) call for future research on specific observable characteristics (e.g. clothing). Moreover, how different aspects of the observable characteristics of other customers may interact together is still unverified ([Choi & Mattila, 2016](#); [Kim & Lee, 2012](#)). In response to several research calls ([Ludwig, Barnes, & Gouthier, 2017](#); [Tomazelli, Broilo, Espartel, & Basso, 2017](#)), this paper adopts theories of social identity ([Tajfel, 1981](#)) and social distance ([Thyne, Lawson, & Todd, 2006](#)) to examine how customers' perceptions of age and similarity in appearance to other unknown customers influence their attitude to a resort and their intentions to interact with them and visit a given resort. In line with prior research ([Fan et al., 2017](#); Johnson and Grier, 2012; [Levy, 2010](#)), this paper aims to answer this question from a dual perspective (i.e. separating those who prefer bikinis from those who prefer burkini swimsuits).

The choice of the two specific observable characteristics (i.e. age and similarity in appearance) of other customers rests on several reasons. First, the age of the observed customers was found to be a dominant factor in choosing between different service providers ([Brack & Benkenstein, 2012](#)) and an important attribute in stimulating the first contact between unacquainted tourists ([Rihova, Buhalis, Gouthro, & Moital, 2018](#)). Second, tourism research has a long-lasting interest in the influence of the age of service employees on customers' patronage intentions ([Luoh & Tsaur, 2013](#); [Tsaur, Luoh, & Syue, 2015](#)), which needs to be complemented by an equivalent understanding of the influence of the age of other customers. Third, age and similarity in appearance are visible elements that can be managed and controlled ([Choi & Mattila, 2016](#); [Wu, 2007](#)). Fourth, the numbers of elderly customers are growing at great speed in many parts of the world ([Nicholls & Mohsen, 2015](#)). But young customers' response to the presence of the elderly is under-researched ([Tomazelli et al., 2017](#)), especially in the Middle East ([Prayag & Hosany, 2014](#)). Fifth, tourism research has been particularly interested in cultural differences ([Fan et al., 2017](#)) and has paid little attention to other differences, such as age ([Tomazelli et al., 2017](#)) and clothing. Sixth, the international press (e.g. The Independent) has paid great attention to tensions over swimsuits in the tourism context (e.g. [Osborne, 2016](#)).

The remainder of this paper discusses aspects of customer-to-customer interactions and halal marketing. The methods section starts by discussing the qualitative in-depth interviews and goes on to describe the procedures and analyse the data from a sketch-based between-subject experiment. The paper concludes with the research implications and suggestions for future research.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Customer-to-customer interactions

[Martin and Pranter \(1989, p. 7\)](#) coined the concept of “compatibility management,” which refers to “the process of attracting homogenous consumers to the service environment, then actively managing both the physical environment and customer-to-customer encounters.” The social environment ([Yin & Poon, 2016](#)) was found to be more influential in the formation of customers' perceptions than the physical environment (e.g. table design) ([Uhrich & Benkenstein, 2012](#)). Yet it has received scant research attention ([Hanks & Line, 2018](#)).

Interactions with other customers occur more often ([Harris, Baron, & Ratcliffe, 1995](#)) and are perceived to be more credible than between customers and service employees ([Harris, Baron, & Davies, 1999](#)). Unlike customer-to-customer interactions, social contact between tourists and hosts is described as unequal and unbalanced due to differences in social status ([Din, 1989](#)). Social contact also depends on the length of the vacation, language competence and the availability of opportunities for interaction ([Fan et al., 2017](#)). These factors may set many limitations on the frequency of tourist-to-host interactions. Compared to customer-to-service employee and host-to-tourist interactions, customer-to-customer interactions have received rather less research attention ([Cai et al., 2018](#); [Line et al., 2018](#); [Rihova et al., 2018](#)). The term ‘other customers’ may refer to travel companions ([Rihova et al., 2018](#)), other customer whom one has never met before ([Yin & Poon, 2016](#)) or the general crowd ([Thakor, Suri, & Saleh, 2008](#)). Prior research confirms that the type of relevant other is influential in the formation of customer behaviour ([Koenig-Lewis, Asaad, & Palmer, 2018](#)).

2.2 Direct versus indirect customer-to-customer interactions

Interactions with unknown customers can be direct/active (e.g. engaging in short conversations) (e.g. [Koenig-Lewis et al., 2018](#)) and/or indirect/passive (i.e. treating other customers merely as present) (e.g. [Cai et al., 2018](#); [Hyun & Han, 2015](#)). The latter has received much less research attention ([Hyun & Han, 2015](#); [Line & Hanks, 2018](#)) than the former, given the fact that only a small percentage (12%–23%) of customers engages in direct interactions ([Harris et al., 1995](#); [Kim & Lee, 2012](#)). Direct interactions depend on the service design ([Torres et al., 2015](#)), the number of other customers ([Yin & Poon, 2016](#)), type of tourism ([Papathanassis, 2012](#)), and individual preferences ([Walls, Okumus, Wang, & Kwun, 2011](#)). In contrast, 58% ([Grove & Fisk, 1997](#)) to 61% ([Zhang, Beatty, & Mothersbaugh, 2010](#)) of customer-to-customer interactions were found to be indirect ones because they are unavoidable ([Line & Hanks, 2018](#)). Therefore, they are highly influential in customers' experience ([Cai et al., 2018](#); [Line & Hanks, 2018](#)).

The presence of other customers was found to exert great influence on customers' sense of social presence ([Carlson et al., 2016](#)), emotional regulation ([Miao & Mattila, 2013](#)), destination attachment ([Line et al., 2018](#)), satisfaction ([Johnson & Grier, 2013](#)) and revisit intentions ([Line et al., 2018](#)). They are sometimes considered a burden in terms of crowding ([Tomazelli et al., 2017](#)), competition for resources (e.g. open buffet) ([Papathanassis, 2012](#)), the co-destruction of value (e.g. crying babies) ([Matson-Barkat & Robert-Demontrond, 2018](#)) and dysfunctional behaviours ([Yin & Poon, 2016](#)).

Brocato et al. (2012) developed a scale that operationalizes three elements of observable characteristics in other customers: similarity, physical appearance and appropriate behaviour. This scale is validated in the travel and tourism context (e.g. Hanks & Line, 2018; Hwang & Han, 2017; Hyne & Han, 2012; Line & Hanks, 2018). However, it takes a holistic approach, measuring the physical appearance of other customers without considering the contribution of specific observable characteristics, such as clothing. Other scales measure the focal tourists' inferences about the salient attributes of other unknown customers (e.g. their personalities) (e.g. Hanks, Line, & Yang, 2017; Line et al., 2018). However, it is not clear on what basis (e.g. age) these inferences were made.

2.3 Halal tourism and indirect customer-to-customer interactions

Although the words “halal” and “Islamic” may be applied to tourism interchangeably, this paper prefers “halal” tourism (El-Gohary, 2016). The word “halal” means permissible or permitted under the teachings of Islam (Olya & Al-ansi, 2018). Islamic tourism is associated with the strict compliance to all principles of Shari'ah (i.e. Islamic law), which is not altogether the case for most hotels and resorts (El-Gohary, 2016). They are not transparent enough in their hospitality practices (e.g. in the availability of alcohol) to appeal to both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists (Alserhan et al., 2018).

To maintain their share of Muslim guests, some tourism destinations offer designated swimming areas or days for Muslim females (Din, 1989; El-Gohary, 2016; Jafari & Scott, 2014). In many Muslim countries, governments (Libya, say, as opposed to Tunisia) vary in the degree of governance they exercise on leisure activities to comply with the Islamic law (Din, 1989). Other countries may follow strict policies with regard to Muslims, but relax them for non-Muslims tourists (e.g. Malaysia) (Din, 1989).

Not all Muslims seek the same strict compliance with their religious practices; it depends on the varying degrees of their religiosity (El-Gohary, 2016; Ghumman & Ryan, 2013). This may extend to their desired touristic experiences (Terzidou, Scarles, & Saunders, 2018). Klein and Kantor (2018) show that Jews, equally, may vary in their commitment to the teachings of Judaism, which is likely to impact on their involvement in leisure activities and acceptance of dissimilar others.

Clothing is an icon of social (Choi & Mattila, 2016) and religious identity which in turn may cause social conflict and intolerance (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015; Ghumman & Ryan, 2013). For instance, Muslim females “wear loose, long-sleeved blouses or shirts, slacks or long skirts, and may cover their heads with scarves” (Hashim, Murphy, & Hashim, 2007, p. 1088). These customs may conflict with the preferences of other domestic tourists who hold secular views (Ghumman & Ryan, 2013; Mekky, 2017). For instance, many Muslim females who choose to wear the Muslim headscarf may face formal (i.e. an explicit rejection of dissimilar others) and interpersonal (e.g. briefer and more disinterested conversations) discrimination in the Western labour market (Ghumman & Ryan, 2013). Further, Muslim residents may resist tourism development projects in their area to protect their children from exposure to the evidence of Western cultures (e.g. scant clothing) (e.g. the Maldives) (Shakeela & Weaver, 2018). To best of the researcher's knowledge, no halal marketing scholars have considered compatibility issues between customers who were previously unacquainted. In addressing this research gap, Figure 1 illustrates the influence of and interaction between two observable characteristics in other unknown customers (i.e. age and similarity in appearance), on one's attitude to the resort and intentions to patronise and interact with others. (Please relocate figure 1 before sub-section 2.4.)

2.4 Age of other customers

Attraction between customers with similar demographic profiles is rooted in the similarity-attraction paradigm (Lim, Lee, & Foo, 2017) and principles of homophily (Line et al., 2018). Social identity theory proposes that people form their sense of belonging to others on the basis of their perceptions of similarity (Tajfel, 1981). People may depend on heuristic information (i.e. stereotypes) as inferred from environmental cues (e.g. similarity to other customers) to form an attitude about an unfamiliar service provider (Hanks & Line, 2018; Uhrich & Benkenstein, 2012).

Since age is an important element of identity (Luoh & Tsaor, 2013), it can be used to classify people into in- and out-groups. In this sense, young people usually perceive the elderly as less sociable, inactive (Luoh & Tsaor, 2013), inflexible and not open minded (DeArmond et al., 2006). As a result, young customers rarely prefer to be surrounded by elderly customers (Thakor et al., 2008).

Empirical evidence shows that customers get attached to places which host patrons belonging to their same age group as theirs (Nicholls & Mohsen, 2015; Rosenbaum, 2008). They also tend to have a positive attitude to the service provider when they see other customers who look like them (Uhrich & Benkenstein, 2012). Kim and Lee (2012) and Thakor et al. (2008) show that young customers are more likely to prefer service places that host young rather than elderly customers. When advertisements feature elderly customers, the purchasing intentions of young customers tend to decline (Day & Stafford, 1997).

H1. Young customers' attitudes to a resort will be more positive when other unknown customers are young rather than old.

H2. Young customers' patronage intentions will be more positive when other unknown customers are young rather than old.

The social distance theory suggests that people who look similar are more likely to feel more intimacy with one another and feel less social distance between them (Thyne et al., 2006). Equally, the social identity theory suggests that similar customers are more likely to develop emotional attachments to one another (Hyun & Han, 2015). People of similar age are less likely to have conflicts when interacting with one another because they tend to have similar

service expectations (Nicholls & Mohsen, 2015).

In contrast, people may feel uncomfortable in the presence of others who belong to different backgrounds, social classes and age groups (Hyun & Han, 2015). Similarity between customers and service employees was found to enhance their personal interaction (Jamal & Adelowore, 2008). Meshram and O'Cass (2018) put forward an empirical case showing that social interactions between customers of similar age may turn them from unknown customers into close friends.

H3. Young customers' interactive intentions will be more positive when other unknown customers are young rather than old.

2.5 Similarity in appearance to other customers

Physical appearance may refer to general appearance (Brocato, Voorhees, & Baker, 2012; Pounders, Babin, & Close, 2015) or more specifically refer to one's face (Reingen & Kernan, 1993), make up (Jacob, Guéguen, Boulbry, & Ardiccioni, 2010) and clothing style (Yin & Poon, 2016). As in prior research (Yan, Yurchisin, & Watchravesringkan, 2011), the term 'clothing' was used instead of "dress" as a proxy of appearance because the latter incorporates other accessories and adornments of the human body such as piercing, which are beyond the focus of this paper. Clothing plays a primary role in forming first impressions (Hamid, 1968).

The social identity theory suggests that people can use clothing to classify people as members of in- and out-groups (Ghumman & Ryan, 2013; Walls et al., 2011) because clothing reflects one's ideology (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015), values (Hanks et al., 2017) and religious orientation (Din, 1989; Ghumman & Ryan, 2013). People usually get attracted to service experiences that reflect "who they are or what they stand for" (Hanks et al., 2017, p. 126).

To Muslim females, incompatibility in appearance with others might threaten their identity and make them feel undervalued because it might suggest disrespect to their social norms (Yin & Poon, 2016) and religion (Din, 1989; El-Gohary, 2016). In interactions between residents and tourists, Reisinger and Turner (1997) identify notable differences between Indonesians (i.e. Muslim tourists) and Australians (i.e. non-Muslim residents) in the meanings assigned to their clothing. The former use their clothing to express a sense of belonging and respect for others, while the latter associate clothing with general social norms (Reisinger & Turner, 1997). Thus, Muslims prioritise "common well-being" more "than their needs as individuals" (Reisinger & Turner, 1997, p. 144). Secular females may perceive burkinis as a means of exercising power over females' freedom (Cohen, 2016), while Muslim females may feel attached to burkinis as a means of rejecting "the Western view of beauty and ... sexual objectification of oneself" (Ghumman & Ryan, 2013, p. 675).

Nyaupane et al. (2015) show that religion and secular tourists are intolerant of one another even when they attend a heritage attraction. When the clothing style of other customers is considered appropriate, customers associate positive characteristics with the service provider (Kim & Lee, 2012; Yan et al., 2011) and they tend to have stronger patronage intentions (Choi & Mattila, 2016). Customers who can relate to the appearance of service employees (Pounders et al., 2015) and other customers (Choi & Mattila, 2016; Hanks et al., 2017) will develop favourable intentions towards the service provider.

H4. Young customers' attitudes to a resort will be more positive when other unknown customers look similar to them rather than different.

H5. Young customers' patronage intentions will be more positive when other unknown customers look similar to them rather than different.

According to the social distance theory, the perception of similarities in appearance, values and religion make people feel more cordial towards each other (Klein & Kantor, 2018). Greater similarity between the appearance of customers and service employees is likely to lower any interpersonal barriers (Pounders et al., 2015). Prior research has found that the general perceptions of similarity to other customers are likely to enhance customers' interactive intentions (Choi & Mattila, 2016; Hwang, Han, & Hyun, 2016). Unlike social interactions between similar employees, dissimilar ones tend to experience higher levels of social exclusion and conflicts (Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999). Extending these findings to other aspects of similarity (e.g. clothing), the following hypothesis is concluded.

H6. Young customers' interactive intentions will be more positive when other unknown customers look similar to them rather than different.

2.6 Interaction effect between age and similarity in appearance to other customers

The social distance theory maintains that when the number of similarities between two people increases, the bond of attraction to each other becomes stronger (Klein & Kantor, 2018). Similarities are likely to encourage the formulation of service congruence (Jamal & Adelowore, 2008) and fit between the customer and the firm (Pounders et al., 2014). Papathanassis (2012) has found that homogeneity among cruise passengers in age, marital status, ethnicity, clothing and appropriate behaviour is likely to improve their experience. Prior research supports the positive influence of customers' perceptions of their similarity to other customers on their positive attitude to the service provider (Hanks et al., 2017; Hanks & Line, 2018) and patronage intentions (Brack & Benkenstein, 2014; Choi & Mattila, 2016).

H7. Young customers' attitudes to the resort will be more positive when other unknown customers are young and look similar to them rather than old and different.

H8. Young customers' patronage intentions will be more positive when other unknown customers are young and look similar to them rather than old and different.

The quality of social interaction is determined by the ratio of similarities and differences between any two people (Reisinger & Turner, 1998). The greater perceived similarity between residents and tourists in terms of age, race (Thyne et al., 2006) and religion (Klein & Kantor, 2018), the more accepting and tolerant the attitudes expressed by hosts to tourists. Elderly customers were found to prefer to interact with others whose appearance and age are close to theirs (Angell, Megicks, Memery, Heffernan, & Howell, 2012) (Meshram & O'Cass, 2018). Perceptions of similarity to other customers were found to be associated with intentions to interact with them (Brack & Benkenstein, 2012).

H9. Young customers' interactive intentions will be more positive when other unknown customers are young and look similar to them rather than old and different.

3 Research context

The experience of sunbathing/relaxing at a seaside resorts was the present research context because it is one of the most frequent leisure activity among young tourists (Carr, 1999; Mundet & Ribera, 2001) and a key travel motive for them (Prayag & Hosany, 2014). The beach experience is likely to interest people in the appearance of other customers (Hyun & Han, 2015). Egypt provides an appropriate context because it has cosmopolitan seaside resorts, which has received scant research attention (Shakeela & Weaver, 2018). Due to global and regional events (e.g. the Arab spring), Egypt has shown great interest in domestic tourism to try to compensate for the sharp decline in the flow of international tourists. However, heterogeneity among domestic or regional tourists is a key challenge due to the co-presence of secular and religious domestic tourists (Mekky, 2017). Many Egyptians are endorsing Western culture and trying to look luxurious and sexy (Al-Mutawa, 2013), while many others in contrast are wholly attached to their religion (Ghumman & Ryan, 2013).

4 Methods

From a post-positivist standpoint, in-depth-interviews were conducted to explore the research phenomena and guide the design of the subsequent experimental study.

4.1 Study 1: exploratory interviews

In line with prior tourism research on resorts (Carr, 1999), ten in-depth interviews were conducted with females (aged between 18 and 24 years), who had chosen either a burkini (five in-depth interviews) or a bikini swimsuit (five in-depth interviews) and had travelled to a coastal resort in the last six months. The interviewing process followed the principle of theoretical saturation (Draucker, Martsof, Ross, & Rusk, 2007) and was fully recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis was used to gain insights into the phenomena and aid in developing the written scenario of the experiment. The interview guide covered questions on interviewees' last travel experience and their motives for preferring certain swimsuits and then they answered questions about their perceptions and behaviours in response to the presence of unknown customers.

The interviews revealed that the reasons for preferring a specific type of swimsuit included complying with general social/cultural norms and trying to have or avoid extensive tanning. One's relative satisfaction with body image may turn one's burkini into a "hiding suit" that protects one's self-esteem from looking unhealthy on the beach. In contrast, bikinis enable females to compete to be the one with the most attractive body.

4.1.1 Intolerance to differences in appearance

Negative reactions to different swimsuits emerged from the interviews not only for out-groups (i.e. unknown customers) but also for in-groups (e.g. companions). A nineteen-year-old female indicated that her friends prefer to wear bikinis, though she does not. She thinks that the "burkini gives her personal assurance and a feeling of safety." For unknown customers, interviews consistently demonstrated that differences in swimsuits may cause stress and discomfort.

"It was uncomfortable to see everyone in their bikinis when I am the only one wearing a burkini. I felt like a black sheep ... I stayed at the corner of the pool for 15 minutes and then left." (24 years, burkini wearer)

The qualitative interviews revealed that negative glances are received from others who wear different swimsuits, due to jealousy.

"I prefer bikini but sometimes ... other females who wear a burkini may stare at me, especially if they are sitting beside their husbands, making me totally uncomfortable ... So I may decide not to swim, go to a different beach or wait till everyone else has gone"

(23 years, bikini wearer)

Similarity in swimsuits seems to be an important issue in determining beach/resort preferences. Other respondents seem tolerant of other customers who dress differently, but this was confined to the authenticity and attractiveness of their burkinis.

"I am okay with the burkini, but I am not okay with those who swim in their own clothes. There are many fashionable good-looking burkinis!" (21 years, bikini wearer)

"I dislike girls who wear swimsuits that look like burkinis" (22 years, bikini wearer).

Attractive appearance is an important aspect of indirect customer-to-customer interaction (Brocato et al., 2012), even when this acknowledges a difference. Similar incidents were reported by the press in Dubai when tourists became angry because of a female who was wearing a non-traditional burkini (i.e. one that did not fit the body) (Young, 2017).

4.1.2 Tolerance of the elderly

Most of the interviewees were consistent in claiming that they do not have a problem with elderly unknown people.

“My mother and grandmother are my friends. So I can relate to other ladies of their age. I can happily engage in a conversation with strangers, regardless of their age” (23 years, burkini wearer).

The greater tolerance of one's elders seems to be an integral part of the collectivistic nature of the Egyptian population (Buda & Elsayed-Elkhouly, 1998), where members of extended families may live together. This contrasts with the findings of prior studies that young customers always feel intolerant in the presence of the elderly (e.g. Thakor et al., 2008).

4.1.3 Other aspects of similarity

The interviews revealed that perceptions of similarity to unknown others on the beach may also extend beyond age and the type of swimsuit and incorporate other visible aspects, such as piercing as well as non-visible aspects (e.g. personality), which may act as social clues to determine whether they are compatible.

“On the beach, I talk to others who *look* and *talk* like me ... it is a personality thing ... piercing may stop me from interacting with someone I don't know because I hate it” (22 years, bikini wearer).

4.2 Study 2: experimental design

Most of tourism studies have adapted descriptive (e.g. Hwang & Han, 2017) or exploratory research (e.g. Papathanassis, 2012) approaches to examine customer-to-customer interactions. In this endeavour, causal research has been underused (e.g. Choi & Mattila, 2016; Levy, 2010). In the present paper, a scenario-based experimental design along with sketches was used to enable confounding factors to be controlled (Choi & Mattila, 2016). A factorial between-subject experimental design was adapted, involving 2 (burkini-wearing versus bikini-wearing respondents) x 2 (old versus young other unknown customers) x 2 (similar versus different appearance of other unknown customers). Consistent with prior research (e.g. Johnson & Grier, 2013), the focus was on extreme points on the continuum of heterogeneity (i.e. those who preferred burkini and bikini swimsuits), resulting in eight experimental conditions in total (see Table 1). Similarity in appearance was operationalised by comparing the respondent's preferred type of swimsuit with those featured in a given sketch (see Appendix no. 1). For instance, if the respondents' preference (e.g. a tankini) was different from those featured in the sketch (e.g. a bikini), they were discarded.

Table 1 Cross tabulation between age and similarity in appearance across Bikini-wearing and Burkini-wearing samples.

alt-text: Table 1 (Please replace this table with the attached one. Please note that Bikini-wearing sample (n= 91) is misplaced. To be consistent with Burkini-wearing sample (n = 98), it should be placed in a separate line/row (in the third row) just below the shaded/gray row containing "similar" and "different" labels, as depicted in the attached table.)

<i>Bikini-wearing sample</i> (n = 91)		Appearance of other customers		Total
		Similar	Different	
Age of other customers	Young	23	24	47
	Elderly	21	23	44
Total		44	47	91
<i>Burkini-wearing sample</i> (n = 98)				
Age of other customers	Young	25	25	50
	Elderly	24	24	48
Total		49	49	98

4.2.1 Setup

Consistent with previous research (Yan et al., 2011), four sketches, featuring a group of six women wearing swimsuits, were developed by a professional artist. The four sketches were meant to be identical in everything except the look of the face, body skin (i.e. meant to reflect age), and the type of swimsuit. The sketches were pretested among three different samples (50 respondents each) to ensure the success of the manipulation.

4.2.2 Participants

200 female students of a public university were recruited to participate in the experiment in exchange for partial course credits. As established in prior research (e.g. Cowart & Lehnert, 2018; Levy, 2010), the choice of a student sample is appropriate because the service experience was suitable for them and they were qualified on the basis of having a recent service experience (Delcourt, Gremler, De Zanet, & van Riel, 2017). Consistent with prior research (e.g. Pounders et al., 2014), only female subjects were considered in the experiment because females are more sensitive to social cues than males (Hwang & Han, 2017). The average age of the respondents was 20 years, who had spent around 3 h on a beach in a typical day at a coastal resort. Eleven out of the 200 respondents were discarded for either correctly guessing the purpose of the experiment (Thakor et al., 2008) or preferring to wear different swimsuits (e.g. a tankini) than those used in the experiment. To this end, 189 responses were found valid for the data analysis.

4.2.3 Experimental procedures

The subjects were randomly assigned to one of the four sketches. Next, they responded to general questions on their preferred swimsuit, satisfaction with their body image and their attitudes to the experience of sunbathing on the beach. Once the participants completed the first part of the survey, consistent with previous studies on inter-personal social contact (Husnu & Crisp, 2010), they were asked to read the following scenario while looking at one of the four sketches (see Appendix no. 1).

“Imagine you went with your family to a seaside resort. Upon arrival, you went to swim ALONE because your family was tired that day and you encountered other resort guests (featured in the sketch) sharing the same beach with you.”

Next, they responded to the realism and manipulation checks and finally to questions related to the dependent variables.

4.2.4 Control variables

Time spent on a beach, care for personal body image and attitude to the experience of sunbathing on the beach were all controlled. Consistent with prior research (Choi & Mattila, 2016), having companions during the encounter was also controlled in the scenario because the presence of companions usually makes people less conscious of other customers (Huang & Hsu, 2010).

4.2.5 Measurement

Multi-item reflective scales were used for the three endogenous constructs. The scale of attitude to a resort (three items) was adapted from Thakor et al. (2008). Patronage intentions (three items) were sourced from Yi (1990) and Day and Stafford (1997). Interactive intentions (five items) were adapted from Thakor et al. (2008) and Sweeney and Wyber (2002). Consistent with prior research, attitude to a resort and patronage intentions were measured on five-point semantic differential scales, with minimum = 1 and maximum = 5. The scale of interactive intentions was measured on five-point Likert-type scaled items, with anchors of 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. Further, the control variables were measured by single-item scales. In particular, care for personal body image and attitude to the experience of sunbathing were measured on five-point semantic differential scales, with anchors of 1 = not much and 5 = very much. The scale of time spent on a beach in a typical day was measured by a ratio scale.

4.2.6 Manipulation and realism checks

The average realism check was 4.1 out of 5. The manipulation checks were successful. Age estimations for the elderly/bikini condition ($M_{\text{age}} = 52.4$ years old, S.D. = 8.4) were found to be insignificantly (t value = 1.006, P value = 0.317) different from elderly/burkini condition ($M_{\text{age}} = 50$ years old, S.D. = 6.9), but it was significantly different from both the young/bikini condition ($M_{\text{age}} = 25.3$ years old, S.D. = 5.5) (t value = 18.151, P value = 0.000) and the young/burkini condition ($M_{\text{age}} = 24$ years old, S.D. = 5.3) (t value = 19.470, P value = 0.000). There were no significant differences (t value = 1.068, P value = 0.289) between the young/bikini and young/burkini conditions in the estimated age of the women featured in the sketches. The respondents successfully identified the type of swimsuit featured in the sketch.

5 Data analysis

In line with Lim et al. (2017), the similarities in the swimsuits between the respondents and the women in the sketch were used to reassign the total sample (189) to one of eight cells, as depicted in Table 1). The data analysis was independently conducted for the two data sets: bikini-wearing ($n = 91$) and burkini-wearing ($n = 98$) samples. In terms of the sample sufficiency, 15 subjects per cell is the ratio recommended to have a valid statistical analysis (McGuigan, 1993), which can be satisfied.

To ensure the equivalence between the two sub-samples, the multi-group analysis feature of Smart-PLS was used to simultaneously estimate the measurement models of the two sub-samples. The Smart-PLS is robust against

any deviations from the normality. As summarised in [Table 2](#), the confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated that the measurement items loaded on their respective factors, exceptions being a single item related to intentions to interact.

Table 2 Confirmatory factor loading.

alt-text: Table 2

		Bikini-wearing sample (n = 91)			Burkini-wearing sample (n = 98)		
		Loading	Composite Reliability	AVE	Loading	Composite Reliability	AVE
Attitude to the resort			0.87	0.69		0.93	0.83
Bad	good	0.75			0.90		
Unfavourable	favourable	0.82			0.93		
Negative	Positive	0.91			0.90		
Patronage intentions			0.94	0.84		0.92	0.79
Unlikely	likely	0.91			0.95		
Impossible	possible	0.93			0.81		
Definitely would not	definitely would	0.89			0.91		
Interactive intentions			0.90	0.70		0.87	0.64
I feel friendly to the other resort guests shown in the sketch		0.81			0.79		
I feel I could talk to the other resort guests shown in the sketch		0.64			0.80		
I feel comfortable with the presence of the other resort guests shown in the sketch		0.93			0.81		
I would feel relaxed to swim with the other resort guests shown in the sketch		0.92			0.77		
My experience would be enhanced by the other resort guests shown in the sketch			

Values of Cronbach alpha, composite reliability and AVE were all found above the recommended thresholds ([Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006](#)). The correlation between any two factors was found to be smaller than the square root of the AVE of these factors, supporting the discriminant validity ([Fornell & Larcker, 1981](#)) (see [Table 3](#)). Harman's one-factor test was conducted to assess the common method bias ([Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003](#)). The measurement items loaded on three factors, offering no support to the common method bias.

Table 3 The square root of the average variance extracted and the correlation matrix.

alt-text: Table 3

	Bikini-wearing sample (n = 91)			Burkini-wearing sample (n = 98)		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Interactive intentions	0.83			0.80		
Patronage intentions	0.45**	0.96		0.36**	0.88	
Attitude to the resort	0.41**	0.37**	0.95	0.17	0.50**	0.91

Notes: ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$, the diagonal represents the sq. root of AVE.

The homogeneity assumption for the two data sets was satisfied by having insignificant scores for both the Box' M and Levene's tests. The MANCOVA results indicated that the control variables were found insignificant. The

independent sample *t*-test showed insignificant differences between the mean values of the control variables across the two sub-samples. To maintain model parsimony, the control variables were dropped from the final analysis.

As depicted in Table 4, the multivariate analysis indicates that customers' perceptions of the age of other unknown customers have significant effects on dependent variables in the burkini-wearing sample (Wilk's Lambda = 0.912, *F* value = 2.966, *P* value = 0.036, $\eta^2 = 0.088$), but not the bikini-wearing sample (Wilk's Lambda = 0.964, *F* value = 1.044, *P* value = 0.377, $\eta^2 = 0.036$).

Table 4 Summary of multivariate analysis of variance results.

alt-text: Table 4 (Please replace with the attached table. Kindly make sure that "age x similarity" are on the same line (was not in the PDF file). Also, the numbers are aligned under their respective headers (see for example Wilk's Lambda is not well-aligned here))

Effect	Wilk's Lambda	df ₁	df ₂	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Bikini-wearing sample (n = 91)						
Age	0.964	3	87	1.044	0.377	0.036
Similarity	0.909	3	87	2.853	0.042*	0.091
Age x similarity	0.906	3	87	2.953	0.037*	0.094
Burkini-wearing sample (n = 98)						
Age	0.912	3	94	2.966	0.036*	0.088
Similarity	0.917	3	94	2.790	0.045*	0.083
Age x similarity	0.994	3	94	0.170	0.917	0.006

Notes: **p* ≤ 0.01 (one-sided), **p* ≤ 0.05 (one-sided).

In the burkini-wearing sample, tests of between-subjects effects at univariate level (see Table 5) confirmed the significant effect of age of other unknown customers on young customers' attitudes to the resort ($M_{\text{young/burkini/attitude}} = 3.6$, $M_{\text{old/burkini/attitude}} = 3.0$, *F* value = 7.688, *P* value = 0.007, $\eta^2 = 0.076$) and interactive ($M_{\text{young/burkini/interactive}} = 3.4$, $M_{\text{old/burkini/interactive}} = 3.1$, *F* value = 4.108, *P* value = 0.046, $\eta^2 = 0.042$), but not their intentions to patronise the resort ($M_{\text{young/burkini/patronage}} = 3.9$, $M_{\text{old/burkini/patronage}} = 3.6$, *F* value = 0.023, *P* value = 0.221, $\eta^2 = 0.016$).

Table 5 Summary of Analysis of Variance Results.

alt-text: Table 5 (Kindly replace this table with the attached one. Please note that tables 4 and 5 are presenting results for two data sets. So, the same indicators are repeated for bikini-wearing and burkini-wearing samples.)

Sources	df	Bikini-wearing sample (n = 91)								
		Attitude to the resort			Patronage intentions			Interactive intentions		
		<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Age	1	2.563	0.113	0.029	0.937	0.336	0.011	0.046	0.831	0.001
Similarity	1	1.030	0.313	0.012	7.278	0.008**	0.077	4.725	0.032*	0.052
Age x similarity	1	5.183	0.025*	0.056	4.253	0.042*	0.047	4.208	0.043*	0.046
Error	87									
Age	1	7.688	0.007**	0.076	0.023	0.221	0.016	4.108	0.046*	0.042
Similarity	1	3.121	0.081	0.032	0.676	0.413	0.007	7.531	0.007**	0.074
Age x similarity	1	0.026	0.872	0.000	0.245	0.622	0.003	0.023	0.879	0.000

Notes: ** $p \leq 0.01$ (one-sided), * $p \leq 0.05$ (one-sided).

In the bikini-wearing sample, tests of between-subjects at univariate level (see [Table 5](#)) did not support the influence of customers' perceptions of the age of other unknown customers on their attitude to the resort ($M_{\text{young/bikini/attitude}} = 3.3$, $M_{\text{old/bikini/attitude}} = 3.0$, $F \text{ value} = 2.563$, $P \text{ value} = 0.113$, $\eta^2 = 0.029$), patronage ($M_{\text{young/bikini/patronage}} = 3.5$, $M_{\text{old/bikini/patronage}} = 3.3$, $F \text{ value} = 0.937$, $P \text{ value} = 0.336$, $\eta^2 = 0.011$) and interactive ($M_{\text{young/bikini/interactive}} = 2.8$, $M_{\text{old/bikini/interactive}} = 2.8$, $F \text{ value} = 0.046$, $P \text{ value} = 0.831$, $\eta^2 = 0.001$) intentions. These results lend partial support to [H1](#) and [H3](#) but provide no support to [H2](#).

The significant main effects of similarity in appearance with other customers on dependent variables were demonstrated for both the burkini-wearing (Wilk's Lambda = 0.917, $F \text{ value} = 2.790$, $P \text{ value} = 0.045$, $\eta^2 = 0.083$) and bikini-wearing (Wilk's Lambda = 0.909, $F \text{ value} = 2.853$, $P \text{ value} = 0.042$, $\eta^2 = 0.091$) samples at the multivariate level (see [Table 4](#)). In the case of the bikini-wearing sample, the univariate analysis (see [Table 5](#)) showed the influence of one's perception of similarity in appearance with other customers on young customers' patronage ($M_{\text{similar/burkini/patronage}} = 3.7$, $M_{\text{different/burkini/patronage}} = 3.1$, $F \text{ value} = 7.278$, $P \text{ value} = 0.008$, $\eta^2 = 0.077$) and interactive ($M_{\text{similar/bikini/interactive}} = 3$, $M_{\text{different/bikini/interactive}} = 2.5$, $F \text{ value} = 4.725$, $P \text{ value} = 0.032$, $\eta^2 = 0.052$) intentions, but not on their attitude to the resort ($M_{\text{similar/bikini/attitude}} = 3.3$, $M_{\text{different/bikini/attitude}} = 3.1$, $F \text{ value} = 1.030$, $P \text{ value} = 0.313$, $\eta^2 = 0.012$).

For the burkini-wearing sample, young customers' perception of similarity in appearance with other customers was found to affect young customers' interactive intentions ($M_{\text{similar/burkini/interactive}} = 3.5$, $M_{\text{different/burkini/interactive}} = 3$, $F \text{ value} = 7.531$, $P \text{ value} = 0.007$, $\eta^2 = 0.074$), but not their attitude to the resort ($M_{\text{similar/burkini/attitude}} = 3.5$, $M_{\text{different/burkini/attitude}} = 3.2$, $F \text{ value} = 3.121$, $P \text{ value} = 0.081$, $\eta^2 = 0.032$) or their patronage intentions ($M_{\text{similar/burkini/patronage}} = 3.8$, $M_{\text{different/burkini/patronage}} = 3.7$, $F \text{ value} = 0.676$, $P \text{ value} = 0.413$, $\eta^2 = 0.007$) (see [Table 5](#)). Consequently, [H4](#) was not supported, but [H5](#) was partially supported. In contrast, [H6](#) was fully supported.

[Table 4](#) demonstrates the significant main effect of the interaction between customers' perceptions of the age other customers and their similarity of appearance on the dependent variables at multivariate level (see [Table 4](#)) for the bikini-wearing sample (Wilk's Lambda = 0.906, $F \text{ value} = 2.953$, $P \text{ value} = 0.037$, $\eta^2 = 0.094$), but not the burkini-wearing sample (Wilk's Lambda = 0.994, $F \text{ value} = 0.170$, $P \text{ value} = 0.917$, $\eta^2 = 0.06$). At the univariate level, [Table 5](#) shows that the interaction effect between age and similarity in appearance to other customers was demonstrated for the three dependent outcomes for the bikini-wearing condition but not the burkini-wearing condition. These results provide partial support for [H7](#), [H8](#) and [H9](#). A summary of the results of hypothesis testing is reported in [Table 6](#).

Table 6 Testing hypotheses across the Bikini-wearing and Burkini-wearing samples.

alt-text: Table 6 (In the proof reading PDF file, Table number 6 is not well-aligned. Kindly try to make each hypothesis on a single line. Please reconsider in the final version. If possible, could you kindly relocate this table before the discussion part as here (not like the PDF).)

Hypotheses testing	Bikini-wearing sample	Burkini-wearing sample	Conclusion
H1: Young customers' attitudes to a resort will be more positive when other unknown customers are young rather than old.	-	✓	Partial Support
H2: Young customers' patronage intentions will be more positive when other unknown customers are young rather than old.		-	No support
H3: Young customers' interactive intentions will be more positive when other unknown customers are young rather than old.	-	✓	Partial support
H4: Young customers' attitudes to a resort will be more positive when other unknown customers look similar rather than different.	-	-	No support
H5: Young customers' patronage intentions will be more positive when other unknown customers look similar rather than different.	✓	-	Partial support
H6: Young customers' interactive intentions will be more positive when other unknown customers look similar rather than different.	✓	✓	Full support
H7: Young customers' attitudes to a resort will be more positive when other unknown customers are young and look similar to them rather than old and look different.	✓	-	Partial support
H8: Young customers' patronage intentions will be more positive when other unknown customers are young and look similar to them rather than old and look different.	✓	-	Partial support
H9: Young customers' interactive intentions will be more positive when other unknown customers are young and look similar to them rather than old and look different.	✓	-	Partial support

Notes: The “√” symbol indicates support for a given hypothesis, while the “-” symbol refers to a lack of support to a given hypothesis.

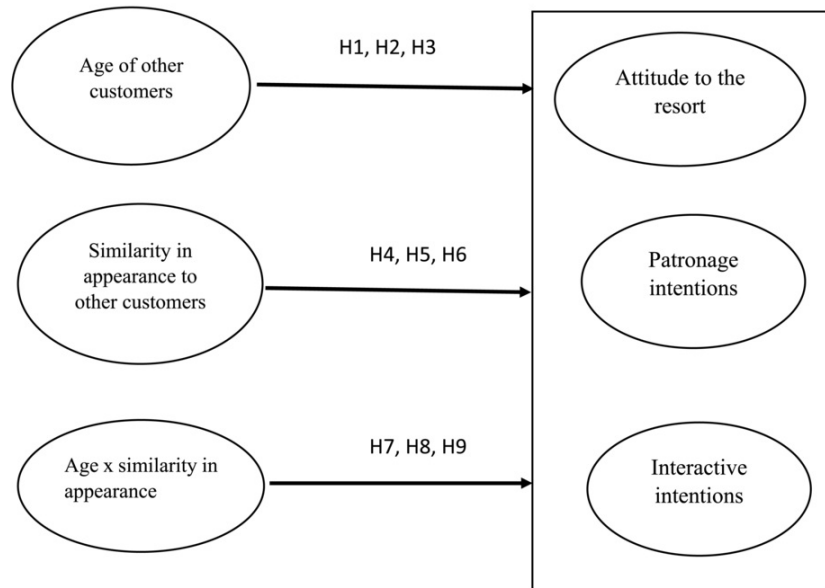
6 Discussion

The aim of this paper has been to examine heterogeneity among resort guests by studying the influence of and interaction between two observable characteristics (i.e. age and similarity in appearance) in other unknown customers, on one's attitude to the resort and intentions to patronise and to interact with other unknown customers from a dual perspective based on one's preference in swimsuits (i.e. burkini versus bikini). (see Fig. 1).

6.1 Bikini-wearing customers

The research findings demonstrated that young customers who wear a bikini, would not visit a resort dominated by other females who wore a different type of swimsuit (i.e. burkini) nor interact with these females. These results hold true only when other unknown guests are young rather than old, demonstrating the interaction effect between the similarity in appearance and age of other customers, as illustrated in Figs. 2-4. They reflect both formal (i.e. public expression of refusal) and interpersonal (i.e. with less eye contact and briefer interaction) discrimination against dissimilar others (e.g. those who wear a burkini swimsuit) (Ghumman & Ryan, 2013; King, Shapiro, Hebl, Singletary, & Turner, 2006). These discriminatory acts may stem spontaneously from pre-existing stereotypes or negative stigmas associated with out-groups (Ang, Liou, & Wei, 2018; Deros, Buijsrogge, Roulin, & Duyck, 2016; Ghumman & Ryan, 2013; King et al., 2006). (Please relocate figure 1 before section 2.4.)

Conceptual Framework



Covariates: time spent on beach, attitude to the experience of sunbathing on the beach, and care for the personal body image

Fig. 1 Conceptual framework.

alt-text: Fig. 1

Attitude to the Resort

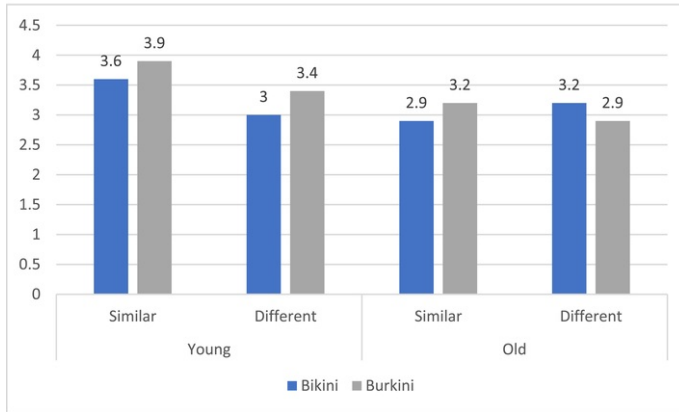


Fig. 2 Attitude to the resort.

alt-text: Fig. 2

Patronage Intentions

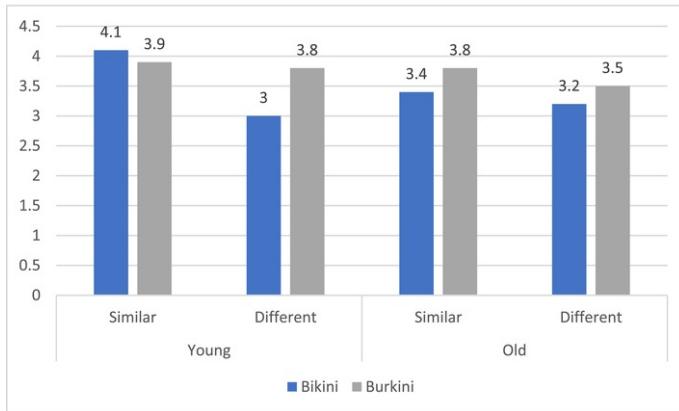


Fig. 3 Patronage intentions.

alt-text: Fig. 3

Interactive Intentions

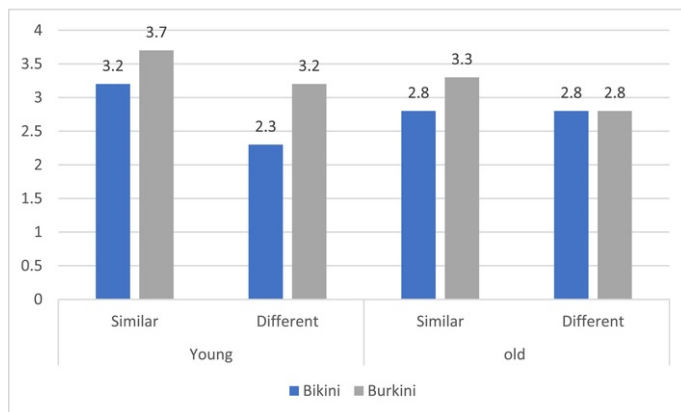


Fig. 4 Interactive intentions.

alt-text: Fig. 4

People may express their prejudice against others when they can find valid justifications (King et al., 2016). The qualitative findings showed that some females who wear a bikini may refuse other unknown guests who wear a burkini because, in their view, it does not always look good, authentic or attractive. Resort guests who wear a bikini may also face negative glances from other (married) females who wear a burkini, especially when the latter are in the company of their husbands. They justify these negative glances by jealousy (i.e. they are a source of threat to their relationships), resulting in their tendency to avoid such places. There may possibly be other justifications for social disapproval from dissimilar others which is not publicly expressed or reported because of the global and social norms regarding the acceptance of different others (Ghumman & Ryan, 2013; King et al., 2006). Future research may explore other justifications (e.g. sources of threat, hygiene factors) used by physically dissimilar customers in expressing their refusal to encounter one another.

To offset invalid justification that gives support to the disapproval of dissimilar others, people who hold a prejudice against dissimilar others should make an effort to accept new information which conflicts with their existing, spontaneous and unthinking pre-judgements (e.g. that Islamists are not friendly) (Ghumman & Ryan, 2013; Grandey, Houston, & Avery, 2019). If the personal interaction (i.e. interpersonal discrimination) with dissimilar others is brief or missing, it may not be possible (King et al., 2006). This is a key challenge for tour leaders and hotel management to overcome the personal obstacles, prejudice and stereotyping among heterogeneous customers.

Bikini wearers feel indifferent to the presence of the elderly whatever type of swimsuit the latter are wearing. These results may be explained by the social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), which states that young females like to show off their beauty to achieve dominance over their eligible rivals. This may indicate the importance of age in determining their sensitivity to differences in appearance.

6.2 Burkini-wearing customers

The attitude to the resort and their intentions to patronise among burkini-wearing customers seem unaffected by similarity in clothing (i.e. swimsuits) to other unknown customers (see Figs. 2 and 3) Figs. 2 and 4). Unlike bikini-wearing females, burkini-wearing females do not avoid places that host others who wear differently (i.e. a bikini swimsuit). Possibly, the ongoing Westernisation of Egyptian society has resulted in the increased adoption of bikinis in many seaside resorts in Egypt, to the point where they have become unavoidable. In addition, when they form their attitudes to the resort, young female customers who prefer the burkini are influenced by the age of other unknown customers. Consistent with prior research (Thakor et al., 2008), they tend to have favourable attitudes towards the resort when it hosts young rather than old customers (see Fig. 2). These results demonstrate the different roles played by various aspects of observable characteristics (e.g. age) in other unknown customers in the formation of one's reactions toward them.

Although burkini-wearing females would visit resorts that host different looking females in terms of age or physical appearance (i.e. in the type of swimsuit chosen), they may choose to avoid interacting with them (i.e. interpersonal discrimination). These findings mirror Din's conclusions (1989: 554) that conflicts between secular demands and Islam may not surface but remain at the perceptual level. According to Crandall and Eshleman (2003), people who hold negative stereotypes against an out-group, may not explicitly disclose their rejection of others (i.e. overt discrimination) due to modern international norms. However, deep within they may not feel comfortable in the presence of others belonging to their out-group (Ghumman & Ryan, 2013; King et al., 2006).

Consistent with the social distance theory (Thyne et al., 2006), young burkini-wearing ones are willing to interact with other unknown females who are also young and wear similar type of swimsuit (i.e. burkini) (see Fig. 3 Fig. 4).

In terms of the magnitude of effects when they consider interacting with other unknown customers, they seem more influenced by the similarity in appearance ($\eta^2 = 0.074$) than the age of these unknown customers ($\eta^2 = 0.042$). Possibly, they may identify with others who share their religion more than with those who belong to the same age group. The current findings contrast with those of [Brack and Benkenstein \(2012\)](#) that age is an overriding aspect of one's perceptions of similarity with other customers. Future research may examine confounding factors that make certain aspects of similarity (e.g. age, body shape, social status, religion) more influential in customer-to-customer interactions.

7 Theoretical implications

This paper contributes to the tourism literature in several ways: First, it extends the research findings on physical appearance (e.g. age) in both interactions between residents and tourists ([Thyne et al., 2006](#)), between customers and service employees (e.g. [Jung & Yoon, 2011](#)) to customer-to-customer interactions. Second, it contributes to the halal marketing literature by examining intolerance issues in hosting heterogeneous customers from a dual perspective, which has so far been ignored by halal marketing scholars. Third, instead of taking an aggregate measure of multiple aspects of physical appearance (e.g. [Line & Hanks, 2018](#)), it extends the previous work in this area by examining the relative contribution and interaction of two important aspects of appearance (e.g. clothing and age). Fourth, the growing body of literature on seaside resorts acknowledges the importance of social life (e.g. night clubs, bars) to young domestic ([Carr, 1999](#)) and international ([Carr, 2002](#)) tourists. However, it has not yet paid enough attention to customer-to-customer interactions. Fifth, it tackles an important controversial issue in tourism management (e.g. the enforced bans on the burkini) which has been ignored by tourism scholars, given the growing trend of seaside resorts in the Middle East that allow bikinis on their beaches (e.g. Saudi Arabia) (e.g. [Sanchez, 2017](#)). Sixth, it extends the findings of [Nyaupane et al. \(2015\)](#) on the social distance between religion and secular tourists from heritage attractions to resorts. Seventh, it extends the scholarly work on the implications of interpersonal discrimination from the standpoint of sociology (e.g. [King et al., 2006](#)), services ([Johnson & Grier, 2013](#); [Thakor et al., 2008](#)), human resources ([Ghumman & Ryan, 2013](#); [Hebl, Foster, Mannix, & Dovidio, 2002](#)), and organizational behaviour ([Grandey et al., 2019](#)) for tourism management.

8 Managerial implications

Halal tourism managers should be aware of the compatibility of not only their products/services with Islamic principles ([El-Gohary, 2016](#)) but also with their customer mix ([Martin & Pranter, 1989](#)). Heterogeneity in appearance may stop some customers (bikini-wearing customers), but not others (burkini-wearing customers), from attending the destination. These findings may guide the allocation of specific spaces or days for females who prefer different swimsuits, especially when a given customer segment is substantial enough to justify the business. The lack of transparency in dress code policies may help many resorts or hotels to appeal to different segments of customers. However, the immediate sales revenues that are generated should be weighed against the long-term financial damage that may occur from conflict incidents between heterogeneous customers ([Osborne, 2016](#)).

Many of the reported incidents over the social media or press implicitly indicate the lack of clarity about the dress code policies in many seaside resorts or hotels, especially regarding burkini swimsuits. The in-depth interviews revealed that not all female customers who prefer a bikini are intolerant to the presence of others who wear a burkini when it is authentic or attractive. Unlike bikinis, burkinis seem to have quite vague specifications. Hotels and resorts can set specifications for the burkinis that are accepted on their beaches. In addition, female resort guests with bikini swimsuits seem to be more sensitive to the similarity in appearance only when other [unknown](#) customers are close in age to theirs. In view of this, resorts may relax their swimsuit restrictions for elderly guests.

Consistently across the two samples, heterogeneity will motivate customers to maintain social distance. When dissimilar tourists are expected to participate in joint activities (e.g. river rafting), the managerial concern may shift to their physical appearance. Resort managers may provide their customers with life vests or tee shirts in a similar colour to help reduce the perceptions of heterogeneity and encourage favourable interactions. At present, tour operators and hotel managers lack clear guidance (e.g. they do not know when to intervene) and training (e.g. they do not know how to identify forms of interpersonal discrimination) and hence cannot effectively manage social interactions between heterogeneous customers. Tourism policy makers may perhaps consider undertaking awareness campaigns that counter any hate or invalid justifications of social disapproval for dissimilar others between hosts and tourists as well as among heterogeneous tourists.

[Grandey et al. \(2019\)](#) have showed how positive emotional expressions (e.g. intense and frequent emotional expressions) by racially incongruent front-line employees have improved the performance evaluation ratings of them from their customers and supervisors. Resort [and hotel](#) managers might like to consider design the service environment (e.g. with music, visual decoration and aromas) in a way that supports a relaxing and emotionally positive service atmosphere to enhance the development of emotional contagion among heterogeneous customers. They can also use signs that encourage the acceptance of others (e.g. "Everyone is welcome") and appropriate behaviour (e.g. saying 'Hi and smiling to our visitors and employees) ([Thakor et al., 2008](#)). Future research can test the effectiveness of these strategies in reducing tensions and intolerance and encouraging compatible customer-to-customer interactions.

9 Limitations and directions for future research

The written scenarios were developed and tested in a single context. Future research can extend these findings to other contexts (e.g. tourist-to-host interactions). Using only female and student respondents sets limitations on the generalisability of the present findings. Future research could extend the present findings to cross-gender social interactions. Although the laboratory research setting improved the internal validity and overcame the tendency to

hide discriminatory reactions to dissimilar others, future research may adapt field experiments to lend external validity to the current findings. Only two aspects (i.e. the age and clothing) of indirect customer-to-customer interactions were examined. There are still many, under-researched aspects such as social class ([Dion & Borraz, 2017](#)), sexual orientation ([Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007](#)), physical disability ([Hebl et al., 2002, 2007](#)), body image and ethnicity, which require attention from future research.

Statement of conflicts of interest

None.

Author contribution

The manuscript is single authored.

Appendix no. 1. Sketches.

Bad	good	3.34	1.01	-0.339	-0.313	3.43	1.27	-0.604	-0.535	3.39	1.15	-0.495	-0.414
Unfavourable	favourable	3.09	1.13	-0.105	-0.566	3.33	1.21	-0.467	-0.604	3.22	1.18	-0.284	-0.665
Negative	Positive	3.26	1.04	0.111	-0.288	3.41	1.18	-0.525	-0.335	3.34	1.11	-0.250	-0.394
Patronage intentions¹													
Unlikely	likely	3.42	1.27	-0.462	-0.733	3.78	1.21	-0.925	0.063	3.61	1.25	-0.680	-0.460
Impossible	possible	3.56	1.20	-0.731	-0.184	3.82	1.16	-0.886	0.066	3.69	1.18	-0.797	-0.105
Definitely would not	definitely would	3.43	1.14	-0.391	-0.533	3.76	1.19	-0.803	-0.085	3.60	1.17	-0.579	-0.423
Interactive intentions²													
I feel friendly to the other resort guests shown in the sketch		2.92	1.26	-0.188	-1.067	3.43	1.15	-0.315	-0.799	3.19	1.23	-0.283	-0.885
I feel I could talk to the other resort guests shown in the sketch		2.83	1.22	-0.050	-0.989	3.23	1.16	-0.313	-0.704	3.04	1.20	-0.192	-0.888
I feel comfortable with the presence of the other resort guests shown in the sketch		2.85	1.33	-0.074	-1.183	3.33	1.18	-0.229	-0.783	3.10	1.27	-0.200	0.963
I would feel relaxed to swim with the other resort guests shown in the sketch		2.78	1.30	0.083	-1.066	3.16	1.22	-0.044	-0.822	2.97	1.27	-0.007	-0.948
My experience would be enhanced by the other resort guests shown in the sketch		2.56	1.14	0.029	-1.112	2.84	1.15	0.058	-0.566	2.70	1.15	0.045	-0.802
Covariates													
How much time do you spend on the beach in a typical day?...hours/day ³		2.68	1.24	0.491	-0.377	2.75	1.66	1.691	4.088	2.719	1.47	1.40	3.353
Do you generally enjoy the experience of sunbathing on the beach ⁴		3.84	1.06	-1.724	2.695	3.79	1.16	-1.502	1.542	3.820	1.11	-1.591	1.958
How much do you care about your personal body image? ⁴		3.31	0.71	-0.366	-0.664	3.22	0.89	0.074	-0.906	3.269	0.80	-1.06	-0.780

Notes: SD = standard deviation.

¹ Measured on five-point semantic differential scales, with minimum = 1 and maximum = 5.

² Measured on five-point Likert-type scaled items, with anchors of 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

³ Measured by a ratio scale.

⁴ Measured on five-point semantic differential scales, with anchors of 1 = not much and 5 = very much.

Appendix B. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2019.05.010>.

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Appendix B. Supplementary data

The following is the Supplementary data to this article:

[Multimedia Component 1](#)

Multimedia component 1

alt-text: Multimedia component 1

Highlights

- Immediate benefits of attracting heterogeneous customers should be outweighed against other unforeseen costs.
 - Reactions to dissimilar customers need to be examined from a dual-perspective.
 - Resort guests may have their own justifications to suppress or express their prejudice against dissimilar others.
 - Reactions to dissimilar customers may vary from avoid visiting a resort to maintaining social distance.
 - Observable characteristics in other unknown customers do not operate in isolation, but they interact with one another.
-

Queries and Answers

Query: Please confirm that the provided email “mohamedsobhy@foc.cu.edu.eg” is the correct address for official communication, else provide an alternate e-mail address to replace the existing one, because private e-mail addresses should not be used in articles as the address for communication.

Answer: Yes, this is my official email at Cairo University

Query: Ref(s). Alserhan et al., 2017; Johnson and Grier, 2012; King et al., 2016; Pounders et al., 2014; Torres et al., 2015; Hyne & Han, 2012 are cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please provide them in the reference list or delete these citations from the text.

Answer: They are actually provided in the reference list (1)

Alserhan B.A., Wood B.P., Rutter R., Halkias D., Terzi H. and Al Serhan O., The transparency of Islamic hotels: “Nice Islam” and the “self-orientalizing” of Muslims?, *International Journal of Tourism Research* 20, 2018, 475–487. (2) Johnson G.D. and Grier S.A., Understanding the influence of cross-cultural consumer-to-consumer interaction on consumer service satisfaction, *Journal of Business Research* 66 (3), 2013, 306–313. (3) King E.B., Shapiro J.R., Hebl M.R., Singletary S.L. and Turner S., The stigma of obesity in customer service: A mechanism for remediation and bottom-line consequences of interpersonal discrimination, *Journal of Applied Psychology* 91 (3), 2006, 579–593. (4) Pounders K., Babin B. and Close A., All the same to me: Outcomes of aesthetic labor performed by frontline service providers, *Academy of Marketing Science* 15 (6), 2015, 670–693. (5) Torres E.N., The influence of others on the vacation experience: An ethnographic study of psychographics, decision making, and group dynamics among young travelers, *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management* 24 (8), 2015, 826–856. (6) Hyun S.S. and Han H., Luxury cruise travelers: Other customer perceptions, *Journal of Travel Research* 54 (1), 2015, 107–121.

Query: The citations “Choi and Mattila, 2015; Fornell and Larcker et al., 1981; Jung et al., 2011” have been changed to match the author name in the reference list. Please check here and in subsequent occurrences, and correct if necessary.

Answer: Please note that Choi and Mattila (2016) not 2015. All references checked for consistency. Also, Jung et al. (2011) should be changed to Jung and Yoon (2011)

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