
Cultural Values and Behaviour in a Destination Country: An Integrative Approach

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Abstract

Experiencing cultural values and behaviour at a destination may be a transformative experience for tourists, and thus a type of experience that tourist authorities want to market. However, highlighting national values and behaviour in a tourism context may also be controversial, as some aspects of culture may be politically charged. Even when scholarly studies exist, it may require careful consideration by the tourist authorities to decide what to communicate to tourists about values and behaviour. Therefore, an integrative approach to the typical ethnographic study methods is put forward in this study. Here statistical data are utilized as input for a qualitative analysis. Only statistics representing at least 50% of the population's values and behaviour are included in the qualitative analysis. This integrative method is applied to an analysis of Danish culture. This method may yield findings that are considered more valid, more credible, and more reliable than traditional ethnographic studies.

Key Words *Danish culture, quantitative analysis, values, behaviour, transformative experiences*

Track *Fourth Track*

Focus of Paper *Practical/applied*

Kind of submission: *Paper*

Entrant for PhD student competition *No*

Introduction

For many tourists experiencing the culture of another country is a big part of the travel experience. A cultural experience, as culture itself, has many elements—values, behaviour, artefacts, food, and language (Reisinger and Turner, 2003, pp. 4-11). Traditionally, tourist authorities focus on presenting information on artefacts, food, and language. However, if they applied the same facts and details to cultural values and behaviour, as they do to locations and opening hours of museums, one can argue that tourist authorities could better facilitate that tourists experience what can be termed the destination's difficult-to-see culture (cf. the metaphor of the cultural iceberg by Hall (1997)). In this vein, one can speak of difficult-to-see cultural experiences. In this paper a difficult-to-see cultural experience is tentatively defined as an encounter where the tourist is exposed to typical cultural values and/or behaviour at a destination.

In experience economic theory, transformative experiences have high economic value (Pine and Gilmore, 2011, pp. 244-245), and one can argue that difficult-to-see cultural experiences are transformative. One characteristic of a transformative experience is that a guide of some sort (human; written; digital) is needed. If tourist authorities give an introduction to a country's cultural values and behaviour, tourists will have the chance to experience many of the difficult-to-see parts of a country's culture, because they would know what to look

for. Then, just by walking in the street or sitting in a café, tourists can experience culture. Culture will then not just be something to be seen in a museum, but something to be observed and maybe even experienced by tourists, even when the stay is short.

However, the difficult-to-see part of culture may also be controversial and not well documented. Even when scholarly studies exist, it takes careful consideration by the tourist authorities on what to communicate to tourists about the difficult-to-see part of culture, often leading tourist authorities to leave very direct messages on typical cultural values and behaviour out of their mass-communication, notably in Western European destinations (Author's observation, 2015-2016).

The issues at hand when hesitating to use academic research on typical cultural values and behaviour may relate to both philosophy of science, methodology, and data collection. While the scientific community utilize a number of scientific methods, many stakeholders in the public may question science that is qualitative (Johns and Lee-Ross, 1998, p. 16).

Ethnography is often understood as the qualitative method of studying culture, with a focus on participation-observation and other qualitative methods. Such methods and the results they generate, while credible and reliable, may be perceived as unrepresentative and, therefore, controversial by some stakeholders, if used to communicate cultural values and behaviour by tourist authorities in mass-communication channels. While all research can be questioned by both experts and the public at large, in this particular case, such questioning would be counterproductive to the purpose. Therefore, an integrative approach to the typical ethnographic research methods is put forward in this study. Integrative research combines quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. In this descriptive research study, statistical data is utilized as input for a qualitative analysis. The purpose for utilizing this approach is twofold: it is pragmatic in outlook and very attractive from a practitioner point of view (Johns and Lee-Ross, 1998, p. 141). Here a miniscule pilot-study utilizing this approach is carried out to test if relevant messages towards difficult-to-see cultural experiences can materialize from using statistical data as criteria for inclusion in an otherwise qualitative analysis.

RQ

This study aims at identifying the cultural values and behaviour in a destination country. Denmark has non-randomly been selected as the destination country. In one way or another, the Danish population has to be asked about *their* cultural values and behaviour. This also means that what are studied are collective variables. With this understanding, the following research question can be formulated:

RQ: What is the typical culture of a country destination, with respect to values and behaviour, as determined by the destination country's population, in the beginning of the 21st century?

The term 'typical' is used in a quantitative sense. Here 'typical' is defined as '50% or more' of the population. The population of Denmark must in one way or another give answers to one or more questions that can be categorized in relative terms. The answers that represent 50% or more of the population will be defined as typical in this study.

Methodology

When utilizing statistical data one has to be critical of the sources in order to secure validity and reliability (Johns and Lee-Ross, 1998, p. 73). In qualitative studies, a distinction between qualitative validity (general validity) and statistical validity (number of respondents) is often made. In this study, in a first methodological stage of the research process, the statistical validity and reliability refer to the statistics used as input. The statistical input data must in one way or the other have response categories where one of the categories constitutes at least 50% of respondents. Data must have been published in the period 1995-2015 in order to represent the period in the RQ. The population sample must be representative of the Danish population, which raises the statistical validity of the data compared to phenomenological research methods. The method used for data gathering must be documented and live up to well-established data gathering criteria, for instance, with respect to response rates, as this affects reliability. With high validity and high reliability, higher credibility is

also secured, which is a key issue in all qualitative research. Critical qualitative-methodological issues with respect to credibility and reliability should also be addressed in the final study, as in any study.

A synthesis of the statistical data is made, using a taxonomy devised by Vejlgard (2016) to organize the data. This taxonomy has four cultural categories in all: Values, behaviour, material elements, and language. Here only the first two categories are used. The taxonomy utilized in this paper can be seen in Figure 1. Not all level-3 sub-categories from the original source are utilized; if a sub-category that is in the original source is not used, it has been left out of Figure 1. The statistical input data must contain data pertaining to one or more of the variables in the taxonomy. Finally, data should preferably refer to something that is unique to Denmark.

Figure 1. A taxonomy of cultural values and behaviour (based on Vejlgard, 2016).

1. Cultural Values

- 2. Thoughts
 - 3. Beliefs
 - 3. Ideology
 - 3. Morals
 - 3. Philosophy
- 2. Feelings
 - 3. Social feelings
 - 3. Personal feelings
 - 3. National feelings
 - 3. Tolerance
- 2. Knowledge
 - 3. Dates

1. Cultural Behaviour

- 2. Lifestyle
- 2. Norms
- 2. Rules
 - 3. Law
- 2. Habits
- 2. Customs
- 2. Traditions

Findings

Cultural Values

Knowledge: Here knowledge is defined as active (un-aided) knowledge. 80% of Danes know that the Second World War began in 1939. 91% know that Germany began its occupation of Denmark on April 9, 1940 (Gallup 2013a). 59% have knowledge of one or more elements in the Danish Constitution (Gallup, 1998).

Beliefs: 85% of Danes belong to the Protestant Church of Denmark (Kirkestatistik, 2009). However, only 64% of the population believe in God. 64% of the population do *not* believe in life after death; 81% does *not* believe in Paradise; 91% do *not* believe in Hell (Andersen & L uchau, 2011, p. 81). 65% of Danes think religious ceremonies are important with respect to birth; 63% think they are important with respect to marriage, and 80% with respect to death (Andersen & L uchau, 2004, p. 256). A majority of Danes agree with the statement, ‘There is not one religion, but all the great world religions contain some basic truth (no precise percentage was given) (Halman et al., 2012, p. 61).

Ideology: 69% of Danes think ‘Freedom is more important than equality’ (Juul, 2004, p. 155). A 74% score on the Hofstede Individualism dimension means that Denmark is an individualist culture (Hofstede, 2010; www.geert-hofstede.com). 83% of Danes support the monarchy (Berlingske Tidende, 2013).

Morals: With respect to these social issues, Danes’ acceptance rate of divorce is 7.3 on a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being the most accepting), their acceptance rate of homosexuality is 6.8, and of abortion also 6.8 (Gundelach,

2004, p. 272). To varying degrees 62% are ok with the talk of sex that takes place in the public domain (Gallup, 2013b).

With respect to how foreigners should be treated, Denmark ranks no. 28 out of 32 European countries, meaning that Danes are among the least xenophobic (Nielsen, 2004, p. 305). 87% of parents say that it is important to raise children to be tolerant (Schultz-Jørgensen & Skovgaard Christensen, 2011, p. 47).

Feelings: Social feelings: 76% of Danes have social trust, that is, trust in other people. 62% have trust in institutions (Sørensen et al, 2011, p. 253).

Personal feelings: Denmark has been ranked as the happiest nation on Earth in the World Happiness Report by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (Helliwell et al. (eds.), 2013). When asked of their own happiness, 52% of Danes say they are 'Very happy' and 46% that they are 'Fairly happy' (numbers are for people in a stable relationship) (Gundelach & Kreiner, 2004, p. 38).

According to scholarly research, happiness is based on a feeling of freedom and a feeling of being in charge of one's own life (Gilbert, 2007). 73% of Danes say they are in charge of their own life (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 1997, p. 144). Denmark is ranked at the highest end of the Empowerment Index of the UN. Among European countries, Denmark is in the Top-3 among countries where people feel that they are in control of their own lives (Halman et al., 2012, p. 130).

National feelings: 93% are proud to be Danish (Hobolt, 2004, p. 326).

Cultural Behavior

Lifestyle: Approximately 80% of the population bike (Danish Bicyclists' Federation, 2017). 75% are members of a membership organization (Juul, 2004, p. 165). A majority of Danes say leisure time is more important than work (no precise percentage is given) (Halman et al., 2012, p. 40). 90% of the Danish population use the Danish flag when celebrating privately (Lindsø, 2012).

Denmark has the second lowest PowerDistance among the 100+ countries, measured by Geert Hofstede. Denmark ranks highest amongst the 27 European Union countries in terms of employee autonomy. According to Hofstede this means that 'Workplaces have a very informal atmosphere with direct and involving communication and on a first name basis.' (Hofstede, 2015).

Norms: 73% of women are part of the workforce which naturally affects the practical living of many people. The work frequency for men in Denmark is only a few percentage points higher (Danmarks Statistik, 2013). In Denmark the norm is that children are day cared in a kindergarten. 94% of children, aged 3-5, are day cared in a kindergarten (Statistisk Tiårsoversigt 2005, 2005), p. 65).

Rules: With respect to following rules and regulation, 62% of Danes take the so-called Universalist approach on the Trompenaars Universalist-Particularist dimension (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997, p. 37), meaning they would put rules first and foremost. It is also practiced on a private level: When Danes observe someone they know wanting to drive while under the influence of alcohol, 81% have acted to stop it (Rådet for Sikker Trafik, 2013a). Adherence to rules is clearly practiced on government level, as Denmark is the country in the world with the least corruption (no. 1 on the Corruption Perception Index 2016) (Transparency.org).

Law: It is required by law to use a safety belt when driving. 94% of Danes use safety belts (Rådet for Sikker Trafik, 2013b).

Habits: Danes have the habit of speaking their minds. 66% take the affective approach on the Trompenaars Affective-Neutral dimension (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 1997, p. 88).

Customs: 91% do *not* base their daily living on religion (Borre, 2004, p. 345). Only when it comes to religious rituals at birth and death does religion get into play for a large part of the population: 80% of children are baptized by a priest of the Christian faith (Kirkestatistik, 2009). 77% have their baptizing confirmed by a priest of the Christian faith, typically at 14 years of age (Kirkestatistik, 2009). 90% are buried by a priest of the Christian faith (Kirkestatistik, 2009). 63% of marriages take place outside of a church (Kirkestatistik, 2009; Vielsesstatistik, 2009).

Traditions: About 95% of Danes do *not* take part in Constitution day celebrations (Warring, 2003, pp. 221-222). In Denmark 80% have a Christmas tree. 83% give presents to someone. The Christmas tree is typically also decorated with Danish flags (Author's observations, 200-2016). Denmark is the only country in the world

where people walk around the Christmas tree on Christmas Eve, holding hands, and singing Christmas carols. 68% do this according to a poll (Søndagsavisen, 2014).

Analysis

While religious ceremonies are important to the Danes, their relationship with religion appear to be relaxed: They do not follow the beliefs of the Church of which they are members, and they don't want others to be restricted by religious rules. Danes are rule-abiding, just not with respect to religious rules. Though Danes say a church wedding is important, most of them do not get married in a church: They opt for a non-religious marriage ceremony that is more informal than a church ceremony.

In Denmark religion is practiced in a relaxed way. However, the Danes are not only relaxed with respect to religion as such but also with the social issues that are often influenced by religion: divorce, homosexuality, and abortion. It seems logical if relaxed attitudes towards religion lead the Danes to be less preoccupied with religious issues than what may be seen in other cultures.

Freedom is an important value to the Danes. People who believe in freedom, including religious freedom, *and* are relaxed with respect to religion and morals are not likely to believe strongly in social control. Likewise, individualism is generally not conducive to a lot of social control. It would seem that social control—a desire to dominate how other people live their lives—is not strong in Denmark. When social control is low, and the habit of expressing one's mind is high, as is the case in Denmark, this can lead to a public discourse (for instance, with respect to sex) that is more direct and more open-minded about which issues are discussed in public and in private than in cultures with a higher degree of social control and a neutral way of expressing thoughts and feelings. Open-mindedness can be said to be a characteristic of typical Danish culture.

When the Danes say they are happy this is credible because they have control of their own lives and are free of social control.

The fact that Danes have trust in each other and that they have high trust in their institutions is another indicator of a relaxed culture. As mentioned, they also abide by rules and regulations. There is no corruption. This certainly creates a much more relaxed culture than when the opposite is the case: If there is no respect for rules and regulations, if you have to worry about how to get things done, because of bureaucracy and corruption, this is likely to create a very un-relaxed daily life. Danes can relax with respect to many practical aspects of life because of the high trust among themselves and their institutions. Though a heavily regulated society, with high taxes paid (KPMG, 2017), it seems that Danes can focus on their work lives and private lives, without a prevalent mistrust seen in many other societies.

If one were to describe the most informal way of transportation, many people would probably say bicycling. And that is something that the Danes do a lot. This has may also have to do with an informal culture at work: Dress codes are informal (Author's observation, 2000-2016), which is conducive to bicycling.

Danes are proud to be Danish but they are relaxed about this. This can be seen with respect to behaviour surrounding the flag and Constitution Day. The Danish flag is used in the most informal ways, as Christmas tree decoration. The Danes are also very relaxed about celebrating Constitution Day, which just a small part of the population does. With no big parades and no fireworks, this is very low-key compared to other countries.

The Danes have knowledge of what is arguably the most important date in the history of Denmark in the 20th century, April 9, 1940, when Denmark was occupied by the Germans. But it is not a date that is commemorated by the Danes. All in all, it seems that symbolic patriotism is less formal than in other countries, such as, for instance, France.

Based on this brief discussion, the contours of two typical characteristic of Danish culture in the beginning of the 21st century seem to appear: i. Typical Danes are relaxed with respect to their (moral) values. ii. Typical Danes are informal in their behaviour.

Tourist Industry Implications

It appears from this brief study that an integrative approach can yield messages suitable for mass-communication channels on the difficult-to-see culture of a destination country. However, this is not surprising. The issue is if the method yields findings that are considered more valid, more credible, and more reliable by letting statistics

determine the data input in creating a cultural profile of a destination. To some potential critics among some stakeholders the method suggested here may be more palatable. Other potential critics may question if tourist authorities should say anything about a typical culture at all. Culture is part of the public discourse, and some aspects of culture may be politically charged. One strategy may then be for the tourist authorities to publish a study of the difficult-to-see culture in full without engaging in any specific messaging directly to tourists. This can be left to the stakeholders, for instance, the media, excursion companies, and local tourist offices. Even this will not guarantee that findings are not disputed and discredited, especially because a country may have a typical culture, but not a homogeneous culture.

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