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Tourism, Culture and the Lebanese
Diaspora: Culturing Tourism through
Migration

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Tourism, Culture and the Lebanese Diaspora: Culturing Tourism through Migration

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Abstract

The effect of Diasporas on society have been studied from various angles, including politics, law, economy, community, and culture. However, Diasporas are rarely examined through the interaction between culture and tourism. The focal point here is how migrants forming cultural clusters attract tourists from their individual cultural groups to visit their local destinations. The significance of such findings can be best demonstrated though specific case studies, in which the relationship between Diasporas, culture, and tourism are considered in relation to specific societies or groups of individuals. Since the link between culture, tourism and the Lebanese diaspora has witnessed little or no research, it has been selected as the main topic through which the findings are verified.

The paper analyses the Lebanese diaspora in London from a cultural prospective in relation to tourism, and expands on existent literature regarding the Lebanese Diaspora. Culture is examined from hospitality prospective, as hospitality plays a key role in the constitution of the Lebanese diaspora. Cultural hospitality as a modern tool of tourism attraction is deliberated upon throughout the paper.

The paper distinguishes between pre-migration and post-migration affluent hospitality investors, denoting to wealthy Lebanese individuals that migrated then established hospitality businesses in London, and to others who became wealthy due to migration. The paper then categorises both groups of migrants into three classifications that every member of the Lebanese diaspora falls under, namely, "Individualism", "Tribalism", and "Sectarianism". Each of these cultural groups contributes to the tourism development in London

Tourism is thus examined from a cultural perspective in order to understand methods of consumption amongst the Lebanese migrants in London, and the means of attraction in the way the culture appears to others. Mentality versus behavior concerning the Lebanese diaspora is analysed in order to elucidate the foundation of the diaspora. Conclusions pinpoint future opportunities of research related to this specific topic.

Key Words: Lebanon; Diaspora; Migration; Tourism; UK

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Introduction

Since the mid and late 19th century, Lebanese migration to London has altered and influenced Lebanese identities and formed commidified values that are witnessed in the current Lebanese diaspora in London. More people of Lebanese origin live outside Lebanon than in it (perhaps 15m-20m, compared with 4.3m). Many have done well. Carlos Slim, a Lebanese-Mexican telecoms tycoon, is the richest man in the world. Carlos Ghosn, a French-Lebanese-Brazilian, is the boss of both Renault (a French carmaker) and Nissan (a Japanese one). Nick Hayek, a Swiss-Lebanese, runs Swatch, the biggest maker of Swiss watches. In the UK itself, Skandar Keynes and Samia Smith are relevantly famed actors, Dom Joly - a comedian, columnist and broadcaster, Mika – a musician and song writer, Naeem Murr – a novelist and short story writer, Michael Atiyah - a mathematician and Sam Hammam – a businessman, owner of Cardiff City F.C.

Coming from a nation that can go from peace to war in a couple of hours, Lebanese entrepreneurs have learned to be flexible and resilient. Wherever they are, Lebanese traders typically remain in touch with their kin. Belonging to a global diaspora allows them to swap information and learn about new opportunities. Zeinab Fawaz, the author of a book on Lebanese business owners in America, argues that "good education, adaptability and networks" are the keys to their success. The median Lebanese household in America makes \$67,000, comfortably above the norm.

Lebanese are generally education focused and strive to achieve the best. However, as Abouzaki (2012) puts it:

The Lebanese "superiority syndrome" has pushed Lebanese to believe that they are the smartest people on the face on this planet. It has also made them fall victims to the anecdote that God has been so generous with them to make them the perfect country on the face of this earth, but since nothing is perfect, God gave them the worst neighbours, which is why they ended up in this worthless situation (Abouzaki, 2012).

Abouzaki sums up in a few sentences the complication of "Lebaneseness". Having the best country in the world but not able to live in it, being the most educated individuals and no other is better, and god being nice to them but are in a poor situation.

The paper analyses the Lebanese diaspora in London based on three themes, "Culture", Identity" and "Hospitality", interrelating culture through migration. Culture is examined through Mentality and Behavior, while Identity is discussed by exploring the early traditional immigrants and recent modern migrants, and Hospitality is presented by conferring Pre-migration wealth and post-migration wealth in the hospitality industry.

The identity of the Lebanese people derives from both their root culture and the influence of their current lifestyles. The Lebanese diaspora is highly influenced by the region, the shifts in the linguistics, the religion, and sometimes through genetics (Kaufman, 2000). Lebanese traditions are signified via hospitality and cuisine, however, ritual Lebanese tradition is denoted through migration. The most significant tradition of Lebanese people after the civil war was migration. The migration tradition became an identity for the Lebanese since the war influenced their home land and their economy. The Lebanese are renowned for their hospitality where they are able to discover and present their self identity. To discover the self identity or individualism the Lebanese began their voyage in the tourism sector (Abdelhady, 2007). The tourism sector on the other hand has rooted itself deeply into the culture, tradition, heritage by the influence of their ancestors.

The Diaspora and Cultural Identity

Culture represents an essential component of the Lebanese human structure. For Lebanese people themselves, culture is addressed through their traditional beliefs. Within the Lebanese diaspora, culture is preserved within the human body. It migrates within them as they travel and is distinguished within their deeper roots, forming a personal unique identity that signifies their belonging. Such an identity created a unique diaspora that is familiar by all worldwide. Abdulrahim (2009), Anthias (2010) and Appiah (2006) concur with the latter by demonstrating how the Lebanese diaspora has been recognized by people all over the world. The authors however add that the Lebanese diaspora is recognized due to for their cuisine, which has made their identity much more unique from other diasporas. The culture conveyed by members of the Lebanese diaspora when they migrated was one that made them survive in spite of language differences and financial instability. Although members of the Lebanese diaspora were well educated and very knowledgeable, they still migrated to prove their existence and their capability, as the rigidity of their homeland did not permit them to do so, making migration itself a great ability they possessed, adding to various generic aptitudes that include hospitality, banking and business.

Moreover, the impact of Lebanese cultural identity is provoked and manifested by the environment too. According to Amit and Rapport (2002), the Lebanese government is encouraging Lebanese migrants to seek Lebanese citizenship from the embassy of the host-land they migrated to. The lack of enthusiasm in seeking Lebanese citizenship, rather yearning for another instead, exhibits a lack of enthusiasm in the "Lebaneseness" of many. Identity is thus expressed in the internal body (sole) and external body (behavior) but not in their legal belonging. Consequently, "Lebaneseness" becomes a desire not a need, as the need is seeking a new geographical belonging while the desire becomes the want to consume cultural traditions. The latter lead to a division of the Lebanese diaspora into "early traditional immigrants" and "recent modern migrants", each representing the Lebanese diapora from a different perspective.

Early Traditional Immigrants & Recent Modern Migrants

Early Traditional Immigrants are the immigrants that left Lebanon in search of a new experience. They are the older Lebanese communities who experience the diaspora as a "nostalgic sense of exile experienced as loss of culture and loss of social connections with the past" Humphrey (2004). They struggled to survive and discovered language and cultural barriers (Naff, 1988). They strived to survive but wanted to be part of a community and did not want to be seen as outsiders (Abdelhady, 2007). Early traditional immigrants are the desirers of a good future, started off as pack peddlers and ended up as "big business men". They brought their traditions with them, blended in with others as they desired being seen as unique foreigners and wanted to be part of local communities, therefore, took part in everyday life.

Recent Modern Migrants are the current migrants forced out of Lebanon due to war (Moya, 2006) and seek to be part of an already existing community. They might within time change or adapt to hostland's cultural beliefs (Tirone and Pedlar, 2000) but are still not sure whether they will go back to their homelands, change host-lands or might even transform and to the host-land's beliefs, forgetting their original cultural values (Werbner, 1999; Anthias, 2010). Nevertheless, modern recent migrants, unlike early traditional immigrants, are the "original" diaspora members who were expelled by force from their homelands (Amit and Rapport, 2002). Early traditional immigrants are still classed as members of the diaspora as the term has now been used to encompass a broad range of groups (Braziel and Mannur, 2003).

However, both the "early traditional immigrant and the modern recent migrant" fall under six categories that determine their identity. The six categories relate to the individual's body that controls the ways in which they act.

The Body and Desire

The body desires arkeli, it becomes addicted to inhaling flavoured smoke. Arkile, a smoking habit which Lebanese immigrants and Lebanese nationals are either addicted to or very familiar with from very early stages in their lives. Perhaps un-intentionally, but the arkeli familiarized Lebanese identities and traditions amongst the western world as they began taking part in it (Kaufman, 2000). The arkeli delivers a social aspect, either amongst Lebanese or Lebanese and others, that signify cultural identity.

The Body and Creation

The body creates food that formed a world famous cuisine. The unique dishes that are the sole of Lebanese cultural traditions shaped Lebanese identities. The cuisine is still getting more and more popular and due to high demand more Lebanese restaurants are being established (Convey, 2008). The body creates a unique cuisine that is served to guests and is used as a commodity Monsour, 2009). The body is being used to perform cooking and preparing dishes.

The Body and Pleasure

Dancing, a cultural tradition symbolized by dabki and belly-dancing is performed by the body (Tabar, 2010). The body is therefore used to celebrate a happening or to entertain others. Again, dancing shaped Lebanese identities by the reputation and gratification of observers and participants (Kassab, 1992). The body is used in dancing for personal pleasure (self entertainment) or pleasuring others (entertaining others).

The Body and Sexuality

Traditionally the Lebanese external body (male and females), is separated. Lebanese males work to provide a living whilst females cook at homes and look after their own family (Samhan, 1999). The body is here seen as the external figure. If you're a Lebanese female you are frowned upon if working outside the home environment. Traditions mean that home-made cultural dishes are prepared by females and males cook the cultural cuisine to offer it as a commodity. This is a cultural recognition.

The Body and Survival

Lebanese immigrants strived for survival in host-lands (Naff, 1988). They admired success and therefore used the body and pushed it to achieving goals. Starting off as pack peddlers and ending up as "big business men" or even working in restaurants, the body was used in order to achieve certain aims.

The Body and Decision-making

This part refers to the inner body (the thoughts). The body makes the decisions of whether to immigrate or not, whether to return or stay, whether to be part of a community or isolated (Tirone and Pedlar, 2000). The "inner" body determines the future and the past of individuals and shapes their identity (Werbner, 1999; Anthias, 2010). Whether food, dancing and music are part of cultural traditions or not, the "inner" body determines whether the individual seeks to be part of such traditions or desires being part of something entirely different.

The body shapes Lebanese identities in various forms. Each form represents a cultural tradition used by Lebanese immigrants and the Lebanese diaspora. The body, internal and external, is what shapes Lebanese identities and strengthens cultural values, making them familiarized and admired worldwide. The Lebanese "early traditional immigrant and the modern recent migrant" however they differentiate within the Lebanese diaspora, still hold cultural traditions that they apply in various means to signify their belonging and sense of identity. Their cultural traditions are applied through the "body" which they use as a means of belonging to the Lebanese diaspora, keeping them in-touch with their roots.

Member of the Lebanese diaspora have indulged themselves into various sectors, especially into the hospitality industry. Their identity with their traditional and cultural aspects allowed them to develop their current experiences wherever they go. Lebanese diaspora members have achieved and

secured successful positions in SMEs such as the Hospitality industry and MNCs such as the financial sector (Kassab, 1992). In turn, this attracted vast numbers of visitors to the diaspora, from people seeking work opportunities, to business partners and investors, to consumers from various countries.

Taking London as an example, early traditional immigrants migrated with the intention of remaining in London as they sought permanent homes away from their home country. Early traditional immigrants, with the majority being of wealthy backgrounds invested in SMEs in London. Most SMEs were in the form of restaurants. The latter lead to inflating numbers of Lebanese migrants travelling to London, seeking guaranteed job opportunities, as they were family friends or desired skilled laborers. These are referred to as Recent Modern Migrants. Early traditional immigrants formed a base for Lebanese migration in London, invested in SMEs through the hospitality industry, attracted British and non British visitors to the currently reputable Lebanese - London hospitality industry and in-turn became the "Mekka" for all Arab travelers to the UK.

The Diaspora and Hospitality

Lebanese in the hospitality industry are marvelously admired as offering food for Lebanese people is more of an art than a business, hence they not only feed the body but also the soul. To provide food for others the Lebanese take immense effort so that their guests are more than satisfied. The special identity of the Lebanese diaspora in hospitality industry is that they offer cuisine as an art. The level of commitment in their process of hospitality is much higher when compared to that of other diasporas. The Lebanese cuisine is arguably one of the best amongst other cuisines as the food provided is of high quality, blended with traditional touches and a pleasant presentation sustained with fresh heartening flavors.

Lebanon, "the Paris of the Middle-East", was once one of the greatest places for travelers as it offered them the best entertainment and hospitality experiences of all times. The exotic hotels with refined cuisine encouraged tourists to visit the country on regular occasions (Basu, 2007). The civil war depleted tourism investment which brought the entire tourism industry to a halt, and yet consumers desired Lebanese hospitality and entertainment and sought other means. Such means were available by means of the already expanded global Lebanese diaspora, with centre locations such as Edgware Road in London. Lebanese migrants were also awaiting such desire and accommodated need for two key reasons: generating business from cultural identity, and practicing traditions in foreign land, this lead to the rapid spread of Lebanese tradition and culture via a diaspora renowned for its hospitality (Labaki, 1984). The people who managed to get into the hospitality industry polished their notions and thus were able to expand the Lebanese hospitality industry with unique services. Hospitality within the Lebanese diaspora became a An influx of Lebanese hospitality seekers, specifically from the

Middle-East and Arabian Golf, developed the Lebanese diaspora from one simply seeking refuge due to turbulent times back home to a competitive distinguished diaspora which is welcomed and respected in host-lands.

The Lebanese diaspora are recognised in offering a mixture of entertainment and social meetings in their clubs or restaurants in hot-lands (Duval, 2003), however, Leung and Stone (2009) point out that the Lebanese diaspora in London definitely plays a huge role in developing their home land with the current identity they possess. The study mainly focuses on Diasporas in the UK – England, where it is found through analysis that Edgware road (London) was the heart of the Lebanese diaspora were the diasporas' role in developing their home country is gigantic. This denotes to Lebanese diaspora members seeking wealth through investment and supporting relatives and families back in the home land, thus, leading to a disparity in Lebanese diaspora wealth. This is segregate into Pre Migration Wealth and Post Migration Wealth.

Pre Migration Wealth versus Post Migration Wealth

The Lebanese before migrating to various parts of the world decide on their purpose and notion in life (Lynch et al, 2011). The Lebanese diaspora comprises two amalgamations of Lebanese travelers, referred to earlier as the migrants and immigrants. The Lebanese civil war from the 70s to the 80s created a border line that altered the quality of migration and migrants. Precivil war migrants sought a better lifestyle abroad and searched for investment, whilst post-civil migrants simply fled political turbulence, leading them to hunt for day-to-day employment as a means of survival. Pre-war migrants became investors while post-war migrants became employees, nevertheless, both aiming for to gather fortunes of capital for their own benefit. However, pre-war migrants originated from wealthy and upper class backgrounds but required investment in an economically stable country such as the UK, with London being a catchy investment destination and business hub for most. Post-war migrants derived from medium to law income families and desired better futures. They brawled destiny, migrated and hunted for wealth through employment, with the aim of returning to their homeland in the near future. Some post-war migrants were fortunate enough to gather the financial fortunes sought for, while others were not. The post migration wealthy Lebanese diaspora members worked habitually within hotels or banks. This demanded closer ties between the pre-war wealthy migrants who had invested in restaurants, bars, bakeries and cafes within London, and the post-war wealthyto-be migrants who had achieved reputable positions within and the hospitality and banking sectors and could be of advantage to Lebanese investors in London. The closer business ties lead to bigger wealth amongst both parties, but strangely wealth that had derived from the Lebanese hospitality industry in London. This is owed to what Labaki (2006) regarded as "the level of commitment shown by the Lebanese diaspora". The author stated that when compared to other diasporas, the Lebanese diapora is much higher especially in their traditional line of work which is the hospitality sector (Labaki, 2006).

Moreover, pre-migration wealthy diaspora members relied on the aid of other fellow Lebanese diaspora members, and vice versa, but did not intend to invest in or return to their homeland Lebanon. On the contrary, post migration wealthy Lebanese diaspora members aimed to invest in their home country and return as soon as the desired wealth was gathered. Regardless of their future intentions and aims, the need of cooperation amongst Lebanese diaspora members strengthened the diaspora even further, transforming it into a hub for business seekers and consumers, luring locals, nationals and internationals of various nationalities to visit a reputable diaspora eminent for its emerging desirable cuisine.

The Diaspora And Traditional Heritage

According to a review of The Economic Times (2013), the Lebanese have committed themselves to bring some changes not only to their life but also to their home land. The article discussed the essence of Lebanese diaspora members and their achievements in various part of the world. For instance, the article highlighted three main figures in the Lebanese global diapora and named them as, Carlos Slim, a Lebanese descendant in Mexico who is claimed as "the richest man on earth" and the owner of a Lebanese-Mexican telecoms: Nick Hayek, a Swiss-Lebanese residing in Switzerland, owns the world's best watch making company "Swatch", and the profound owner of both Nissan and Renault (car manufacturing companies), the French resident Carlos Ghosn. Thus, they have not only proven their capability but also have proven other Lebanese people back at Lebanon and other Diasporas a man become something from nothing. The fact they had strived hard to attain this position in their life was quite elaborative but without constant commitment and spontaneity they wouldn't have reached to this particular position in their lives. On the contrary, if they stayed back home, in Lebanon, and tried to attain the same level of achievement, they certainly wouldn't have. This is what Lynch et al (2011) refer to when arguing that migration was a life changing aspect for most Lebanese as it happened due to their self confidence and lack of confidence in their home land, thus, life goals for Lebanese entrepreneurs are only attainable through migration.

Furthermore, becoming someone in society and seen as someone important is essential for most Lebanese, hence, they aspire to opening businesses or seek employment in competitive industries such as the hospitality and finance industries. They left their home-land and moved to foreign countries seeking the dream of respect by wealth and if the latter did not occur they simply would not return. Prior migration, the poor lifestyles for some and loss of faith in the future of their home-land for others, created the largest international diaspora in comparison to residence statistics. The economical and financial wealth of the Lebanese diaspora members might vary from individual to individual yet the reason for migrating remains intact and purposeful, also proving that despite having to leave their home-land, Lebanese diaspora members never

dismissed or transformed their cultural heritage and traditions. Cultural heritage and traditions from this prospective are perceived through adoption of the Lebanese cuisine, Lebanese entertainment in the form of music, dancing and cafes, national festivities and religious ceremonies. Cultural heritage was adopted by Lebanese migrants in both its forms, absolute and conditional (Derrida, 2000), as a means of achieving pre-migration aims of wealth and respect. Absolute cultural traditions were consumed as a means of personal joy, seeking pleasure during disheartened times as strangers in a foreign world, and conditional cultural traditions were adopted through establishing businesses within the hospitality industry. Lebanese migrants "migrated" their cultural traditions with them. They implanted cultural traditions deep into the roots of the host-countries by establishing businesses and seeking reputable positions. Their cultural traditions carried with them, is what made the Lebanese diaspora a unique reputable one.

Anthias (2010) emphasizes that the Lebanese diaspora is an internationally renowned and respected diaspora. Such success is indebted to cultural traditions which they held onto despite language differences for many and financial instability for others.

Moreover, the adoption of cultural traditions by Lebanese migrants distinguishes three types of Lebanese diaspora members, referred to as individualists, tribalists and sectarianists.

Individualism, Tribalism, and Sectarianism

Lebanese Diaspora members are spontaneous and committed people. They are spontaneous in the life changing decisions they make and spontaneous in friendships and social lives. They are committed to themselves, their careers and personal futures and are committed to the future and success of their people (Khechen, 2007). However, they are spontaneous and committed due structure of Lebanese migrants in general. Lebanese individualists think about their own careers, own futures and their own well-being and thus choose their circle of friends and responsibility of belonging accordingly. They do not seek friendship of other fellow Lebanese, neither wish for others to be as successful, nor the family ties and commitments to family members. On the contrary, tribalists are the Lebanese diaspora members that originated from tribes in their home-land and upon migration sought the help of fellow tribal members in the host-land. They aim to succeed but also want members of their tribe to succeed with them. They seek the close friendship of fellow tribe members and at times seek business partnership with them. Both individualists and tribalists aim to succeed and build fortunate futures. However, sectarianists are diapora members that fled their homeland due to political turbulence and civil war. They fled hating other Lebanese sects and that hatred grew whilst living abroad. They exclude themselves from other Lebanese migrants and seek friendship and life opportunities with the non Lebanese. Sectarianists are against going back to their home-land as it would remind them of appalling memories they already struggle to forget.

Consequently, the formation of the Lebanese diaspora into three key types shapes a pattern that every Lebanese diaspora can be determined by, regardless of their classifications as individualists, tribalists or sectarianists.

Mentality vs. Behavior

Mentality and behavior play a major role in the formation of the Lebanese diapora as they guide diaspora members in understanding one another. It is essential to examine the mentality of diaspora members as it leads to the pre-estimation of behavior. Behavior solely cannot determine the commitment and intention of a diaspora member without examining mentality. Determining mentality would then provide an understanding to the level of commitment the migrant has towards the diaspora.

Conclusions

Unique cultural traditions adopted and implemented by Lebanese migrants formed a strong diaspora recognized and respected amongst others around the world. Implementing cultural traditions in the form of hospitality welcomed pre-existent enthusiasts and attracted new inquisitors. Within the Lebanese diaspora in London the hospitality industry, renowned for its authentic cuisine and vigorous entertainment, attracted local, national and international patrons seeking a taste of the infamous "Paris of the Middle East" Lebanon. Culture, in the form of hospitality, acts as a tourism hub, benefiting both the local economy and the diaspora itself. However, the diaspora itself is comprised of early traditional immigrants and recent modern migrants, both of which migrated with the aim of securing a flourishing future. Lebanese migrants sought respect, success and wealth. While decades of turbulent politics, years of civil fighting and wars crushed economic growth and persuaded migration between the mid 70s and early 80s, Lebanese migration existed decades before. Prior the 70s when Lebanon witnessed an economic boom some decided to seek new lifestyle abroad and decided to invest in first world cities such as London. They invested in cultural traditions by opening restaurants and establishing Lebanese cafes and fast food outlets. Early traditional immigrants attracted recent modern migrants who fled the 70s and 80s war and they necessitated employment opportunities. Members of the diaspora used "the body" as means of survival. The use of the body exists in six different categories, each of which is a means for survival as a migrant. As the London Lebanese diaspora grew in recent years, diapora members grouped depending on sects and beliefs.

Moreover, the adoption of cultural traditions by Lebanese migrants distinguished three types of Lebanese diaspora members, referred to as individualists, tribalists and sectarianists. All three categories seek to develop personal fortunes and future opportunities, but each in a different way and by various intensions. In turn, this led to determining diaspora members through mentality and behavior.

This paper analysed the Lebanese diaspora in London from a tourism and hospitality cultural prospective. Cultural traditions were examined as a key means in the constitution of the Lebanese diaspora. Future research should elaborate on specific tourism patterns within the diaspora and establish categorical hospitality consumption based on the tourism patterns specified.

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