



Fethiye: Turkey's 'Little Britain' – residential tourists' identity and relationships

Ross Bennett-Cook

To cite this article: Ross Bennett-Cook (2022): Fethiye: Turkey's 'Little Britain' – residential tourists' identity and relationships, Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change, DOI: [10.1080/14766825.2022.2120817](https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2022.2120817)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2022.2120817>



© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 08 Sep 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Fethiye: Turkey's 'Little Britain' – residential tourists' identity and relationships

Ross Bennett-Cook

School of Architecture and Cities, University of Westminster, London, UK

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the Turkish resort town of Fethiye's large British population of permanent residents, who have added to the physical and cultural character of the town. To understand why these individuals decided to relocate to Fethiye, and what their lives are like in the town, 17 semi-structured interviews with British residential tourists were conducted. The paper reveals a complex identity paradox, where many feel that the stigma surrounding the term 'expat', and what it means to be a 'Brit abroad', has impacted their identity, relationships and judgement of fellow residential tourists. The study also uncovers the motivational characteristics for their relocation, from which a strong financial element towards the choice of Turkey was revealed. Host-guest relationships are also explored, revealing largely positive attitudes towards the Turkish community.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 14 June 2022
Accepted 30 August 2022

KEYWORDS

Residential tourism; host-guest relations; expat; identity; resident perception; construction (of place)

1. Introduction

An estimated 5.5 million Britons live overseas, with more than 300,000 people joining this growing trend annually (BBC, [n.d.](#); Jerrim, 2015). The destinations that Britons choose overseas have been faced with criticism, stereotyping and ridicule for the type or style of tourism or migration they represent. These places often align with the Mediterranean resort development of the 1960s and 1970s, where resorts were built to cater to the needs of mass-market and typically working class holidaymakers (King, 2001). As White (2010) explains, this connection between mass tourism and the working class has resulted in these destinations being stigmatised with working class stereotypes of classlessness or unsophistication. These stereotypes continue to prevail today, with British overseas residents often being associated with a 'Brits abroad' stereotype, often centred around ideas of culturally homogenous resort communities, 'Little England's by the sea', and perceived lack of host-guest integration (Benson & Campion, 2021; Benson & O'Reilly, 2018; O'Reilly, 2013).

Since the UK's 2016 Brexit referendum, as well as the 2015 European migrant crisis, migration seems to have increased in media, political and personal discussions. These discussions quite commonly include Turkey; as a country on the periphery of Europe, it is often framed as the 'gateway to Europe', rhetoric that was used as partial justification

CONTACT Ross Bennett-Cook  r.bennettcook@westminster.ac.uk

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

for Britain's exit from the European Union (Ker-Lindsay, 2018; Kirişci & Ekim, 2016; Werber, 2016). However, British migrants overseas, commonly referred to as expats, seem to receive significantly less attention than other migrant communities (Jerrim, 2015).

2. Literature review

2.1. *Tourists, residents, immigrants, expats?*

A definition for tourists who stay overseas for long periods, own houses overseas, but may not necessarily permanently relocate to the new destination is blurred (Huete & Mantecón, 2012). This is due to several factors, including the length of stay, how these visitors are viewed by others, and the increasingly indistinct boundaries and the interplay between tourism and migration (King, Warnes, & Williams, 2000). Hui (2009) explains that tourism has typically been seen as a circular journey, meaning that a tourist leaves home, visits a destination, and then returns home, yet this is a model of tourism mobilities that is increasingly unrepresentative of modern travel experiences (Hui, 2009). Amongst scholars, there is no apparent agreement as to when a tourist becomes 'permanent', and when exactly a transition into 'migrant' begins (Tokington, 2010). For example, according to Warnes (1991), the residential status becomes permanent after six months, yet Jordan and Duvell (2003) explain that migration consists of a stay of over one year. Cohen (1974, p. 537) defines permanent tourists as 'persons who, though deriving their income in their country of origin, prefer to take up semi-permanent residence in another country', a definition which can embody several groups of overseas settlers, including second-home owners, retirees and lifestyle migrants. Yet, for Urry (1990, p. 3) a 'clear intention to return "home" within a relatively short period of time' is a key characteristic of tourism, indicating that for him, certain categories within these tourist-migrant groups may not be considered 'tourists' at all. More recently, the term 'residential tourism' has been created, to embody the mixture between tourism and migrant that this group typically represents (Huete & Mantecón, 2012).

Many argue, however, that these types of travellers should simply be labelled as 'immigrants', but ethnic backgrounds, nationality or economic status allows them to be viewed differently. Deo (2012) writes that Britons who relocate abroad usually see themselves as expats, a term Koutonin (2015) argues has connections to white and western superiority. They argue that if non-white travellers were to relocate in the same way, they would quickly be seen as immigrants: 'Africans are immigrants. Arabs are immigrants. Asians are immigrants. However, Europeans are expats because they can't be at the same level as other ethnicities'. This is a viewpoint shared by other authors, Tokington (2010) found that in Portugal's Algarve, Northern European residents are described as *turismo residencial* (residential tourists), yet those of an African, Asian, Latin American or Eastern European background are called immigrants, which is often met with negative connotations.

2.2. *Enclaves*

The huge tourism arrivals associated with mass tourism has resulted in entire towns being dedicated solely to tourism (O'Reilly, 2000). These exclusively planned resorts are typically

referred to as tourist enclaves, representing spaces that are dominated by non-locals (Saarinen & Wall-Reinius, 2019). In some cases, entrance to such destinations can be controlled, whereas other resorts may be avoided by locals due to their overwhelming foreign presence or exclusionary atmosphere (Cocola-Gant & Lopez-Gay, 2020).

Williams (1998, p. 178) explains that tourist enclaves are not designed to represent the reality of a destination but to represent a 'commodified, managed and contrived forms of provision that present a flavour of foreign places in a selective and controlled manner'. These are set within a physical environment that has been intentionally designed to reflect the stereotypes of what the exotic destination should look like. As Williams puts it, these places are constructed to reflect ourselves rather than the places we are visiting (Williams, 1998, p. 178). Many tourists expect a home-away-from-home experience; even when abroad, they are surrounded by home comforts that have quite often been literally shipped in from their home countries. The requirements for locals to meet these expectations inevitably change the character of the destinations, which in extreme cases can result in destinations losing their original identities almost completely, becoming placeless, completely unrepresentative of their indigenous culture and indistinct from other resorts.

Milano, Novelli, and Cheer (2019) explain that sometimes host communities actually prefer the creation of exclusionary enclave-style resorts, as this provides a clear distinction between tourist areas and local areas and may help to preserve local areas for hosts' enjoyment. However, enclaves also receive significant criticism from tourism researchers and local communities. Due to their exclusionary design, which often encourages or prevents host-guest interactions, some feel that enclaves can exacerbate issues of social inequality and injustices between these groups, formulating an 'us and them' exclusionary environment (Prayag, 2015; Saarinen & Wall-Reinius, 2019). Additionally, Kothari (2015) explains that areas preserved for tourists, especially wealthy, white, western tourists in developing countries, evoke uncomfortable similarities to colonialism.

2.3. 'Brits Abroad'

Benson & O'Reilly (2018, 9) explain that British nationals living overseas are often stereotyped,

they are portrayed as older and retired (and therefore problematic or escapist); as residential tourists or second-home owners (and therefore as frivolous, and not worthy of serious attention); as 'expatriates' (who are elitist and make no attempt to integrate), or as nostalgic counter-urbanites. (who are seeking a lost world)

O'Reilly (2001) observed that many of these representations emerged during the 1980s and 1990s. In these representations, British holidaymakers and overseas residents were often portrayed as upper-class colonial-style expats or working-class mass-market tourists, 'living an extended holiday in ghetto-like complexes, participating minimally in local life or culture, refusing to learn the language of their hosts, and generally recreating a little England in the sun' (Benson & O'Reilly, 2018, p. 10). These images have been further perpetuated by the media through television series such as ITV's *Benidorm* or sensationalist stories in popular British newspapers (Casey, 2013; Prieto-Arranz & Casey, 2014). This is something that Benson and Campion (2021) explain was further exacerbated during

media representation of Britons living overseas during Brexit, where news stories were dominated by retirees living in resorts like Benidorm, whilst the 74% of British nationals who live in the EU for employment purposes were largely ignored.

Benson and O'Reilly (2018) argue that these representations are unfair, sensationalist, and play into the negative ideas of migration and mass tourism. Lawson (2018a) found that the negative 'Brits abroad' stereotype, in some ways, has actually helped to encourage the integration process. Her research in France found that many British residents were obsessed with distancing themselves from these negative stereotypes, which subsequently has resulted in some British residents actively avoiding socialising with fellow Brits and making stronger efforts to interact with locals instead. Similarly, King et al.'s, (2000) research on the Costa del Sol suggested that Britons displayed an overt willingness to integrate. However, Britons living in Fuengirola, cannot be considered integrated with Spanish society. Here, there are British clubs full of British members, with Britons seen to solely socialise and interact with their own nationality: 'for many British, daily life involves talking to and being with other British people and very little interaction with the Spanish' (O'Reilly, 2008: 181). Yet as Marshall (2021) explains, this is a reality not unique to Britons; it is common for all nationality of migrants to gravitate towards others with similar languages or cultural backgrounds to their own.

Benson and O'Reilly (2018) and O'Reilly (2001) indicate that the 'Brits abroad' stereotypes began to formulate in Spain, which may be related to the infamous British-dominated mass tourist resorts that many parts of the country's coastline have become known for (O'Reilly, 2013). Andrews (2005, 2008, 2010) has worked extensively on ideas of Britishness overseas, particularly in the typically British Spanish resorts of Magaluf and Palmanova. Here, some of the displays of British nationalism she describes have helped to perpetuate the stereotypes of dominating British tourists and expats unwilling to integrate and formulate a 'little England' overseas. However, this is not a phenomenon created solely by British tourists. Mass tourism from many western countries has been linked to the cultural homogenisation of destinations – in fact, Duim (2005) and Ivanovic (2008) regard tourism as a leading factor in creating cultural uniformity overseas. Jacobsen (2003) explains that this is due to the fact that mass tourists aren't travelling abroad to experience new cultures; they want to travel to places that do not feel *too* foreign, which is why holiday resorts will often be dominated by restaurants selling British or German food, or those with pictures on menus to avoid language barriers. Creating a safe, familiar and easy holiday environment that many mass-market holidaymakers and families are looking for (Jacobsen, 2003), as Bahar, Laçiner, Bal, and Özcan (2009, p. 511) put it, 'for many, all that matters is that the local supermarket meets their food needs, that they have access to English, German or Dutch restaurants, pubs and clubs, and that the local people to a certain extent understand English'.

3. Methodology

3.1. Fethiye

Fethiye, on Turkey's Mediterranean coastline, is one of the country's most popular tourist destinations. Alongside its ancient Lycian history and architecture, the town is also famed for its thriving British community. Figures from Fethiye's Tourism, Culture, Environment

and Education Foundation show that 1 in every 20 residents of the town are foreigners, from which Britons represent the largest foreign community (Ergil, 2019). Alongside this permanent population, approximately 1.5 million British tourists visit the Muğla region annually, from which approximately 600,000 visit Fethiye specifically (pre-Covid statistics) – resulting in the area being the most popular in Turkey for British tourists (Anadolu Agency, 2017). These figures have resulted in a dominant British influence in the town, with some referring to Fethiye as *küçük İngiltere* (little Britain or little England). The town has become so synonymous with its Britishness that it has become a popular destination within Turkey for those wanting to learn English, with local schools advertising the opportunities to practice English with local British residents (Eurovizyon, 2012; Yüzde Yüz Haber, 2011).

As the British community has grown, their influence on the town has become evident. From Hisarönü's 'fake British high street', where comically named Marc and Spenger, Azda, Nexst and Tesco sell knock-off goods (Figure 1), to a promenade lined with British-themed pubs and restaurants. As one Trip Advisor (n.d) user writes,

every second restaurant at the harbour front serves the full English Breakfast. That's right: sausages, bacon, beans, toast, eggs, and even black puddings (some would even write on the menu stuff like 'Heinz Baked Beans', 'Asda Sausage', and 'Tesco Bacon'). They even serve curry and curry is, well, Britain's national dish

Fethiye's characteristics can be said to embody a typical home-away-from-home enclave-style resort.

3.2. Selection of participants

Primary research for this paper involved interviews with 17 British residential tourists of Fethiye, who live in the town on both a temporary and permanent basis. Due to travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, these interviews were conducted online via



Figure 1. 'Fake British High Street', Hisarönü, Fethiye.

Table 1. Participant profiles.

Interviewee	Gender	Age group	Time living in Fethiye	Any specific characteristics
1	F	41–50	4 years	Housewife
2	F	41–50	6 weeks	Retired
3	M	31–40	2 years	Works remotely for a British company, returns to the UK regularly for work commitments.
4	F	21–30	5 months	Turkish spouse, pregnant, housewife
5	F	51–60	5 years	Retired
6	F	80+	7 years	Retired
7	M	71–80	12 years	Retired
8	M	51–60	1 year	Moved due to COVID-19 lockdowns in the UK. Working remotely for a US company.
9	F	41–50	12 years	Turkish spouse, working as an English teacher for a Turkish company.
10	F	51–60	12 years	Housewife
11	F	80+	16 years	Retired
12	F	21–30	3 years	Working part-time for a Turkish company.
13	M	41–50	1 year	Working remotely for a UK company.
14	F	41–50	2 years	Turkish spouse
15	M	31–40	3 years	Owens a business in Fethiye.
16	M	21–30	7 months	Moved due to COVID-19 lockdowns in the UK. Working remotely
17	F	51–60	1 year	Retired

webcam and microphone. Residents were contacted via Facebook groups dedicated to ‘expats’ and foreign residents of Fethiye, in which a large and interactive British community was present.

An initial short post on the main Facebook group pages was written, giving the entire group a brief overview of the project and the reasons for the search for interview participants. Potential participants were instructed to contact the interviewer directly via Facebook’s direct message function or to comment on the post if they would like more information or would be interested in taking part. At this stage, further, more detailed information regarding the scope and reason for the research and the topics/themes of the interview were given to those who responded. A total of 17 interviews were conducted in August 2021 and January 2022, with the shortest interview being 29 minutes and the longest at 1 hour 33 minutes. Each participant was interviewed individually and no couples were interviewed together (Table 1).

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Expats

Of the 17 participants for this study, each identified themselves as an expat. To a certain extent this definition was anticipated, as the Facebook groups used to recruit participants were themselves labelled under such identities. Upon discussion, it quickly became clear that most were unclear of what exactly an expat was or why they choose this term for themselves. For most, it seemed to be an expected and unquestioned identity.

#1: I would say expat. And yes, many years ago I lived in South Africa, and I classed myself as an immigrant when I went to South Africa. But for some reason, I don’t in Turkey. If you went to live in Canada, or Australia or South Africa, you’re most commonly known as an immigrant. But if you go to Spain, Greece, Turkey, you’re classed as an expat.

#2: *I'd say at the moment I consider myself an expat, but I'm fully aware that I'm an immigrant in another country*

When questioned regarding the perceptions of their Turkish hosts, most agreed that they are seen as migrants of *yabancı* (a Turkish phrase for foreigner) – but, unlike the negative rhetoric regarding the migrant label discussed in academic research and the media, these associations were not viewed negatively in this circumstance. Some respondents did notice that Syrian and Afghan migrants did not receive such a warm welcome from their Turkish hosts, but suggest that British residents' perceived wealth, and the fact that Fethiye is a 'tourist place' provides an indication as to why Britons are viewed differently – some interviewees, for example, explained that even if the British community is causing issues, they will always be tolerated because of their economic power:

#9: Finding drunk British people sleeping on the steps of the mosque at morning prayers is probably very offensive to a lot of people, but nobody would say anything because they are tourists or expats and that's the money they need to live on.

4.1.1 'I'm an expat, but not a typical expat'

Although identifying themselves as expats, most were keen to dissociate themselves with stereotypical expat connotations. The identity was not something of pride, but something all interviewees wanted to distance themselves from. Recurrently, it was explained that although they are living in a heavily British part of the country, they don't like to 'mix' with fellow Britons – as interviewee 2 states, 'Çalış is very much an expat place, that was a deliberate choice for us, we didn't want to feel isolated', however, later on, she explains that 'we never wanted to be part of the expat community. We always enjoyed the Turkish lifestyle which is the main reason we moved here'. Interviewee's seemed to appreciate the need for the familiarity that comes with a British community, whilst simultaneously wanting to avoid any negative stereotypes associated with this form of enclave-style, homogeneous resettlement.

Interviewee 5 expressed a similar viewpoint, explaining that they didn't want to be 'locked into what was essentially a British community', but when probed into why an area with a large British community was selected, she explained that

I think its safety in numbers, to have something in common when you live somewhere like Turkey which is very culturally different to where we've been brought up, and their ways are considerably different, their customs, and their social outlook is different, you need something familiar, that's all it is, familiarity for when you move somewhere that is different. And the familiarity comes with the people that come from the same country as you

This seems to match the general idea of migrant communities across the world, Marshall (2021) and Hall (2012) argue that it is commonplace for migrant communities to congregate in ethnic enclaves where access to information, housing, employment etc. maybe easier within one's own social and linguistic environment. Interviewee 4, for example, a pregnant woman who moved to Fethiye five months ago to be with her Turkish husband, explained that contact with fellow Britons who are also pregnant, or those with young children, has made her move to Fethiye feel less daunting. Although she explained that she has also made friends with expectant mothers who are Turkish, she adds that their ideas surrounding pregnancy and raising children

differ from British cultural norms, meaning she has related more easily with fellow British nationals.

4.1.2 Expat stigma

Participants recognised certain stigmatised and stereotyped characteristics associated with being an expat. Many interviewees cited stereotypes of Brits abroad: that they do not mingle with locals, prefer British food or British services, and don't learn the local language. There was criticism of 'other' expats who were deemed to do things the 'wrong way'.

Interviewee's with Turkish partners have made greater advances towards learning the Turkish language. Of those without a Turkish spouse, just interviewee 10 has made a significant effort to learn Turkish, moving to Istanbul for language classes prior to her settlement in Fethiye. As she explains,

There is a stigma surrounding being an expat, lots of people don't want to be seen as a typical expat and considered an expat, but in reality, most people do fit into that typical expat mould. I really don't consider myself to be a typical expat, but as I say, I've taken the time to learn the language.

Recurringly, older participants suggested that their age has prevented them from attempting to learn Turkish, giving the impression that at their age it is 'impossible' to learn a new language, something that Bahar et al. (2009) recognised as a hurdle for expat integration. Several respondents acknowledged their embarrassment in terms of language skills, as interviewee 7 states, 'my Turkish isn't very good, which I'm quite disgusted about. I've been here 12 years and can barely hold a conversation', and many recognised that migrants to the UK would be expected to learn English. In the UK, rhetoric on immigration regularly states that learning English is integral for integration into British society, with an all-party parliamentary group on social integration stating that speaking English is 'the key to full participation in our society and economy' in 2017 (Peck, 2017). Yet, with just 3 participants speaking Turkish so any significant level, interviewee 10 explains that it is commonplace for Britons in Fethiye to rarely learn the language:

The general expat thing applies to people who aren't married to a Turk or have come out to work, I think you'll find that 95% even 99% of them conform to the 'expat thing'. How would I describe the typical expat? To me, it's someone who hasn't learned the local languages, lots of people here who say "well I've tried to learn Turkish" and what they mean is 1 hour a week or a few evenings [...] It seems to me that everyone is desperate not to be seen as an expat, but hasn't actually done a single thing to escape that stereotype. I think it's understandable when it comes to the 70 or 80-year-olds, they're hardly going to learn Turkish are they? But I meet people who are in their 30s or 40s and could pick it up, they say "it's too late to learn a language now", but if a Turkish person, or Polish person, or Romanian person moves to England everyone says "you must learn the language and integrate!", nobody gives a damn what age they are.

4.2. Relationships

4.2.1 The expat community

Fethiye's residential tourist community have a complicated relationship with the notion of being and mixing with the expat group that they themselves identify as. Many

participants used words like 'bitchy', 'two-faced' and 'incestuous' to describe their fellow Britons, with most indicating that the close-knitted community often leads to unhealthy relationships of gossip and nosiness:

#7: The community is small, it becomes a bit incestuous and can be unpleasant at times. Many times you make friends with fellow British people, just because they are British and you're British, but you wouldn't be friends back home.

#9: I don't mix with them at all. The gossip is too much for me, expats aren't nice people, I know that sounds bad but they're not, they're lovely to your face.

Other individuals who had relocated to the area more recently, such as interviewee 2, who had moved to the area just 6 weeks ago, had more positive impressions of the community, explaining that she finds Britons overseas significantly more friendly than back home. Whereas those who had lived in the town longer, assured that those opinions would soon change.

#2: Everyone is super friendly. We all know what we're going through, I think that's the thing, so everyone is much more friendly than they would be back home [...] I used to live on the south coast and you could walk into a pub there, be a regular at the pub, but only say hi to a very few people, but here we walk into a place and everyone says "hello! How are you? How are you finding it?". We are having conversations with everybody. So we feel very welcome. We thought maybe the expat community might be a bit cliquey, and it might be yet, but everyone has been exceptionally friendly

4.2.2 'Turkish people are the nicest people you could ever meet'

Unlike the British community, who received mostly negative reviews, the Turkish community received an overwhelmingly positive response from all. Respondents agreed that they had felt welcomed and embraced by the local population, emphasising the high degree of warmth and hospitality they had received in comparison to their experiences in the UK:

#1: love the generosity, I love how they treat their guests and their friends. I don't think you get that in England, I feel that when you live in England, you have family in England so your circle tends to be your family, a few close friends and workmates [...] But Turkish people are so forthcoming with their friendliness and warmth, there's no hidden agenda behind them.

#5: I feel 100% welcomed, Turkish people are some of the warmest people [...] compared to the UK they are the warmest people friendliest, kindest, at times when you need them the most they will rock up with dinner for you, they are the loveliest people who I have had the pleasure to live amongst

Those who speak Turkish feel that the local community shows great appreciation for their effort to learn. One respondent explained that the fact that Turkish isn't a common language to speak, which unlike Spanish or French cannot be used for communication around the world, makes locals feel an increased appreciation for those who have taken the time to learn the language. For those who have not learned Turkish, some stated that communication barriers had prevented them from making truly meaningful connections, yet also explained that even under these circumstances their neighbours have been hospitable.

Previous researchers have suggested that younger expats/those of working age have higher levels of integration with host communities, due to greater chances of interaction

at work (Bahar et al., 2009; Benson, 2010). However, this was not found to be significant within this study. Those of working age tended to work remotely and/or for non-Turkish companies, or as English teachers and therefore surrounded by fellow British/non-Native colleagues. This, therefore, did not add to their levels of integration with the host community or assist with language acquisition. This may highlight that newer forms of employment (such as remote employment, which has risen in popularity since the COVID-19 pandemic) creates little-to-no chances of work-based interactions in foreign countries, and could perhaps decrease the need to learn local languages.

A substantial factor mentioned by all participants was the cost of living, which many stated as the huge pull towards relocation in Turkey, as interviewee 2 explains, 'I just really don't understand why anyone would stay in the UK if they had any sort of disposable income like a pension'. Several suggested that price was the main factor towards choosing the country, as interviewee 5 explained 'the fact that my finances would go further here than in any other country. If I'm going to retire I may as well go here'. Interviewee 9 also recognised this, explaining that cost of living is such a determining factor that some are even relocating to cheaper options, 'a lot of people are going to Bulgaria because the beer is cheaper, Efes is 30 lira in the bars, but you can get it for €1 in Bulgaria, lots of people are moving to Bulgaria'. She goes on to explain that, because of her local Turkish husband, she has a different perspective regarding price and is very aware that local people living in Fethiye are increasingly struggling due to western residents and tourists evoking price increases:

The people who think it's wonderful and amazing are the people who have got an income from the UK that gives them a lifestyle that feels like they're on holiday, not the Turks who are wondering how they're going to get their car fixed or take their dog to the vet. But the UK make it so hard to take Turkish spouse, people are stuck. [...] I spoke to a friend who said they had an excellent steak, the best steak they've ever had, and it was cheap too. So out of interest, I asked "how much were they?" ... "oh it was great value, 170 Turkish Lira each" ... to me that's not good value, they're thinking in pounds [sterling] ... you find that a lot. People say "what are you moaning about, it's only £2" ... but for Turkish people who are working, that's ridiculously expensive

Only those with a knowledge of the Turkish language gave any mention to the hardships Turkish people may be presented with in such circumstances, which suggests that the learning of Turkish has significantly increased their knowledge of the realities of local life.

4.2.3 Misconceptions, tensions and cultural clashes

Many respondents showed a sense of pride for Turkey, wanting to protect Turkey's image and educate ignorant misconceptions of those 'back home'. Several interviewees mentioned their grievances at family, friends or colleagues' ignorance regarding Turkey and its culture. Several respondents reported that people perceive Turkey as 'backwards', 'dirty' or 'third world', speaking with frustration that many have a misinformed impression of the country:

#5: It pains me when people say "dirty turkey?" – Turkey isn't dirty, Turkish people aren't dirty [...] the country being dirty is a big misconception. I think the fact that you have to walk around fully covered up as a female is a big misconception, I think they think it's a backwards country – that word is used a lot "backwards country" or third world country, but it's not, it's not at all.

#7: When I first said I was moving here someone said “why are you moving to Turkey? it’s a barbaric country!” A lot of them don’t understand, they think it’s a third world country with no running water or electric. Unless they’ve been, they have a lot of preconceptions about it.

Those with Turkish partners experience an added dynamic of assumptions, due to the ‘Turkish toyboy’ stereotype. As Hamid-Turksoy, van Zoonen and Kuipers (2013) explain, the Turkish toyboy image has been exacerbated by sensationalist British media reportings of mature British women dating younger Turkish men. The narrative typically depicts older, lonely, naive or vulnerable British women who are fooled by much younger Turkish men to get into romantic relationships for the gains of wealth or British passports. Interviewee 9, who has a Turkish partner, stated that this is a stereotype she regularly encounters. She explains that many have told her that ‘you have to be careful, he wants a visa’, even 12 years into their marriage – but as she adds, the requirements for spousal visas are extensive, with most relationships opting to stay in Turkey, and the vast majority of relationships being for genuine love, with the toyboy storyline being a rare story making good headlines. Even those who aren’t in relationships with Turkish men explained that the toyboy assumption is so common that people have often assumed that they relocated for one:

#1: they’ll ask me “have you met somebody?” and when I say yes, they’ll assume I’ve met a Turkish man. There’s the generalisation that women go out there for a Turkish man, a Turkish toyboy.

Gender roles and women’s place in society was a factor mentioned by several female participants as something they had considered or had ‘concerns’ about prior to their relocation to the country. Women’s rights, the assumption that women must ‘cover-up’, and men’s attitudes towards women were recognised as misconceptions about Turkey, which participants agreed were not issues they had faced once settling in Fethiye. No male participants mentioned their gender as a factor in determining their experiences in Turkey, suggesting that this is a factor considerably more applicable to females. Some of these female respondents also recognised that they are living in a very westernised, touristic part of the country, in which gender issues are generally not a concern, but this may not be the case elsewhere in the country. Those who had travelled to less touristic or westernised areas noted that they saw distinct changes in women’s societal roles – interviewee 4, for example, spoke of the cultural differences regarding being female in her husband’s home village in Eastern Turkey:

I experienced a lot of cultural differences when I travelled to my in-laws, it was interesting, to say the least! I had to change the way I dress, sit, etc. Men and women do nothing together there so I had to sit in with all the wives whilst my husband went off with the men constantly. I felt like a prisoner, no freedom at all.

Much of this narrative fits into descriptions that academics have given to Turkey, where the country is often described to have vastly different cultures and societal norms within its own boundaries (Dalacoura, 2017; Greaves, 2007; Smith, 2020; Tataroğlu, 2006; 2015). This is something Smith (2020) described as two ‘camps’, with one aligning mostly towards a western and secular cultural standpoint, and the other being considered more eastern in terms of cultural and religious associations. Touristic areas have become so westernised that some have stated that they’re not the ‘real Turkey’ due to their hugely Europeanised cultural norms (Tataroğlu, 2006, p. 198)

5. Conclusion

The study revealed a complex and uncomfortable identity relationship for British residents in Fethiye. Generally, their responses corresponded with the notion of British residential tourists being considered 'expats' instead of migrants. Many respondents understood the western-centric and privileged connotations associated with the term, although this awareness did not seem to alter their self-identification. It was evident throughout the research that participants feel a degree of discomfort or embarrassment with connotations associated with expat identity, of what it means to be a Briton overseas, with most discussions involving the want to distance themselves from the expat community, ensuring that they themselves do not fall into this negative stereotype – with this being the strongest theme throughout the study.

Similarly to expat identity, the reasoning for settling in an ethnically homogeneous enclave-style destination such as Fethiye produced some inconsistencies. Many argued that moving to a 'little Britain' was not what they wanted, although this put into question why a destination such as Fethiye was chosen. As with expat identity, it seemed that stigma surrounding this style of location or type of migration made some participants feel uneasy about accepting that the comforts of a home-away-from-home style of resort is what they have chosen. Retired and older participants, however, did recognise and appreciate that an established British community in the town has provided a level of safety and reassurance. Each participant showed love for Turkey and explained that Turkish culture, particularly Turkish hospitality, played a large factor towards their choice to relocate. However, many residents also commented that cost of living in Turkey was a large pull, suggesting that the town could be replaced with a cheaper destination elsewhere. As with previously mentioned connotations surrounding expat identity, there was a similar theme here with certain responses criticising the lifestyles of fellow Britons, where those who had integrated into Turkish society due to their Turkish spouses felt that many Britons live in a 'bubble' outside of the realities of local life, with age range or employment status not making a significant difference to host-guest interactions in this case.

Throughout the study, respondents gave overwhelmingly positive responses regarding their Turkish hosts and relationships with the local population, with all agreeing that they have felt welcomed and embraced by the local community. Although the majority of participants had limited-to-no knowledge of the Turkish language, which questions the ability to fully integrate, most felt that this had not hugely impacted their ability to form friendships with local people.

6. Recommendations

There is room for further study on British residential tourist identity. Conversations regarding expats and connotations associated with the term are relatively recent; Koutonin's article 'Why are white people expats when the rest of us are immigrants', published in 2015, seems to be the first article to discuss the identity politics of western or white migrants vs non-western, non-white migrants in mainstream media. The 2016 Brexit referendum opened up further discussion regarding what it means to be a Briton overseas, with Brahic and Lallement (2018) explaining that Brexit resulted in so-called 'expats'

becoming ‘migrants’, suggesting that the identity of Britons overseas is recently changing and up for further exploration. The majority of studies regarding British residential tourism has taken place in EU states – with a significant emphasis on Spain and France (such as Brahic & Lallement, 2018; Lawson, 2014, 2016, 2018a, 2018b; O’Reilly, 2000, 2001, 2007, 2009, 2013), there is, therefore, room for further exploration of these themes outside of the EU and in developing destinations, where added dynamics of socio-cultural and economic distance can also be explored. Several female participants in this study identified their gender as an area of concern or consideration when moving overseas. Although this study briefly touched on these themes, further exploration of female experiences as residential tourists, in Turkey and elsewhere, particularly in patriarchal societies, could be selected for further study.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

Ross Bennett-Cook is a visiting lecturer in tourism and events management at the University of Westminster, with a research interest in tourist resorts, tourist spaces, and host–guest interactions.

References

- Anadolu Agency. (2017). Brits eye for Turkey’s Aegean region as a second home. [online] *Daily Sabah*. Retrieved from <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2017/08/08/brits-eye-for-turkeys-aegean-region-as-second-home>
- Andrews, H. (2005). Feeling at home: Embodying Britishness in a Spanish charter tourist resort. *Tourist Studies*, 5(3), 247–266. doi:10.1177/1468797605070336
- Andrews, H. (2008). ‘Tits out for the boys and no back chat’: Gendered space on holiday. *Space and Culture*, 12(2), 166–182.
- Andrews, H. (2010). Contours of a nation: Being British in Mallorca. In J. Scott & T. Selwyn (Eds.), *Thinking through tourism* (pp. 27–50). New York: Routledge.
- Bahar, Hİ, Laçiner, S., Bal, İ, & Özcan, M. (2009). Older migrants to the Mediterranean: the Turkish example. *Population, Space and Place*, 15(6), 509–522. doi:10.1002/psp.528
- BBC. (n.d). *BBC NEWS | Special Reports | Brits Abroad*. [online] BBC News. Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/in_depth/brits_abroad/html/default.stm
- Benson, M., & Campion, M. (2021). Brits abroad: The UK and its overseas citizens. [online] *Youtube*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbchRIPjVvk>
- Benson, M., & O’Reilly, K. (2018). Long read: let’s ditch the stereotypes about Britons who live in the EU. [online] *LSE*. Retrieved from <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2018/10/01/long-read-lets-ditch-the-stereotypes-about-britons-who-live-in-the-eu/>
- Benson, M. C. (2010). The context and trajectory of lifestyle migration. *European Societies*, 12(1), 45–64. doi:10.1080/14616690802592605
- Brahic, B., & Lallement, M. (2018). From ‘expats’ to ‘migrants’: Strategies of resilience among French movers in post-Brexit Manchester. *Migration and Development*, 9(1), 8–24. doi:10.1080/21632324.2018.1503486
- Casey, M. E. (2013). The working class on Holiday: British comedy in Benidorm and classed tourism. *pearl.plymouth.ac.uk*. [online] Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/11709>

- Cocola-Gant, A., & Lopez-Gay, A. (2020). Transnational gentrification, tourism and the formation of 'foreign only' enclaves in Barcelona. *Urban Studies*, 57(15), 3025–3043. doi:10.1177/0042098020916111
- Cohen, E. (1974). Who is a tourist?: A conceptual clarification. *The Sociological Review* [Online], 22(4), 527–555. doi:10.1111/j.1467-954x.1974.tb00507.x
- Dalacoura, K. (2017). East' and 'west' in contemporary Turkey: Threads of a new universalism. *Third World Quarterly*, 38(9), 2066–2081. doi:10.1080/01436597.2017.1315301
- Deo, R. (2012). The British abroad: expats, not immigrants | Ritwik Deo. [online] *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jul/09/british-abroad-expats-immigrants-indians>
- Duim, R. v. d. (2005). *Tourismscapes; an actor-network perspective on sustainable tourism development*. Wageningen: Wageningen Universiteit.
- Ergil, L. Y. (2019). For the love of Fethiye: Thriving expat community finds its place. [online] *Daily Sabah*. Retrieved from <https://www.dailysabah.com/expat-corner/2019/01/15/for-the-love-of-fethiye-thriving-expat-community-finds-its-place>
- Eurovizyon. (2012). *Fethiye'de bir küçük İngiltere*. [online]. <https://www.eurovizyon.co.uk/>. Retrieved from <https://www.eurovizyon.co.uk/yasam/fethiyede-bir-kucuk-ingiltere-h10821.html>
- Greaves, A. M. (2007). Trans-Anatolia: Examining Turkey as a bridge between east and west. *Anatolian Studies*. [online], 57, 1–15. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20455388>
- Hall, M. (2012). Residential integration on the new frontier: Immigrant segregation in established and new destinations. *Demography*, 50(5), 1873–1896. doi:10.1007/s13524-012-0177-x
- Hamid-Türksoy, N., van Zoonen, L., & Kuipers, G. (2013). I dumped my husband for a Turkish Toyboy. *Feminist Media Studies*, 14(5), 806–821. doi:10.1080/14680777.2013.792855
- Huete, R., & Mantecón, A. (2012). Residential tourism or lifestyle migration. Social problems linked to the non-definition of the situation. In O. Moufakkir & P. M. Burns (Eds.), *Controversies in tourism* (pp. 160–169). Wallingford: CABI.
- Hui, A. (2009). Many homes for tourism: Re-considering spatializations of home and away in tourism mobilities. *Tourist Studies*, 8(3), 291–311. doi:10.1177/1468797608100591
- Ivanovic, M. (2008). *Cultural tourism* (p. 7). Cape Town: Juta.
- Jacobsen, J. K. S. (2003). The tourist bubble and the Europeanisation of holiday travel. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 1(1), 71–87. doi:10.1080/14766820308668160
- Jerrim, J. (2015). *Emigrants from Great Britain: What do we know about their lives?* [online] Retrieved from https://www.oecd.org/education/emigrants_report_final_feb_2015.pdf
- Jordan, B., & Duvell, F. (2003). *Migration: The boundaries of equality and justice*. Cambridge: Policity Press.
- Ker-Lindsay, J. (2018). Did the unfounded claim that Turkey was about to join the EU Swing the Brexit referendum? [online] *British Politics and Policy at LSE*. Retrieved from <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/unfounded-claim-turkey-swing-brexit-referendum/>
- King, B. (2001). Resort-based tourism on the pleasure periphery. In D. Harrison (Ed.), *Tourism and the less developed world: Issues and case studies* (pp. 175–187). Wallingford: CABI.
- King, R., Warnes, T., & Williams, A. M. (2000). *Sunset lives: British retirement migration to the Mediterranean*. Oxford: Berg.
- Kirişçi, K., & Ekim, S. (2016). Brexit, the politics of fear, and Turkey the boogeyman. [online] *Brookings*. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/06/23/brexit-the-politics-of-fear-and-turkey-the-boogeyman/>
- Kothari, U. (2015). Reworking colonial imaginaries in post-colonial tourist enclaves. *Tourist Studies*, 15(3), 248–266. doi:10.1177/1468797615579566
- Koutonin, M. R. (2015). Mawuna Remarque Koutonin. [online] *The Guardian*. Retrieved from [https://cdn.awpwriter.org/uploads/conference_event/18585/Why_are_white_people_expats_\(The_Guardian\)_Koutonin_\(13_March_2015\).pdf](https://cdn.awpwriter.org/uploads/conference_event/18585/Why_are_white_people_expats_(The_Guardian)_Koutonin_(13_March_2015).pdf)
- Lawson, M. (2014). An invading army without a spirit of adventure: Media representations of the British in France. *Dosalgaves*, 24.

- Lawson, M. (2016). Narrative positioning and 'integration' in lifestyle migration: British migrants in Ariège, France. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 17(1), 58–75. doi:10.1080/14708477.2016.1165242
- Lawson, M. (2018a). Britons reluctant to appear part of a British Expat Community in France – Brexit could change that. [online] *The Conversation*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/britons-reluctant-to-appear-part-of-a-british-expat-community-in-france-brexit-could-change-that-86166>
- Lawson, M. (2018b). *Britons reluctant to appear part of a British Expat Community in France – Brexit could change that*. [online] *The Conversation*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/britons-reluctant-to-appear-part-of-a-british-expat-community-in-france-brexit-could-change-that-86166>
- Marshall, T. (2021). *Power of geography: Ten maps that reveal the future of Our world*. London: S.L. Scribner.
- Milano, C., Novelli, M., & Cheer, J. M. (2019). Overtourism and tourismphobia: A journey through four decades of tourism development, planning and local concerns. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 16(4), 353–357.
- O'Reilly, K. (2000). The new Europe/ old boundaries: British migrants in Spain. *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, 22(4), 477–491.
- O'Reilly, K. (2001). Blackpool in the sun: Images of the British on the Costa del Sol. In R. King & N. Woods (Eds.), *Media and migration* (pp. 173–186). London: Taylor & Francis Group.
- O'Reilly, K. (2007). *Emerging tourism futures: Residential tourism and its implications*. [online] repository.lboro.ac.uk, Loughborough University. Available at: <https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/6117> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2021].
- O'Reilly, K. (2008). Britain in Europe/the British in Spain: exploring Britain's changing relationship to the other through the attitudes of its emigrants. *Nations and Nationalism*, 8(2), 179–193. doi:10.1111/nana.2002.8.issue-2.
- O'Reilly, K. (2009). Hosts and guests, guests and hosts: British residential tourism in the Costa del So. In P. Obrador Pons, M. Crang, & P. Travlou (Eds.), *Cultures of mass tourism: Doing the Mediterranean in the age of banal mobilities* (pp. 129–142). Farnham: Routledge.
- O'Reilly, K. (2013). *The British on The Costa Del Sol*. Hoboken: Taylor And Francis.
- Peck, T. (2017). Immigrants 'should be made to learn English on arrival in UK' to help integration. [online] *The Independent*. Retrieved from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/chuka-umunna-immigrants-should-be-made-learn-english-arrival-uk-classes-esol-social-integration-a7509666.html>
- Prayag, G. (2015). Beyond enclave tourism: The road to sustainability of Mauritius. In D. Morpeth & H. Yan (Eds.), *Planning for tourism: Towards a sustainable future* (pp. 240–258). Oxfordshire: CABI.
- Prieto-Arranz, J. I., & Casey, M. E. (2014). The British working class on holiday: A critical reading of ITV's Benidorm. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 12(1), 68–83. doi:10.1080/14766825.2013.877472
- Saarinen, J., & Wall-Reinius, S. (2019). Enclaves in tourism: Producing and governing exclusive spaces for tourism. *Tourism Geographies*, 21(5), 739–748. doi:10.1080/14616688.2019.1668051
- Smith, H. L. (ed.). (2020). *Erdogan rising: The battle for the soul of Turkey*. London: William Collins.
- Tataroğlu, E. (2006). *Conceptual analysis of tourism: The case of Marmaris Town* (PhD Thesis). Retrieved from <https://etd.lib.metu.edu.tr/upload/12607136/index.pdf>
- Tataroğlu, E. (2015). *Conceptual analysis of tourism: The case of Marmaris town*. Turkey: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Trip Advisor. (n.d.). *A British Village - Fethiye Message Board - Tripadvisor*. [online] www.tripadvisor.co.uk. Retrieved from https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowTopic-g298031-i1222-k2066353-A_British_Village-Fethiye_Mugla_Province_Turkish_Aegean_Coast.html
- Urry, J. (1990). *The tourist gaze: Leisure and travel in contemporary societies*. London: Sage.
- Warnes, A. (1991). Migration to and seasonal residence in Spain of northern European elderly people. *European Journal of Gerontology*, 1, 53–60.

- Werber, C. (2016). The UK is weirdly terrified of immigration from one specific country. [online] *Quartz*. Retrieved from <https://qz.com/773676/the-uk-is-weirdly-terrified-of-immigration-from-one-specific-country/>
- White, S. (2010). <http://www.travel-conference.co.uk/commentries.php?paper=14>. [online] TSVC | Tourism Students Virtual Conference. Retrieved from <http://www.travel-conference.co.uk/commentries.php?paper=14>
- Williams, S. (1998). *Tourism geography*. London: Routledge.
- Yüzde Yüz Haber. (2011). Küçük İngiltere: *Fethiye*. [online] <https://www.haberyuzdeyuz.com/>. Retrieved from <https://www.haberyuzdeyuz.com/yasam/kucuk-ingiltere-fethiye-h687.html>