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## Diaspora tourism: The case of Timor-Leste

### Abstract

Timor-Leste is the newest Asian nation, achieving independence on May 20, 2002, and, after petroleum and agriculture, tourism is considered a strategic sector for its national economic development. The previous literature suggests that new destinations should explore the potential demand for diaspora members to visit or revisit friends and relatives in their homeland as a niche market and an opportunity for tourism development. This is because diaspora members abroad can spread information about the attractions of homeland locations as well as invest directly in building the tourist facilities needed in such locations. Timor-Leste is quite an unstudied country as a tourism destination, especially from the demand perspective. Thus, this study intends to contribute to a better knowledge of diaspora members as potential tourists visiting Timor-Leste. In particular, using data from 362 questionnaires applied to Timorese diaspora members residing in Portugal, Indonesia and Australia, the aim of this study is to explore this niche market by identifying and analyzing their characteristics, including their cultural identity, place attachment, expectations, and motivations related to a potential (re)visit to their homeland in Timor-Leste.

**Key words:** diaspora tourism; cultural identity; motivation; travel decision; Timor-Leste

### Introduction

Many researchers have studied the diaspora phenomenon as a niche market in the tourism industry (Huang, Haller & Ramshaw, 2011; Newland & Tanaka, 2010; Pan, 2008; Taylor & Newland, 2010; Wong-Mingji, 1999). Diaspora tourism can help new destinations to enter the international tourism market, mainly because these tourists can spread information about the attractions of their homeland locations. Moreover, they may be motivated to invest directly in building new tourist facilities or bringing the existing ones up to the international tourism standards that they have come to expect as a result of their experiences abroad (Taylor & Newland, 2010).

Timor-Leste emerged as Asia's newest nation on May 20, 2002. It experienced four hundred and fifty years of Portuguese colonization, three years of Australian and Japanese occupation during World War II, and twenty-four years of Indonesian occupation followed by two-and-a-half years of provisional United Nations (UN) administration (Loureiro, 2001; Myrntinen, 2009; Sousa, 2003). During Indonesia's occupation of Timor-Leste (1975–1999), an estimated 20,000 Timorese people were living as refugees in Australia, more than 10,000 in Portugal, and a few in Macau, Mozambique, Ireland, the United States, Canada, and other parts of the world (Wise, 2004). Likewise, a bloody conflict that occurred after the Referendum of August 30, 1999 resulted in the deaths of thousands of people, and more than 250,000 Timorese people were displaced to Indonesia (Carter, Prideaux, Ximenes & Chatenay 2001; La'o Hamutuk, 2003).

The Government of Timor-Leste (2002–2011) considers tourism as one of the strategic sectors and priorities for national economic development after petroleum and agriculture (TL-SDP, 2011). Recent

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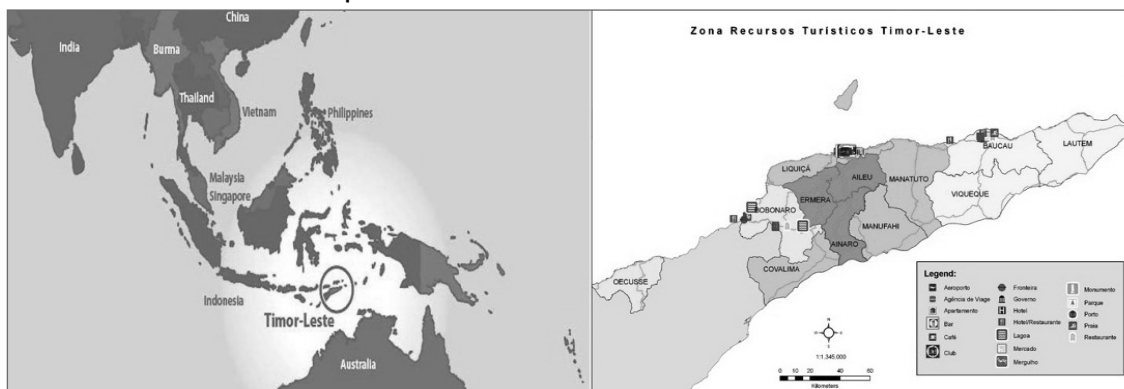
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research points out that Timor-Leste, as a new tourism destination, should explore the demand of diaspora tourists to visit or revisit friends and relatives (VFR) (Novelli, Morgan & Nibigira, 2012). This study is dedicated to this form of niche tourism in this new country. The objective is to explore the Timorese diaspora as a niche market by identifying and analyzing its members' socio-demographic profile, travel and visit characteristics, expectations beyond the decision to return to or revisit their homeland, and signals of the cultural identity, memories related to place attachment, and motivations. Since Timor-Leste is still taking its first steps as a destination, this research can contribute to a better knowledge of this potential niche market and thus to the development of marketing strategies to increase the Timorese diaspora demand and improve the experiences of diaspora tourists as homecoming travelers.

## Research setting

The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste arose as Asia's newest country in 2002. It is located 600 km northwest of Australia and occupies the eastern half of Timor Island, with the western part belonging to Indonesia (Figure 1). It covers an area of 15,000 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of about 1.1 million. The Timor-Leste currency is the American dollar (US\$). The country has experienced recent fast economic growth (the 2012 GDP growth was 8.5%). The GDP per capita is US\$ 5,176 (2011); nevertheless, the poverty rate is 41% (2011). Most residents of Timor-Leste work in agriculture. Oil exploration is an important source of economic wealth and also the major sector contributing to the annual budget of the Government of Timor-Leste (MF-RDTL, 2014).

Figure 1  
Timor-Leste in Asia and Pacific map



Source: DNE (2010).

The Ministry of Tourism intends to achieve the objectives defined in the 2011–2030 strategic development plan, including infrastructures, capacity building, marketing communication, and funding for rural business development (TL-SDP, 2011). Nevertheless, the budget allocated to tourism development was extremely small during the post-independence years of Timor-Leste, and practically all of it was dedicated to the payment of employee salaries.

From the restoration of independence in 1999 until 2012, a number of hotels (around 61), travel agencies (20), and restaurants (75) opened to accommodate United Nations peacekeeping staff and foreign aid workers (Tolkach, 2013; Vong & Valle, 2013). The current tourism development focuses on natural and cultural assets and emphasizes community-based tourism and ecotourism (Tolkach,

2013). Snorkeling and diving are popular activities. The mountainous interior has potential for hiking, trekking, and mountain biking (Cabasset-Semedo, 2009). The country has a long cultural and historical heritage related to the traditional cultures, the Portuguese colonization, and the resistance against Indonesian occupation (Tolkach, 2013; Vong, Valle & Silva, 2014). Some institutions deliver hospitality and tourism education (albeit without field experience), such as the Dili Institute of Technology (DIT), the National University Timor Lorosae (UNTL), and other tourism and hospitality training centers in Dili.

Tourism development commenced in the Timor–Portuguese period from 1968 to 1975, attracting 5,000 tourists annually (Oliveira & Silva, 2013). During Indonesia's occupation, from 1975 until 1988, there was no tourism development, but between 1989 and 1991 more or less 3,000 international visitors came to Timor-Leste. Most of them were NGO workers and journalists traveling on tourist visas with the objective of informing the situation in Timor-Leste to the world (Tolkach, 2013). In 2012 some 55,000 international tourists visited Timor-Leste, spending \$21 million, and this number increased to 78,000 (42%) in 2013 (UNWTO, 2014). However, limitations in the infrastructure and human resources are still major impediments to tourism development (Tolkach, King & Pearlman, 2013).

## Theoretical framework

### Diaspora and tourism

A diaspora can be defined as individual persons or groups, including political refugees, guest workers, expellees, immigrants, ethnic and racial minorities, and foreigner displaced persons, who feel, maintain, or revive a connection with a prior home (Huang et al., 2011; Tchouassi & Sikod, 2010). Diaspora members have a history of dispersal, memories of the homeland, alienation in the host country, a desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity defined by the above relationships (Duval, 2003; Tchouassi & Sikod, 2010). Theoretically, a diaspora can be defined as a conceptual construct based on consciousness, feelings, mythology, history, memory, meaningful narratives longings, group identity, and dreams, both virtual and allegorical (Collins-Kreiner & Olsen, 2004).

In general, it is assumed that diaspora members will promote tourism and the national brand in the host countries; at the same time, the expectation is that migrants will promote tourism in their countries of origin (Newland, 2011). The expectations of diaspora members on returning to their count for the purpose of living, working, or investment are that they will be able to make use of all the means and new skills that they have acquired during their migratory experiences with a view to achieving similar goals in their country of origin (Cassarino, 2004). Nonetheless, returned or visiting diaspora members are unlikely to be change agents in their home countries, because they could be seen as "jeopardizing the established situation and the traditional power structure" (Cassarino, 2004, str. 258).

Several researchers have examined diaspora-related tourism, which has been growing into a significant market niche since at least the 1970s, and many destinations now design and market tourism products to diaspora communities around the world (Collins-Kreiner & Olsen, 2004; Newland & Tanaka, 2010). The diaspora tourism market is a type of market in which the supply side meets the diaspora tourists' demands and needs through a customer-focused approach. This means putting tourist requirements and expectations at the center of the marketing approach (Collins-Kreiner & Olsen, 2004; Newland, 2011; Newland & Tanaka, 2010; Sasson, Mittelberg, Hecht & Saxe, 2011; Swart, 2010). To attract the diaspora tourists, strategic marketing is required based on an integrated effort to identify, maintain, and build up a network of individual consumers. Networks should be strengthened for the mutual

benefit of both sides through interactive, individualized, and value-added contacts over a long period of time from generation to generation (Fyall, Callod & Edwards, 2003).

Many diaspora tourists preserve strong economic, political, peacebuilding, reconciliation, and religious ties to their homeland; thus, when they travel back to their homeland, they are potentially more prone to sustaining and improving the well-being of the local residents, preserving cultural and environment aspects (Huang et al., 2011; Novelli et al., 2012; Taylor & Newland, 2010). Diaspora tourism deserves especial attention because there are motivations and characteristics that are particular to this type of tourists. These include the memories related to place attachment and the motivations and expectations that they have created before the decision to return to or revisit their homeland (Ben-Moshe & Pyke, 2012; Hou, Lin & Morais, 2005; King & Christou, 2008; Newland, 2011).

## Cultural identity and place attachment

Cultural identity refers to a sense of solidarity with the ideals of a given cultural group and to the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors manifested toward one's own and other cultural groups as a result of this solidarity (Schwartz, Montgomery & Briones, 2006). Furthermore, identity functions as a self-regulatory social-psychological issue. Individuals adopt identities through processes characterized (a) by imitation and identification or (b) by exploration, construction, and experience (Schwartz et al., 2006). Identity functions to provide (a) the structure for understanding who one is; (b) meaning and direction through commitments, values, and goals; (c) a sense of personal control; (d) consistency, coherence, and harmony between values, beliefs, and commitments; and (e) the ability to reorganize potential in the future possibilities and choices (Adams & Marshall, 1996).

Attachment to a destination has been an important topic of empirical inquiry for researchers in psychology, leisure, and outdoor recreation. The study of attachment to a destination focuses on specific environmental settings that are meaningful to people, groups, and communities, that is, cultural meaning when individuals experience this in searching for their genealogical roots (Hou, Lin & Morais, 2005b; Ruting, 2012). According to these authors, place attachment includes the cognitive and emotional linkage of an individual with a place, and visitors with different cultural backgrounds from the host country may develop different levels of belongingness to the destination and identity. Based on place attachment, other behaviors can be identified, such as behavioral routines and techniques, styles of dress and address, memories, myths, and stories (Iorio & Corsale, 2013).

Diaspora tourists usually maintain cultural and psychological attachment to their places of origin and ties with their homelands, even after several generations (Iorio & Corsale, 2013). One of the most common ways to sustain ties with the homeland is to travel with the aim of preserving or strengthening personal and emotional links and rediscovering places. Indeed, connections to the homeland are major motivators of the tourism flows of diaspora members and their descendants who wish to rediscover their roots and to re-experience their former homeland (Iorio & Corsale, 2013). As diaspora members are exposed to the cultural ideals and interact with the new social environment, they are likely to change. Diaspora people seek to locate themselves within their receiving and heritage cultures and to maintain a sense of self-consistency while considering new possibilities (Schwartz et al., 2006; Serafini & Adams, 2002).

## Tourists' motivations

Crompton (1979) empirically identified the motives that push or pull tourists to leave their home to travel. The pull factors are related to destination attractions: natural attractiveness (scenery, climate, or

beach); building attractions (historic sites, resorts, or theme parks); or cultural attractions (museums or art galleries). The push factors are evident at the individual or social level or as a combination of the two. Examples of push factors include escape from routine, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships, facilitation of social interaction, novelty, and education (Crompton, 1979; Lepp, 2008).

Based on the sociological theory, Dann (1977) found two main motivations for tourist travel that concentrated on "push" factors, in particular those stemming from "anomie" and "ego enhancement" in the tourists themselves. Anomie reflects absolute independence and sovereign will. It is the desire to transcend the feeling of loneliness inherent to daily life. In other words, people need love, affection, and communication with others (Moniz, 2006). Important motivations are stimulation, personal development, relationship, security, self-actualization, nostalgia, romance, recognition, escape, relaxation, relationship enhancement, and self-development (Konu & Laukkanen, 2009; Pearce & Lee, 2005). To put it differently, the motivations are connected to individuals' basic needs to participate in diverse activities, develop preferences, and expect satisfaction (Konu & Laukkanen, 2009).

Regarding diaspora tourism, the motivations to return to and visit the homeland vary from visiting friends and relatives (VFR), maintaining network affiliations, and economic motives to rediscovering the ancestral culture (Cassarino, 2004; Duval, 2003; King & Christou, 2008).

## Research methodology

The empirical study was conducted in 3 countries: Portugal, Indonesia, and Australia. The three countries were selected because they were the most important receivers of the Timorese diaspora. The population of this study consisted of people aged over 18 years who had been living in those countries for more than 3 years. Based on the "snowball" technique, a total of 520 people with these characteristics were identified with the following breakdown: Portugal (195), Indonesia (168), and Australia (157).

A questionnaire was designed to obtain data for this study. The questionnaire was structured in two parts. Part one – which collected socio-demographic information – contained questions about gender, age, and education levels. Part two assessed the following dimensions: identity, experiences, motivation, potential of the tourism industry, destination image, satisfaction, and expectation. Each dimension was measured using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from one – strongly disagree – to five – strongly agree).

The data collection instrument was sent by email using the online platform "<https://spreadsheets.google.com>" to the 520 individuals previously identified. Of the questionnaires received, a total of 362, 131 came from Portugal, 118 from Indonesia, and 113 from Australia. These represent a response rate of 67%, 70%, and 72% of the target population in each country.

After completion of the questionnaire, the data were analyzed using the software package SPSS followed by interpretation of the results.

## Results and discussion

### Socio-demographic characteristics

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the 362 respondents in the three research sites. In the overall sample, 53.8% of the respondents were male, and 26.4% were aged between 28 and 37 years. The highest education level attained by 36.7% of the respondents was achieved through polytechnics and

professional courses. 74.4% of the respondents were employed. The majority of the respondents (91.8%) were born in Timor-Leste, and 49.0% were married. Most of the respondents had dual nationality, such as Timorese–Portuguese (64.1% in Portugal) and Timorese–Australian (72.6% in Australia). Of the Timorese people living in Indonesia, 78.8% had single Indonesian nationality.

Table 1  
Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

Variables and items	Country of residence (%)		
	Portugal	Indonesia	Australia
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	55.0	57.6	48.7
Female	45.0	42.4	51.3
<b>Age</b>			
18–27 years	32.8	26.3	17.7
28–37 years	28.2	11.0	39.8
38–47 years	15.3	22.9	35.4
48–57 years	12.2	33.1	3.5
>58 years	11.5	6.8	3.5
<b>Marital status</b>			
Single	58.8	30.5	46.9
Married	32.1	64.4	50.4
Other	9.2	5.1	2.7
<b>Occupation</b>			
Unemployment	27.5	27.1	22.1
Employment	72.5	72.9	77.9
<b>Education</b>			
Primary school	0.0	0.0	0.9
Secondary school	32.8	28.8	31.9
Polytechnic professional	48.1	41.5	20.4
Bachelor degree	8.4	11.1	37.0
Master degree	9.2	14.4	8.0
PhD/doctoral degree	1.5	4.2	1.8
<b>Place of birth</b>			
Timor-Leste	95.4	94.9	85.0
Portugal	3.8	0.0	0.9
Australia	0.0	0.0	14.2
Indonesia	0.8	5.1	0.0
<b>Nationality</b>			
Timorese	34.4	19.5	23.0
Timorese–Portuguese	64.1	1.7	4.4
Timorese–Australian	1.5	0.0	72.6
Indonesia	0.0	78.8	0.0

## Travel and visit characteristics

Table 2 shows that most respondents have traveled back home while residing in their current country of residence: 67.9% of the diaspora respondents residing in Portugal; 84.7% residing in Indonesia; and 88.5% in Australia. A large percentage of the respondents have returned home to Timor-Leste once over the last 10 years (Portugal, 42.0%; Australia, 51.3%). In contrast, 40.7% of the respondents residing in Indonesia have returned to Timor-Leste 5 times or more. This was an expected result due to the proximity between the two countries. The travel pattern reflects the holiday season in Portugal

and in Australia. In fact, of those living in Portugal, the most popular month to return is July, which is a typical month for vacations. For those living in Indonesia or Australia, and due the same motive, the preferred month to return is December. The arrivals have become more frequent since 2011, maybe because of the increase in the number of tourist infrastructures available. The majority of the respondents traveled by air (Indonesia, 62.7%, Portugal, 67.9%, and Australia, 88.5%) to reach Timor-Leste. Most of the respondents living in Indonesia (59.3%) and Australia (62.8%) traveled to Timor-Leste with their families, while 38.2% arriving from Portugal came alone. This last result is probably explained by the high travel costs of traveling from Europe to Timor-Leste.

Most of the respondents from Portugal (38.2%) and Australia (38.1%) visited all the districts in Timor-Leste, which are thirteen, as shown in Figure 1, while 68.6% of the respondents from Indonesia just visited Dili, at the north of the country (Table 3). The majority of the respondents stayed at family members' houses (Portugal, 63.4%, Indonesia, 74.6%, and Australia, 77.0%). Examining the length of stay in Timor-Leste, the results show that most of the respondents stayed from 3 to 4 weeks (Portugal, 29%, Australia, 33.6%, and Indonesia, 35.6%).

Table 2  
Travel characteristics  
(percentage of those with an affirmative answer)

Variables and items	Country of residence (%)		
	Portugal	Indonesia	Australia
Have you traveled back home for visits since residing in Portugal/Indonesia/Australia?	67.9	84.7	88.5
If yes, how many trips have you made to Timor-Leste over the last 10 years?			
None	32.1	15.3	11.5
One	42.0	14.4	51.3
Two	15,3	16,1	20,4
Three or more	10,7	54,3	16,8
When was your last arrival to Timor-Leste (year)?			
2006	0.0	0.0	0.9
2007	3.1	0.8	0.9
2008	4.6	1.7	8.0
2009	6.1	0.0	3.5
2010	6.9	6.8	9.7
2011	10.7	15.3	19.5
2012	26.0	22.0	24.8
2013	0.8	28.0	9.7
Who accompanied you on your visit to Timor-Leste?			
Family	16.0	59.3	62.8
Friends	6.9	0.8	5.3
Co-workers	6.9	8.5	7.1
Business partner	0.0	3.4	0.0
Nobody	38.2	12.7	13.3

Table 3

**Characteristics of the visit  
(percentage of those with an affirmative answer)**

Variables and items	Country of residence (%)		
	Portugal	Indonesia	Australia
<b>Districts visited</b>			
Dili – Atauro	15.3	68.6	13.3
Manatuto (Sanctuary Aitara Soibada)	1.5	3.4	4.4
Baucau (Venilale, Matebian)	3.8	0.0	8.8
Lautem (Lospalos, Com, Jaco)	3.8	1.7	7.1
Aiinaro – Maubisse – Ramelau	3.8	0.0	4.4
Other	1.6	0.8	12.5
All districts	38.2	10.2	38.1
<b>Accommodation</b>			
Family house	63.4	74.6	77.0
Hotel	1.5	7.6	1.8
Other (e.g., guest house, friend's house, motel)	3.1	2.4	9.8
<b>Length of stay</b>			
Less than 1 week	0.8	4.2	9.7
1–2 weeks	9.2	35.6	32.7
3–4 weeks	29.0	35.6	33.6
2–3 months	19.8	4.2	8.8
4–12 months	9.2	5.1	3.5

**Timorese diaspora expectations**

The expectations of Timorese diaspora members are presented in Table 4. All the respondents intend to visit and revisit their homeland in Timor-Leste, with a very high percentage planning to visit in the next 5 years (83.1%, 80.9%, and 97.3% of the residents in Indonesia, Portugal, and Australia, respectively). In terms of the location to visit, 46.6% of the respondents from Indonesia prefer Dili, while 46.6% of the respondents from Portugal and 41.6% of the respondents from Australia would like to visit all the districts. A possible explanation for the Indonesians' preferences is the proximity between the two countries, geographical and even cultural, in the sense that the tourism experience they can have in Timor-Leste may not seem very challenging. So, they choose Dili, the capital of the country, probably to do business. Diaspora tourists from Portugal and Australia, especially the former, have fewer opportunities to return, due distance and associated travel costs, and therefore they are willing to visit more places in one visit. Moreover, due the cultural differences, Timor-Leste has an image of an exotic destination, where all districts have something different to reveal and visit.

Table 4

**Diaspora expectations (percentage of those with an affirmative answer)**

Variables and items	Country of residence (%)		
	Portugal	Indonesia	Australia
<b>Plans for future visits</b>	100	100	100
<b>Likelihood of visiting in the next 5 years</b>	80.9	83.1	97.3
<b>Locations to visit</b>			
Dili – Atauro	16.8	46.6	21.2
Manatuto (Sanctuary Aitara Soibada)	2.3	7.6	9.7
Baucau (Venilale, Matebian)	7.6	1.7	3.5
Lautem (Lospalos, Com, Jaco)	9.9	5.1	6.2



Table 4 Continued

Variables and items	Country of residence (%)		
	Portugal	Indonesia	Australia
Aiinaro – Maubisse – Ramelau	5.3	4.2	6.2
Ermera	2.3	2.5	0.0
Bobonaro (thermal waters, Be Malae)	2.3	0.8	2.7
Other	6.8	5.8	8.9
All districts	46.6	25.4	41.6

## Tourism and social development evaluation

Table 5 shows the results of the respondents' evaluation of various attributes that are relevant to tourism and social development in Timor-Leste. For many attributes the respondents demonstrated a very low level of satisfaction. For example, regarding "tourism development," only 9.9% of the diaspora members residing in Portugal expressed satisfaction (10.6% and 15.3% among the diaspora members residing in Australia and Indonesia, respectively). Overall, the item best evaluated is "process of peace and reconciliation," with 59.3% of the respondents from Australia expressing satisfaction (39.0% and 29% within the diaspora members residing in Indonesia and Portugal, respectively).

When evaluating the quality of tourism and other facilities, the respondents in the three countries of residence also expressed very low levels of satisfaction (Table 5). The lowest percentages of satisfaction were found among Portuguese residents. Overall, the respondents were particularly critical of the following tourism-related attributes: "tour guides," "tourist information centers," "nightlife offerings," and "travel agencies". Regarding the other attributes of the country, all tourists are especially concerned with "collection and processing of solid waste", "basic sanitation" and "drainage and waste water treatment".

Table 5  
Evaluation of social development and tourism attributes in Timor-Leste  
(percentage of those expressing satisfaction)

Variables and items	Country of residence (%)		
	Portugal	Indonesia	Australia
<b>Social development attributes</b>			
Tourism development	9.9	15.3	10.6
Economic development	14.5	34.7	15.9
Political development	10.7	31.4	31.9
Social security and safety	16.0	33.1	46.9
National stability	25.2	33.1	57.5
Process of peace and reconciliation	29.0	39.0	59.3
<b>Tourist attributes</b>			
Tourist accommodation – hotels, apartments, guest houses (variety and quality)	11.5	14.4	25.7
Restaurant offerings (variety and quality)	9.9	25.4	41.6
General recreation offerings	8.4	14.4	48.7
Cultural offerings	18.3	39.8	36.3
Nightlife offerings	7.6	7.6	3.5
Travel agencies	6.9	16.1	34.5
Tour guides	4.6	12.7	8.8
Car rentals	9.2	28.0	31.0
Shopping centers	8.4	24.6	20.4
Tourist information centers	3.8	22.9	1.8
Parks and gardens	9.9	38.1	39.8
Cleaning and maintaining beaches and tourist attractions	10.7	19.5	13.3

Table 5 Continued

Variables and items	Country of residence (%)		
	Portugal	Indonesia	Australia
<b>Other attributes of the country</b>			
Water supply	4.6	33.1	26.5
Electricity generation, distribution, and reliability	6.9	28.8	31.9
Public lighting	4.6	12.7	11.5
Basic sanitation	3.1	15.3	7.1
Collection and processing of solid waste	3.1	11.9	7.1
Drainage and waste water treatment	3.1	16.1	8.0
Road cleaning	5.3	15.3	11.5
Security and policing	12.2	32.2	42.5
Civil protection services	9.2	33.1	37.2
Banks and currency exchange	15.3	44.1	35.4
Communications (post and telecommunications)	15.3	46.6	34.5
Health services	11.5	28.8	34.5

## Cultural identity and place attachment

Table 6 shows that, overall, 63.8% of the respondents decided to migrate from Timor-Leste between 1975 and 1999 during the Indonesian occupation. Of these migrants, 30.5% moved to Portugal, 73.5% moved to Australia, and 87.3% moved to Indonesia (following the referendum for self-determination of the Timor-Leste Government on August 30, 1999). Most of the respondents gave their reason for migration as educational (94.2%), economic (81.5%), to reunite with family (61.6%), and to seek refuge or asylum (61.2%). The majority (96.3%) of the respondents still recognize themselves as Timorese. Significantly, 75.5% of the respondents perceive themselves as Timorese by the food they eat, 60.9% by the language they speak, 62.8% by the clothes they wear, and 75.8% by their nationality. Of the respondents, 28.8% speak Portuguese, 61.6% speak English, 66.5% speak Tetun, and 74.7% speak Indonesian. The survey asked how often they talked about Timor-Leste with others. Of all the respondents, 58.0% talked about Timor-Leste daily, 27.4% weekly, and 14.6% monthly. Most of the respondents (69.2%) talked with their families and 68.7% of the respondents said that culture was the most frequently discussed topic.

Table 6  
Cultural identity and place attachment  
(percentage of those with an affirmative answer)

Variables and items	Country of residence (%)		
	Portugal	Indonesia	Australia
<b>Period of emigration</b>			
Portuguese times (1966–1974)	4.6	0.0	0.0
Indonesian times (1975–1999)	30.5	87.3	73.5
UNTAET (2000–2001)	12.2	0.0	5.3
RDTL (2002–2013)	52.7	12.7	21.2
<b>Reasons for out-migration from Timor-Leste</b>			
Economics	83.2	77.1	84.1
Education	94.7	91.5	96.5
Joint family	61.8	61.0	61.9
Refuge/asylum	56.5	68.6	58.4
<b>Identified as a Timorese person</b>	97.7	95.8	95.6

Table 6 Continued

Variables and items	Country of residence (%)		
	Portugal	Indonesia	Australia
<b>Ways one can be identified as a Timorese person</b>			
The food	77.1	61.9	87.6
The language	38.9	67.8	76.1
The dress	72.5	39.8	76.1
The nationality	84.7	56.8	85.8
<b>Level of communication in language(s)</b>			
Tetum	48.1	78.0	73.5
Portuguese	45.0	5.9	35.4
English	67.9	17.8	99.1
Indonesia	83.2	93.2	47.8
<b>How often do you discuss Timor-Leste with others?</b>			
Daily	58.8	55.9	59.3
Weekly	28.2	22.9	31.0
Monthly	13.0	21.2	9.7
<b>Who do you talk to most frequently about Timor-Leste?</b>			
Family	52.7	76.3	78.8
Co-workers	10.7	6.8	0.0
Colleague students	19.1	11.9	19.5
Friends	17.6	5.1	1.8
<b>What topic related to Timor-Leste do you talk about most frequently?</b>			
Culture	72.5	61.9	71.7
Economics	9.9	15.3	27.4
Politics	4.6	3.4	0.0
Education	8.4	11.0	0.9
Tourism	3.1	4.2	0.0
Others	1.5	4.2	0.0

## Timorese diaspora motivations to travel home

Most respondents agreed with the importance of the pull attributes listed in Table 7 for attracting diaspora members to visit or revisit their homeland in Timor-Leste. Table 7 shows some differences between the respondents regarding some specific attributes. For example, in responding to the attribute "uniqueness of the destination" (natural resource attractions and cultural identity), the Timorese diaspora members in Indonesia attributed less importance (58.5%) to it than other respondents residing in Australia (97.3%) and in Portugal (97.7%). We can interpret this result as reflecting the similarities and geographical closeness of Timor-Leste and Indonesia.

Overall, the respondents attached very low importance to "entertainment activities and nightlife" (11.9%, 28.2%, and 37.2% of the residents in Indonesia, Portugal, and Australia, respectively). Similarly, the respondents were not very preoccupied with "hospitality of the residents" (31.9%, 31.9%, and 36.6% of the residents in Indonesia, Portugal, and Australia, respectively). A possible explanation is that they feel at home, sociable, and integrated with their family in Timor-Leste. For the attribute "security and social stability," most of the respondents were very concerned (79.7%, 81.7%, and 89.4% of the residents in Indonesia, Portugal, and Australia, respectively).

Table 7

**Pull attributes to (re)visit Timor-Leste (percentage of those who reported importance)**

Attributes	Country of residence (%)		
	Portugal	Indonesia	Australia
Uniqueness of the destination (natural resource attractions and cultural identity)	97.7	58.5	97.3
Access to telecommunications (telephone, Internet, mail)	76.3	56.8	75.2
Availability of parks or gardens	84.0	53.4	59.3
Beaches and bathing areas	93.9	75.4	93.8
Availability of accommodation	90.8	52.5	87.6
Availability of local transport	71.8	55.9	83.2
Living cost	71.8	74.6	70.8
Opportunities to practice sports and leisure activities	60.3	54.2	70.8
Landscape	87.0	81.4	97.3
Food and dining	80.9	67.8	77.9
Entertainment activities and nightlife	28.2	11.9	37.2
Historical and architectural heritage, monuments, and museums	67.2	55.9	83.2
Cultural events	66.4	66.9	90.3
Religious events	57.3	73.7	85.0
Opportunities for shopping	57.3	73.7	85.0
Hospitality of the residents	36.6	33.9	31.9
Tranquility, rhythm of life	78.6	66.1	85.8
Security and social stability	86.3	75.4	86.7
Peace and reconciliation	81.7	79.7	89.4

The majority of the respondents expressed that they felt "*Saudade* (longing) for their homeland in Timor-Leste" (84.7%, 93.9%, and 99.1% of the residents in Indonesia, Portugal, and Australia, respectively). The push motivations of Timorese diaspora members to return to visit their homeland are presented in Table 8. A major motivation is to "visit family and friends" (85.6%, 92.2%, and 100.0% of the residents in Indonesia, Portugal, and Australia, respectively). "Important family events" are also an important motive for respondents from Indonesia or Australia (72.9% and 84.1%, respectively). The idea of a holiday as motivation to visit the homeland was high for 84.1% of the respondents in Australia but less important for respondents from Indonesia (55.1%) and Portugal (56.5%). The idea of a "business" visit was rated low (44.9%, 31.3%, and 45.1% of the residents in Indonesia, Portugal, and Australia, respectively).

Table 8

**Push attributes to (re)visit Timor-Leste (percentage of those who reported importance)**

Attributes	Country of residence (%)		
	Portugal	Indonesia	Australia
<b>Extent to which the following attributes are important to (re)visit Timor-Leste</b>			
Visit family and friends	92.4	85.6	100
Holidays	56.5	55.1	84.1
Important family events	55.7	72.9	84.1
Business	31.3	44.9	45.1
Politics and reconciliation	35.1	44.1	34.5

## Conclusion

Diaspora tourists play an important role in the development of tourist destinations by spreading information about the attractions of homeland locations, investing directly in building new tourist facilities, and improving the existing ones to the international tourism standards that they expect as a result of their experiences abroad. Understanding the diaspora tourist demand is fundamental to tourism marketing decisions and strategic development planning. Such an understanding can improve the quality of tourism and travel industry services and help to establish an in-depth connection between the tourists and the local people in the destination.

This study found that the 362 respondents from the Timorese diaspora expressed a potential tourist demand, motivation, experience, and expectation to visit or revisit their homeland, and this is a potential niche tourism market that can be developed further as a means of breaking into the international tourism market. All the respondents firmly expect to visit and revisit their homeland in Timor-Leste, and most of them would like to visit all the districts. In most cases the respondents have dual nationality and emigrated from Timor-Leste during the Indonesian occupation (1975–1999). These potential tourists demonstrated a strong commitment to preserving their cultural identity and place attachment to their homeland in Timor-Leste. The majority, 96.3%, still identify themselves as Timorese, mainly due to the food that they eat, their language, the way that they dress, or even their nationality. The majority of the respondents expressed their feeling of "*Saudade*" (longing) for their homeland in Timor-Leste.

One very important result is that most of the respondents gave strong importance to the pull attributes that can attract diaspora tourists to visit or revisit their homeland. However, they demonstrated a very low level of satisfaction with the social and development aspects in Timor-Leste, especially in regard to "tourism development" aspects. Most of the respondents expressed very low levels of satisfaction with the quality of tourism services and other facilities. These results can explain why Timor-Leste is still not recognized as a holiday or even a business destination. In fact, the most important objectives of the respondents when visiting Timor-Leste are to visit families and friends or participate in important family events.

These results are encouraging for the development of tourism marketing and should be used by policy makers to shape tourism marketing strategies and planning. Firstly, it is important and a priority for the Government and policy makers to clarify the policies regarding Timorese diaspora rights (and responsibilities) as citizens either in their country of origin or in their country of residence and help to establish community organizations for Timorese diaspora members. This would simplify the collection of information about Timorese diaspora members and therefore support communication campaigns to attract them to their homeland. Secondly, it is important to invest more in education and training for second-generation Timorese diaspora to maintain their cultural identity and form attachments to their homeland and as a consequence keep the ties with their homeland and motivate them to travel back with the aim of preserving or strengthening their personal and emotional links, rediscovering places, rediscovering their roots, and re-experiencing their former homeland.

Thirdly, it is important for the Government and policy makers to develop policies for facilitating and establishing diaspora investment in the homeland and promoting a sense of connection between the diaspora members in a host country and their homeland in Timor-Leste. With these purposes, the Government has an important role to play by developing policies that are relevant to the expectations of the potential business diaspora tourists, including offering opportunities for successful public–private partnerships and enabling an environment for diaspora investment.

Fourthly, it is important for the Government to invest more in basic public facilities that are able to improve citizens' quality of life as well as improving the country's conditions as a leisure destination. As suggested by the responses to our questionnaire, these include improvements in "nightlife offerings," "tour guides," "public lighting," "basic sanitation," "collection and processing of solid waste," "drainage and waste water treatment," "road cleaning," and "management, cleaning, and maintaining of beaches and tourist attractions." Moreover, Timor-Leste is a unique country where Portuguese is spoken in a South-East Asian and Pacific context. There is a unique Timorese culture, Portuguese colonial heritage, Timorese Liberation Resistance history, and tropical waters rich in marine life with a coral triangle. Timor Leste also has a calendar of special events, such as the Tour de Timor bicycle race, the Dili City of Peace Marathon, the Darwin to Dili Yacht Rally, the Ramelau Cultural Festival, and the Carnival (Andrew, Pheng & Philips, 2011; Cabasset-Semedo, 2009; Sarmento, 2011; TL-SDP, 2011). Therefore, public entities must take good advantage of these attributes and create an offer that may meet the potential tourists' expectations.

Finally, the destination management organizations in Timor-Leste should develop a strategic action plan to build a positive image of the country that identifies and differentiates the destination by selecting a consistent brand element. One suggestion is to create specific marketing strategies for Timorese diaspora members relating to "*Mai Fali Eh*," a well-known song in Timor-Leste meaning "come home" in Tetum, an official language in Timor-Leste. The name of the song comes from a serenade in which a mother "homeland" calls her children home at sunset, encouraging those who have left Timor-Leste to return (Boit, 2012). Thus, it intends to support and facilitate the connection of people to people and the promotion of reconciliation among Timorese diaspora members with family members in their homeland, therefore preserving the expectation and traditional faith "Be a good citizen, be a new hero for our Nation" (MF-RDTL, 2014).

Tourism marketing focuses on the needs and demands of tourists as consumers, and only with a good awareness of the market and consumers' behavior is it possible for a destination to create an offer that may meet the tourists' expectations (Ruzic, Dropulic & Boskovic, 2008). This study is the first contribution to this knowledge in a new country, Timor-Leste, which is still taking its first steps towards tourism development. More research in this area is still necessary. Given that the country has different diasporas, a deep study about how to target each diaspora market considering their different profiles and expectations would be relevant.

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