

The Model of Asymmetry in Sister City Relationships to Promote Halal Goods

STIVANI ISMAWIRA SINAMBELA*, FARIS AL-FADHAT & HASSE JUBBA¹

ABSTRACT

Islam occupies the second position as the largest religion in the world with 1.91 billion followers. However, little research has been done to understand the opportunities and challenges of halal business. This study aims to explore and examine the extent to which the Sister Cities programs promote local halal goods. Halal goods and Islamic branding can positively help in reshaping the image of Islam across the globe. Observations such as identifying halal goods as eco-friendly reflect the increased sensitivity among consumers in developing nations, which was a behavior common among Westerners. The theoretical model presented here argues that mutual compatibility must be met for both countries to benefit from the program. The compatibility requirements suggested are asymmetry category in a mutual cultural environment that includes religious and ideological agenda. Empirical testing has found the most beneficial coupling method, in terms of the number of the need for halal products and the destination country, was the different sizes method (Big-Small and Small-Big). The model designed here, and the empirical results may assist Local Governments to design a more efficient Sister City engagement policy for their city. This paper is an attempt to re-initiate the discussion of empirical studies on Islamic branding in the emerging economics context through sister-city relationships. This conclusion implies that local governments have a great opportunity to advance their particular cities and gain from global cooperation through sister-city relationships. Nevertheless, their programs could not promote all aspects of halal goods.

Keywords: *Sister City; Asymmetry Relations, Halal Goods*

INTRODUCTION

Halal ethics are set in Muslims' everyday practices and behaviors (Ab Talib et al., 2016). For example, regarding food and drinks, Muslims abide by the Islamic dietary rules (Sneddon et al., 2015), which require all Muslims only to consume the permitted (Halal) food and drinks, not the prohibited ones (Van der Spiegel et al., 2012). Similarly in the context of clothing, Muslims are only permitted to select fashion products that fulfill the Islamic dress code, as a Sharia law that regulates all Muslims regarding which types of clothing are permissible (Halal) or forbidden (Haram) to wear (Sumarliah et al., 2021). In 2019, global Muslims spent 2,02 trillion USD in food, pharmaceutical, cosmetics, fashion, travel, and media/recreation sectors, all of which are impacted by Islamic faith-inspired ethical consumption needs (Dinar Standard, 2020). Indonesia is one of the leading nations heading in the governing management of Halal production (Dinar Standard, 2019). The Global Islamic Economy Indicator, which covers 81 countries, was ranked first by

¹ **Stivani Ismawira Sinambela*** (Corresponding Author) is a Postgraduate candidate at the Department of Islamic Politics, Faculty of Political Science, Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, INDONESIA. Email: stivanii.sinambela@gmail.com; **Faris Al-Fadhat** Ph.D. is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of International Relations, Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, INDONESIA. Email: farisalfadh@umy.ac.id; **Hasse Juba** Ph.D. is a Senior Lecturer in Political Islam, at the Department of Islamic Politics, Faculty of Political Science, Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, INDONESIA. Email: hassejuba@umy.ac.id

Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia and Turkey (Dinar Standard, 2022). Meanwhile, Indonesia's ranking has seen a substantial rise from 10th in 2018 to 5th in 2022, supported by strong initiatives to promote economic growth through the development of a dedicated Islamic economic strategy.

Malaysia remains the leader in GIEI and continues to strengthen its ecosystem for Islamic economic issues. The country has developed world-class regulations, launched a new initiative to certify halal certification worldwide. At the Malaysian International Halal Summit (MIHAS), the trade agreements signed with China and Japan, spurred by strong demands from international companies, strengthened Malaysia's role in international halal trade.

Indonesia has taken an important step by launching the Halal Economic Masterplan 2019-2024 through the recently established National Islamic Finance Activity, with the main objective of strengthening the role of Islamic finance in promoting economic growth (Aisyah & Gorbiano, 2019). This plan reinforces cumulative efforts to strengthen the state's role in halal tourism and further develop a strong business ecosystem including halal food and products, modest clothing, and Islamic finance. The master plan supported large and ambitious initiatives and recommended four strategic steps with the goal of making Indonesia a major producer of the global halal industry by 2024 (Mufti, 2019).

Table 1. Demand and Supply for Halal Goods

Sector	Demand Opportunity in 2024 (Billion USD)	Supply Rank	
		Indonesia	Malaysia
Modest Fashion	402	3	4
Halal Food and Beverage	1,97	1	2
Halal Pharmaceutical	134	4	2
Halal Cosmetics	95	2	3

Source: Dinar Standard (2020)

The potential demand for these halal products will be even greater in line with the growing awareness of consumers that the term halal is not only a demand for obedience in religion, but is also synonymous with products that have better quality and have a positive impact on human life and the environment. To be able to develop and promote halal products internationally, researchers offer the concept of Sister City Relationships. Sister city are programs that correspond to cities that are geographically and sometimes politically distant and open to economic benefit and personal relationships. The Sister Cities International Program is designed to bring cultural, economic and political benefits to international partners. Most importantly, it brings people from different backgrounds and languages together, leading them to better understanding and hopefully long-term cooperation.

From the perspective of classical liberalism, in practice cooperation is the most effective tool in catalyzing cooperation between countries, while diplomacy is a strategic tools to make it happen (Jönsson & Hall, 2005). One of the diplomatic practices outside the contemporary diplomacy tradition that is taking on an increasingly strong and relevant role is Sister City. Sister city cooperation, which was previously known only as a guardian of good relations between regions that are geographically close together, is now starting to experience very significant development. The context that is collaborated in sister cities is not only in the fields of education, social and culture as carried out by local government, but also brings benefits in the economic field (Han et al., 2022; Ramasamy & Cremer, 2007). In the last decade, Sister City has been directly

involved in more inclusive practices (Ryan & Mazzilli, 2021) with various programs that reach not only the local government level, but also various community groups. This community group has rights and obligations in the formation of its city's foreign relations (Mueller, 2008), as well as an important and innovative component in global politics (Marchetti, 2021), which seeks to fulfill its group's agenda and interests. Not infrequently community groups (citizens) become messengers, initiators, lobbyists, subverters (Sharp, 2001), as well as agents for themselves both at the sectoral, regional and local levels.

Furthermore, a sister city can also be a connecting bridge that shortens the distance between institutions to develop mutual benefits (Zhai, 2018) and facilitate international trade and investment (Li et al., 2019; Yao & Zhang, 2015), whereas in Islamic country these two things are centralized by the Central Government. Sister city collaboration is not only able to contribute to improving bilateral relations between countries, but can also be used for the development of local MSMEs (Mascitelli & Chung, 2008) which of course requires the support of the Local Government as the main actor in the concept of sister city relationships. The purpose of this article is to find out how the asymmetric relationships model in sister city cooperation can provide economic benefits, especially trade in halal products.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the United States, however, sister city relationships began in 1956 when President Dwight D. Eisenhower took the initiative to introduce human diplomacy into American society. Sister Cities International (SCI) was established as a non-profit corporation under the acclaimed and growing National Cities Alliance program (Cohen, 2021). According to SCI, US cities should have only one sister city in one country. However, this rule does not apply as long as the two cities have approximately the same area and are ideologically, interested and culturally compatible partners (Baycan-Levent et al., 2010). The Sister City International Program aims to bring cultural, economic and political benefits to our international partners. But most of all, it is about connecting people from different backgrounds and languages, understanding each other better, and building long-term partnerships.

Various studies provide evidence regarding the motivations behind the formation of cross-border alliance organizations and regional economic integration. The research shows that regional integration has a positive impact on the overall national economy (Krugman & Obstfeld, 2009) and strengthens the strategic position within a region (Rugman & Verbeke, 2005). In addition, it also leads to an improvement in the aggregate economic situation of all integrated areas in the long run, creating growth opportunities for the organization. Partnering countries can benefit greatly from cooperation when they share common physical resources such as rivers, fishing grounds, and hydroelectric power plants, or cultures such as religion, ideology, and other cultural values. Cross-country collaboration is defined as the level of cooperation and the level of representation at the country level in multinational systems in global strategy development. The literature on international strategic alliances discusses several motivations, economic and non-economic.

There are externalities between these countries, single market solutions are less than optimal, and failure to cooperate costs a lot of money. In contrast, if cooperation is carried out at the local level, partner cities can meet each other's needs at a lower cost (Bontenbal & Van Lindert, 2008). Various factors that influence the two partner cities become fertile ground for researchers. However, the scope of academic research addressing the issue is still limited and only concentrates mainly on the matching process and the development of relations between the cities involved.

Globalization and decentralization are one of the triggering factors for the growing influence and involvement of Local/Regional Governments to be able to increase competitiveness and be more responsive to local needs through Sister City Relationships (de Villiers, 2009; Rochman & Hudalah, 2020). Regional Heads as leaders have an important role in the success of Sister City.

The study of asymmetry in international relations was introduced primarily as a global activity to achieve foreign policy. Many experts specifically relate the Asymmetric Relationship as a form of asymmetric interdependence between the core state and the peripheral state (Musgrave, 2019). While realists argue that interdependence increases the process of competition and conflict between countries (Long, 2017a), liberal theories argue that interdependence can be the basis for cooperation under certain conditions (Keohane & Nye, 2017). Growing economic interdependence can coexist with ongoing political conflicts and geopolitical rivalries. Asymmetric interdependence is a structural factor that shapes the balance of power in the long term and can be used in the short-term (Yermekbayev et al., 2020).

Asymmetry is a major feature of international relations. According to the Asymmetry Relations Theory, there are always asymmetrical bilateral relationships in international relations. Bilateral relations are between two separated systems with little external influence or determinants (Garcia et al., 2011). This asymmetrical bilateral connection shows that one country is stronger in terms of economic strength, military strength, political strength, territorial strength, and so on, while the other is weak (Womack, 2003). Scholars have addressed such situations by examining other forms of asymmetry that influence bilateral relations. Smaller states will choose to challenge bigger states where there is an asymmetry of interests that will give them a good chance of prevailing (Fearon, 1994). Although their bilateral relationship is lopsided, it does not promote instability in the international system.

The concept of asymmetry is defined as the fundamental aspect of bilateral relations by Womack. First, bilateral relations with a lesser second country offer no advantages for a powerful country because of its national strength. The first (bigger) country, on the other hand, knew that relations with the second (smaller) country had to be preserved for a variety of reasons (Womack, 2015). One of these reasons is to maintain the country's and its surrounding' domestic stability. Strong countries are better able to influence smaller countries' behavior. This power to govern must be maintained so that smaller states do not behave outside of established standards. Second, bilateral relations with powerful countries are unquestionably useful and important for weaker states. Because bigger states provide incentives and aid to weaker states, they tend to take advantage of and sustain bilateral partnerships. These kinds of things are vital for a weak country's survival. Rothstein (1968) argues that the more competitive the system is, the more likely a smaller state can retain influence over the other players, irrespective of size (Ullman, 1969).

THEORY AND MODEL

The interdependence theory developed by Keohane and Nye (1989) tends to be symmetrical. Symmetrical in this case includes how far the balance and interdependence between countries. If the independence of a party is symmetrical, then both have the same power (Keohane & Nye, 2017). However, when viewed from a political economy perspective, the existence of symmetrical interdependence will cause cooperation between countries to stagnate. Taking advantage of asymmetric relations and the openness of global trade allows many small countries to become more prosperous (Long, 2017b). On the other hand, a stronger state has the opportunity and responsibility for leadership in this asymmetrical relationship, but if the state dominates the

international order for the sake of its national interest, then this domination will not last long (Womack, 2003).

The development of globalization and diplomacy has also influenced the development of international relations. The state is no longer the main actor, but sub-states also take an active role in international relations. One of them is Sister City Relationships (SCR), which is an agreement between two cities from different countries with the same characteristics, with the aim of developing the potential of each region together (reciprocity). However, not all SCR are carried out effectively to develop the economic sector. Among other considerations that can affect the economy between two cities, such as religion, distance, country's population, the combined population of the two cities are also important consideration (Cohen, 2021). There are four scenarios that can be adopted in the SCR: (1) Big-Big (BB), meaning that foreign cities and local cities have the same character of population density. (2) Big-Small (BS), meaning that foreign cities are densely populated, while local cities are less populated. (3) Small-Big (SB), meaning that foreign cities have a small population, while local cities have a denser population; and (4) Small-Small (SS), meaning that the two cities have a small population (chart 1).

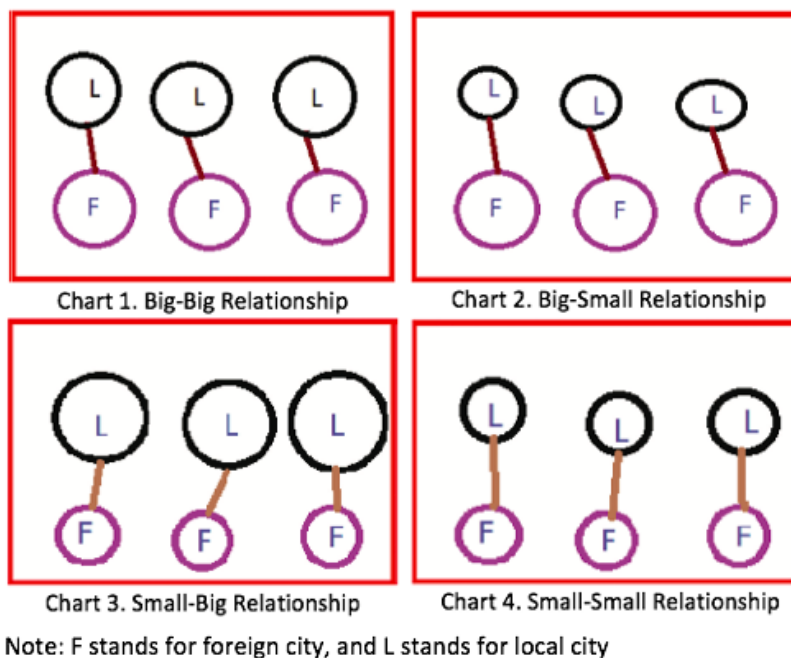


Chart 1. The relationship between sister cities in the same and different size (Cohen, 2021)

The assumption developed by Cohen is related to the 4 scenarios above, that if a small city is associated with a large foreign city partner, then the small city will find it difficult to get the attention of the big city. This is because these big cities have a tendency to look for foreign city partners of the same size. Meanwhile, according to Cohen, the best opportunity for small cities to get the attention and resources they need is to engage in partnerships with cities of similar size (small towns). This assumption is reinforced by Cohen with the conclusion that people who live in big cities tend to seek similar experiences in twin cities. In Cohen's opinion, it can be concluded that symmetrical relationships have more influence on the success of Sister City collaboration.

RESULT

The potential demand for these halal products will be even greater in line with the growing awareness of consumers that the term halal is not only a demand for obedience in religion, but is also synonymous with products that have better quality and have a positive impact on human life and the environment. The growth of the halal products is summarized in **Table 2**. To be able to develop and promote halal products internationally, researchers offer the concept of Sister City Relationships. To understand the impact of Sister City Relationships, we analyzed two cities in Indonesia that have the most sister city relationships: Jakarta and Surabaya.

Table 2. The demand for halal products worldwide (2016-2020)

Country	Food & Beverage Halal (USD Billion)	Cosmetics Halal (USD Billion)	Modest Fashion (USD Billion)	Muslim Populations (Million people)
China	143.2	150.5	35.8	28.1
France	58.3	-	-	5.7
Canada	34.5	-	-	1.1
Saudi Arabia	20.6	-	-	31.9
Malaysia	16.4	-	-	16.3
Thailand	15.9	-	-	3.0
Turkey	14.8	-	-	79.9
Philippines	12.3	7.4	-	7.9
Bangladesh	8.2	-	11,0	153.7
Nigeria	7.8	7.1	-	99.0
Kenya	2.5	-	-	5.5
Cambodia	1.5	-	-	3.1
Italy	-	63.5	-	3.0
Spain	-	45.0	-	1.2
India	-	43.6	6.0	195.0
Rusia	-	-	14.6	20.0

Source: ITC Trademap, worldpopulationview (2020)

Jakarta is the capital city of Indonesia that signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with 21 foreign sister cities. Jakarta has both land and sea which then makes Jakarta a wealth of natural resources both mineral, agricultural and marine. This automatically makes the element of availability of natural resources fulfilled. This condition was used by the local government to establish cooperation in the field of trade with various parties in order to gain profits. Jakarta's export value reached US\$ 1.03 billion in November 2021. China is still the main export destination with a value of US\$ 174.5 million or 16.8% of the total. Then followed by Singapore with an export value of US\$ 95 million or 9.2%, the United States US\$ 91.7 million (8.8%), and the Philippines US\$ 87.6 million (8.4%).

Surabaya is the second largest city in Indonesia that signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with 11 foreign sister cities. Surabaya is one of the earliest port cities in Southeast Asia. It makes Surabaya one of the busiest trading city ports in Asia (Worldguides, n.d.). Based on the destination countries, Japan is the main export destination country for Surabaya, followed by the

United States and China. During January 2023, Surabaya exports to Japan reached US\$ 300.11 million, while exports to the United States and China were US\$ 234.42 million and US\$ 187.35 million respectively.

Fig. 1 shows the number of export products from Indonesia to the U.S.A. has increased from 2018 to 2022. Jakarta has signed foreign sister city agreements with Los Angeles. Surabaya on the other hand, signed an agreement with Seattle. It has more positive impact on increasing trade with the U.S.A. **Fig. 2** shows the number of export products from Indonesia to China that has increased from 2018 to 2022. Jakarta has signed foreign sister city agreements with Beijing and Shanghai. On the other hand, Surabaya signed 3 sister city agreements with China cities: Guangzhou, Xiamen, and Chengdu, which has experienced a more drastic positive impact on trade with China.

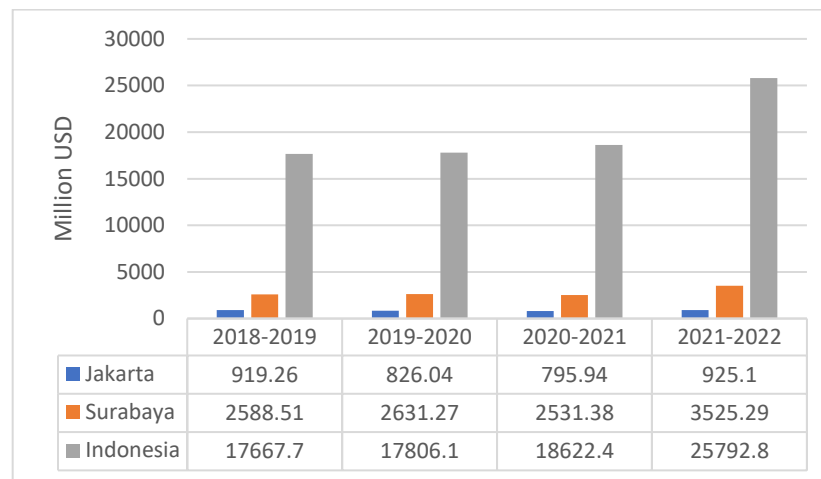


Fig. 1. The U.S.A. imports products from Jakarta, Surabaya, and entire Indonesia during 2018-2022.

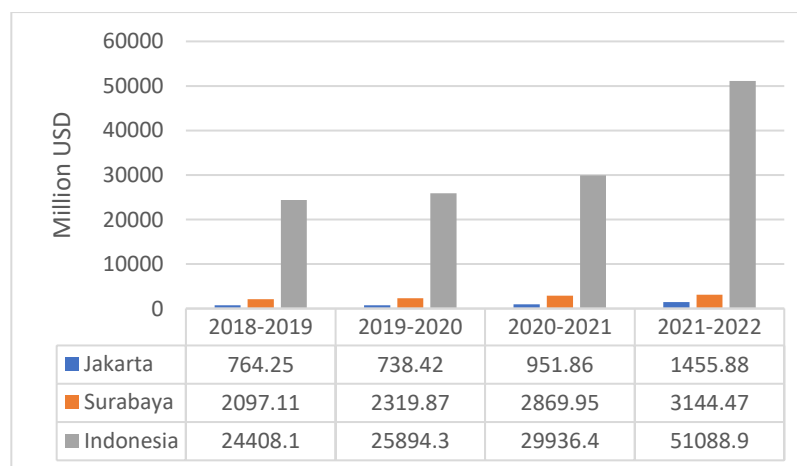


Fig. 2. China imports products from Jakarta, Surabaya, and entire Indonesia during 2018-2022.

Table 3 shows that as of 2022, countries involved with Indonesia in Sister City Relationships are the U.S.A., China, Japan, South Korea, European, ASEAN, and OIC members, among others. Out of the 108 sister city agreements between Indonesia cities and foreign cities, 71

involve big cities (66%) and 37 involve smaller cities (34%). Our model shows a positive impact of bigger foreign sister cities and the number of products exported received in both local cities. On the other hand, the same size category was found to have a negative effect on the explained variable. This result strengthens the finding that the sizes of sister cities do matter. The same size category has a negative impact on the partnerships because they have the same struggle in producing halal products or as a competitor to find investors.

Table 3. The foreign origin of Jakarta and Surabaya Sister City and the entire Indonesia for 2022.

Foreign	U.S. A	China	Japan	South Korea
Total	5	20	12	8
Foreign	European	ASEAN	OIC	Others
Total	21	8	13	30
Jakarta	GDP USD	Big	Small	Total
	17.854	11	10	21
Surabaya	GDP USD	Big	Small	Total
	12.415	8	3	11

Notes: Big = the number of GDP Per Capita foreign sister cities more than the local city, Small = the number of GDP Per Capita foreign sister cities less than the local city.

DISCUSSION

This research uses an official Ministry of Trade report from two cities in Indonesia: Jakarta and Surabaya, to substantiate theoretical model that was designed to form a successful international sister city relationship. Past researchers concerning the SCR coupling process have argued that the coupling process is based on historical connections and shared cultural, economic, recreational, and ideological concerns. They do not frame orderly model that will ensure sustainability and long-term economic benefits for both parties. This paper offers a model that state the conditions and terms that should enable such success. The primary conditions for a successful engagement process are the size of the engaging cities, the necessary resources that must be invested in the process and the supported environment that must be formed.

This Islamic economy, also referred to as the halal economy, directly impacts the following five sectors: food (halal); clothing (modest); tourism (Muslim-friendly); pharmaceuticals (halal) and cosmetics (halal). Other sectors include education (Islamic-themed) and philanthropy (zakat, *waqf*, *sadaqah*). The consumers of the Islamic economy are primarily Muslims but also include others outside the Islamic faith who share similar values. Specific consumption practices influenced by Islamic values include consumption of halal (lawful) food, decent clothing, family-friendly tourism, and other services with special attention to gender interactions and religious practices. The Islamic economy as a collective creates value for consumers and the economies involved. It also has great potential to contribute to global well-being through its underlying socially conscious ethos.

The theoretical model presented here argues that for both countries to benefit from the Sister City Relationships, the coupling cities size must be compatible. The econometric models have proven that the most promising beneficial coupling method in terms of Halal trade was different size method (BS and SB), with an emphasis on BS. The least promising beneficial

coupling method is SS, meaning that the combination between a small foreign city and small local city has the same economic problems, such as lack of investment to produce halal goods for trade. Compatibility requirements does not stop at the cities size but also requires mutual cultural environment that includes political, religious, and ideological agenda. Compatibility alone is not enough for successful engagement between two foreign cities. Investing various resources will smooth the engagement process and enrich the participating partners for years to come. The first and most important needed resources is human. The personal relations between people from both countries can fill the gap in communication and cultural differences, then move the process forward more smoothly. Second, influential factor is time. Every relationship personal or non-personal needs time for trust and tradition to be build. Third, money must be invested in the process for the initiation and maintenance of the mutual cultural and social activities.

CONCLUSION

To ensure a long-term successful coupling process collaborate marketing strategy must be adopted. That strategy should be based on the cultural and religion differences understanding and joint motivation to cooperate and solve problems. It should involve producers and consumers (potential actor in halal trade) from the participating countries designing together the components of the marketing mix. The theoretical model and the empirical results presented here, can help local government to increase the chances that Sister City Relationships will be fertile in terms of trade halal goods. Since results have suggested that the best coupling method is BS, policy makers should concentrate first on such coupling and invest the necessary resources in a few potential agreements of that kind before moving on to other formation of coupling.

Business actors in halal goods should be involved in the making of Sister City agreement, then signed at the same time to resources that are available to the program. If the discussed compatibility requirement in terms of size, cultural and religion aspects are not met, success will demand much more resources investment and time. Potential business actors should also consider other goals than direct trade increase that will affect the engaging parties in the long run, such as political, education and cultural cooperation. The current research has tried to isolate the impact of the Sister City from other factors that might influence mutual relationships using macro perspective. However, further research is needed a micro perspective case studies that follows two Sister City Relationships over time using questionnaires that may reveal directly to what extent the program has influenced the people involved in the process from both countries in terms of cultural and ideological change, better understanding of each other and the willingness to cooperate in the future.

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