

**THE IMAGE OF ISTANBUL AS A DESTINATION CENTER:
AN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the destination image of Istanbul and compares the perceived images of people from different countries. The research has been applied to a sample of university students in Italy (bachelor, master and doctoral) who are coming from different countries around the world for their studies. A quantitative research has been used by applying a survey with measures derived from the existing research in the field.

The objective of this study is to display the perceptions on Istanbul's destination image from the point of view of the chosen sample and compare these perceptions according to nationality. With this study, the researchers are looking forward to contribute to the academic literature by projecting perceptions of university students of a multinational sample. It is also aimed to contribute to the further strategies and work on the destination image of Istanbul.

Keywords: Destination Image, Image Perception, The Image of Istanbul.

**Destinasyon Merkezi Olarak İstanbul İmajı:
Ampirik Bir Araştırma**

ÖZET

Mevcut çalışma, İstanbul'un destinasyon imajını incelemekte ve farklı ülkelerden bireyler tarafında algılanan imajları karşılaştırmaktadır. Araştırma, İtalya'da öğrenim gören, farklı ülkelerden gelmiş üniversite öğrencileri (lisans, yüksek lisans, doktora) nezdinde yürütülmüştür. Mevcut literatürde yer alan ölçeklerden yararlanılarak oluşturulan anket ile nicel bir araştırma gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Çalışmanın amacı, seçilen örneklemin bakış açısından, İstanbul'un destinasyon imajına yönelik algıları ortaya koymak ve bu algıları farklı milletler bağlamında değerlendirmektir. Bu çalışma ile araştırmacılar çok milletli bir öğrenci örnekleminin algılarını ortaya koyarak literatüre katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Aynı zamanda, İstanbul'un destinasyon imajı üzerine yapılacak gelecek çalışmalara da katkıda bulunulması amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Destinasyon İmajı, Algılanan İmaj, İstanbul İmajı

Introduction

In the current globalized world, cities are in fierce competition to attract attention, both in economic and touristic areas. While international movement has been rapidly increasing in the recent years, building and enhancing a differentiated destination image

has become crucial for cities. To become a preferable destination, a city should differentiate its image among competitor destinations.

To manage the destination image of a city, first of all, the perceived image of the city should be stated. The perceptions show the opportunities and threats for the destination image of the city. Setting out the perceived image will enable the destination to compare the perceived image with the desired-ideal image and move forward with building and improving the desired image of the destination. Thereby, managing and differentiating the destination image will be put on a healthy footing. For this reason, this study focuses on understanding the perceptions of Istanbul's destination image. It is aimed to provide useful data for academic studies and also contribute to the further destination image strategies for Istanbul.

Literature Review

In the literature review part; first of all the concept of destination image have been defined and the components, which compose it, have been explained depending on several existing research. Because of the reason that this research includes a multinational sample, the issue of image perceptions among different cultures and nationalities has been undertaken. Finally, a general picture of the perceived destination image of Istanbul was drawn, depending on the antecedents of the existing research.

Destination Image

While the fierce competition has affected all kinds of businesses and brands around the world, the competition among destinations has also been increasing. In the case of cities, the competition has been growing more than ever due to cheaper and easier travel opportunities, international investors, a growing free labour force flow and ofcourse due to the Internet (Papp-Váry, http://kgk.uni-obuda.hu/sites/default/files/30%20Papp-Vary%20Arpad_2.pdf). Thus, it has become very important for destinations to differentiate themselves among competitors and obtain a favorable position in the minds of potential visitors by developing a positive and a memorable image (Gnoth, Baloglu, Ekinçi & Sirakaya-Turk, 2007 as cited in Sahin & Baloglu, 2011, p. 71).

Destination image studies have been a popular tourism research area since then it started in 1970's (Hosany et al., 2006 as cited in Sahin & Baloglu, 2011, p. 71). The importance of destination image is widely recognised for its significant effect on the behavioural intentions of tourists (Krasteva, Wickens & Bakır, 2010, p. 67). Many research

provides evidence that destination image affects touristic decisions (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). According to these facts, destination image plays a critical role for the city to be chosen by foreign visitors.

A city's image heavily influences destination choices, creates destination brand value and serves as an indicator for the substitutability of destinations (Dolnicar and Grabler, 2004, p. 100) rise the importance of destination image building process. Baloglu and McCleary (1999) define destination image as; "an attitudinal construct consisting of an individual's mental representation of knowledge (beliefs), feelings, and global impressions about an object or destination" (p. 870). Destination image can be defined as the perception of a person or a group of people regarding a place. This perception is formed by one's sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions about that place (Crompton, 1979; Hosany et al., 2006 as cited in Sahin & Baloglu, 2011, p. 71) . Consequently, destination image may be summarized as a combination of facts (beliefs, ideas, impressions, feelings) which create the perception and representation of a place.

In their study, Gallarza et al. (2002) grouped the studies on destination image which were done between 1971 and 1999. They ended with seven distinct topics; studies on conceptualization and dimensions, destination image formation process, assessment and measurement of destination image, influence or distance on destination image, destination image over time, active and passive role of residents in image study and destination image policies such as positioning and promotion. Also, perceived value has been emphasized as the object of attention by researchers in tourism (Baloğlu, 2001; Dolnicar S. & Grabler K., 2004; Kashyap & Bojanic, 2000; McCartney, 2008; Murphy, Pritchard, & Smith, 2000; Oh, 2000; Oh, 1999, 2000; Petrick, 2004; Tam, 2000; Woodruff, 1997).

In the literature, there are some discussions about the similarities and differences of destination branding and destination image. It is important to distinguish these two concepts. Ekinici (2003), building on the work of Cai (2002) and Konecnik (2004) suggests that destination branding constitutes the core of destination image. When the evaluation of a destination image includes a strong emotional attachment, the process of destination branding begins.

It has been established by Fakeye & Crompton (1991) that destination image influences the earliest stage in the decision making process by encouraging individuals to form expectations and assumptions about the destination prior to their actual experience of it (Krasteva, Wickens & Bakır, 2010, p. 68). In their 2001 study, Baloglu and Mangalolu

indicate that the perceived image of the destination is a main competition factor. Therefore, understanding the perceptions of the visitors about a destination is much more valuable than only understanding the features and what the destination has to offer.

Gunn (1972) proposed a destination image formation model which consists of 'organic', 'induced' and 'modified induced' images. The organic image is formed by the information assimilated from non-touristic, non-commercial sources and the opinions of family and friends. The induced image is formed through accessing additional, more commercial sources of information and the modified induced image is based on first hand information and destination experience (Krasteva, Wickens & Bakır, 2010, p. 68). Echtner and Ritchie (1993) proposed a model of destination image which consists of attribute-based and holistic components. These components are formed by functional (tangible) and psychological (intangible) characteristics.

Destination image has a multi-dimensional construct, mainly determined by personal (psychological and social) and destination factors (affective and cognitive constructs) (McCartney, 2008, p. 14).

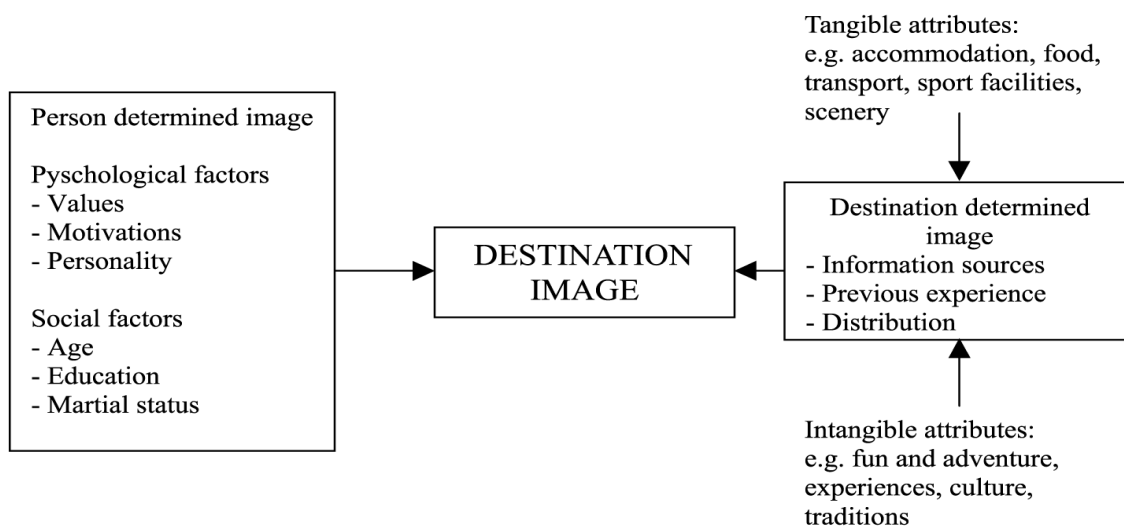
According to many researchers (Beerli, Diaz, & Pérez, 2002; Bigné, Sánchez & Sánchez, 2001; Crompton, 1979; Hosany et al., 2006; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Stern and Krakover, 1993), destination image is considered as a multidimensional construct of two main dimensions which form the overall image about that place; cognitive evaluation and affective evaluation. Cognitive evaluation is determined by beliefs and knowledge about a place, whereas affective evaluation is all about feelings towards that destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999 as cited in Sahin & Baloglu, 2011, p. 71). When the knowledge of the place is higher, the credibility of cognitive evaluation increases. In affective evaluation, the place is evaluated depending on the affective quality of the sum of the attributes of that destination (Baloglu & Sahin, 2011, p. 71).

In addition to these constructs, Hosany & Ekinçi (2003) suggested that an overall destination image also includes brand personality which is the set of human characteristics associated with a brand (Aaker, 1997, p. 347).

In Figure 1, the formation of destination image is shown as the combination of psychological factors, social factors and destination determined image which includes; information sources, previous experience and distribution. In other words, the figure shows the destination image formation as the combination of personal and destination factors.

These classifications above all suggest that a destination image is formed with the joint affects of the mentioned componens.

Figure 1: The Formation of Destination Image



Source: (Baloglu S., & McCleary K.V., 1999: 870; Pikkemaat B., 2004: 89; Peters M., & Pikkemaat B. 2003: 158) as cited in McCartney G. (2008). Does One Culture All Think the Same? An Investigation of Destination Image Perceptions from Several Origins. *Tourism Review*, 63(4).

Another important factor which affects the image of a destination is the image of the country which the destination is at. Country image is defined as the sum of beliefs and impressions people hold about places. Images represent a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with a place. They are a product of the mind trying to process and pick out essential information from huge amounts of data about a place (Kotler & Gertner, 2002, p. 251). As indicated by (Martínez & Alvarez, 2010, p. 758) the need for also considering the country image for destination image studies about developing countries. Therefore, it is thought that travellers are also affected by general worries about Turkey while perceiving the image of Istanbul.

Many studies such as Baloglu & Mangalolu (2001); Sonmez & Sarakaya (2002); Altmbagak (2004) and Tasci, Gartner & Cavusgil (2007) have found out that there are many negative factors which affect the image of Turkey. According to these studies, Turkey is affected by negative stereotypes and connotations. There are several factors which lead the image of the country to this. These are rooted on historical, religious and geographical reasons and also depend on the affects of media. The negative perceptions result from several reasons such as identifying Turkish communities with the Ottomans,

the wars that took place in the past which created fear among Turks, associating Turkey with Islam and assimilating it with other muslim countries. Also the news about Turkey in international media, usually include negative point of views, mainly covering; economic issues, Armenian, Cyprus and Kurdish problems (Alvarez, 2010, p. 129). Because of these factors summarized above, Turkey is facing many problems with its international image. Hence, Istanbul is also being affected by these negative circumstances.

Image Perceptions of Different Nationality and Cultures

As well as personal factors such as demographic factors and psychological factors effect in determining the overall image, it is also agreed that geographic and cultural differences will result in different destination perceptions (Chen, 2001; Bonn et al., 2005, as cited in McCartney, 2008, p. 14). There are some studies, which direct their interest to perceptions among different nationalities and cultures: Correia and Crouch (2004) suggested that tourist decision-making behavior differs significantly by country of origin. Bonn et al. (2005) also highlighted the importance of image perceptions based on country of origin. They suggested that country of origin is a key consideration in determining a specific positioning strategy for a destination. Thereby, they mentioned that destination managers need to understand of how the tourism product and service quality components are perceived across nations and cultures and create. Komppula and Saraniemi (2004) mentioned the effects of cultural affiliation and McCartney (2008) mentioned that possible competitive advantages considering the diversified perceptions in mind (p. 15). MacKay and Fesenmaier's (2000) recommended attention to the refinement of attributes across cultures in what to include and exclude in destination image propositions. Pizam and Sussmann (1995) found that tourism experiences could differ, with French, Italian and American tourists. They reached results such as Japanese people not being as much as interested in authenticity then Europeans (McCartney, 2008, p. 15). Depending on the antecedents of existing research, culture and nationality differences are important factors, which affect destination image perceptions. Therefore, it is important to understand how image perceptions differ among diverse nationality and cultures.

Moving from the findings of existing research mentioned above, in this study the image perceptions of Istanbul will be stated with a research including participants from different nations and cultures.

Destination Image of İstanbul

Cities are the places where people gather, interact, form groups and share a common life together (Kuzgun et.al., 2010, p. 29). Building and managing a successful destination image for a city, depends on differentiating it among its competitors. For this, the main factor that helps the city is its spirit, which gives its own identity, its main color, and basic characteristics (Karlığa, 2009). Hosting people from many different nations, diverse ethnic roots, diverse religions, witnessing the periods of Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman Empires, with all their traditions, cuisines, arts, religions, languages and life styles enrich the soul of Istanbul (Kuzgun, et. al., 2010, p. 30). For centuries, Istanbul has been the meeting point of various cultures. Therefore, Istanbul has a very unique combination of historical and cultural background. Istanbul has been attracting attention with its cultural and historical heritage, geographical situation, events, organizations and also with its economical and developing business world (Kuzgun, et. al., 2010, p. 28).

Istanbul is the largest and most popular city of Turkey. With its unique cultural, historical and geographical characteristics, it has been taking interest of many foreign visitors. In 2011, Istanbul was visited by 8.057.879 foreign visitors, which indicates an increase of 16% (Haber Turizm, 2012). Also, in the first three months of 2012, 1.605.612 foreigners has visited Istanbul, which shows an increase of 17.5% compared to the first three months of 2011 (Tourism&Aviation, 2012). On the other hand, for years, Istanbul has been trying to manage its destination image but have faced many obstacles. Therefore, this study is focused on measuring the perceived destination image of Istanbul.

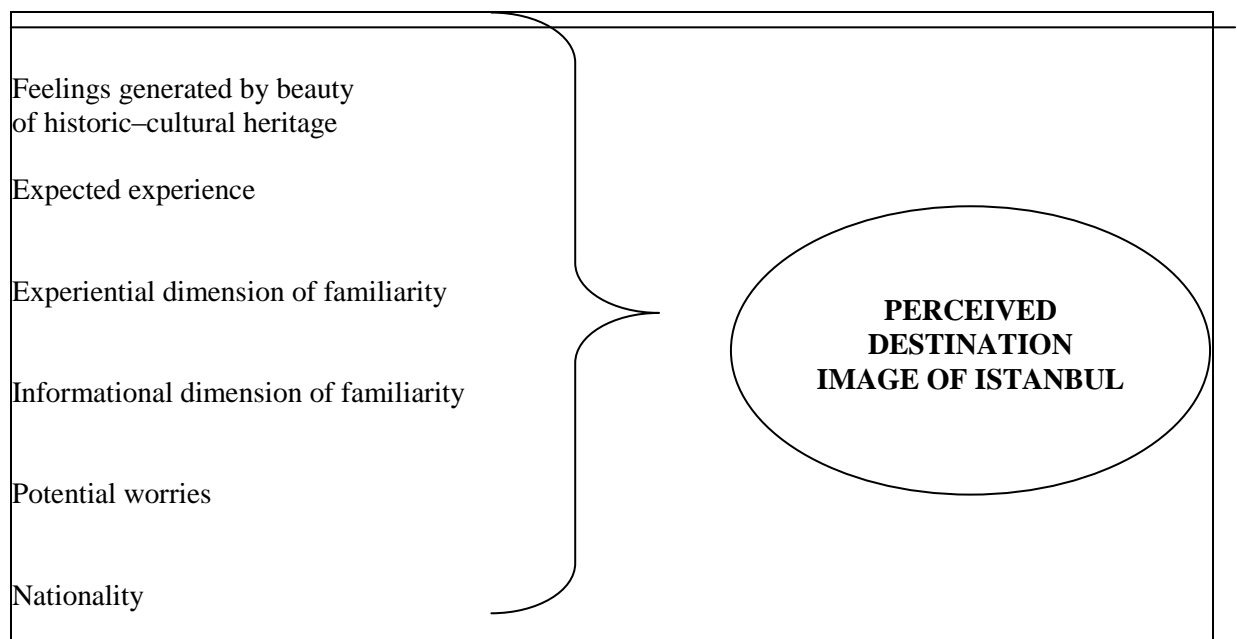
Many studies were done concerning the destination image of Istanbul. Some of them include: (Gözler, 2008; Kuzgun, et. al.: 2010; Seçilmiş & Ünlüönen, 2009; Şahin, 2008; Şahin & Baloğlu: 2011; Üner, Güçer & Taşçı, 2006). Şafak (2008) measured the brand personality and destination image of Istanbul and compared the perceived image and personality across different nationalities by applying a survey to a sample of 334 tourists while visiting Istanbul. Şafak & Baloğlu (2011) focused on the same topic using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The study showed that first-time visitors from different geographic and cultural backgrounds have different perceptions of the brand personality and image of Istanbul (Şafak & Baloğlu, 2011, p., 87). Thereby, they suggested a customized approach for cities to assess their brand image and personality for multiple countries and identities. Üner M. & Güçer E. & Taşçı A. (2006) aimed to determine the image in the foreigners' view of the city of Istanbul. An interesting result, which they came

up with, was that; visitors who like to participate in cultural events prefer to go to Istanbul. These people are also inclined to visit alternative destinations. Seçilmiş and Ünlüönen (2009) departed from the idea that one of the most important things for tourists while travelling is safety. In their study, they wanted to draw attention to safety in tourism by determining whether Istanbul is regarded as safe by tourists and suggested further planning on the topic, such as increasing the importance given to educations about tourism safety, increasing the number of infopoints for tourists, collaborating with the home countries of the tourists.

Methodology

In this study, a survey has been used to measure the perceived destination image of Istanbul. The survey instrument consists of six categories of questions; perceptions of destination questions (Baloğlu, 2001), feelings generated by beauty of historic-cultural heritage (Royo-Vela, 2009), expected experience questions (Taşçı, Gartner & Çavuşgil, 2007), questions about potential worries (Sussmann & Ünel, 1999), familiarity questions (Baloğlu, 2001) and demographic questions. The research model of this study has been formed by the researchers of this article, depending of the existing researches mentioned above. The research model can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Design of The Research



Measures

To display the destination image of Istanbul among participants, perceptual/cognitive items scale of Baloğlu (2001), which consists of three dimensions (quality of experience, attractions, value/environment) was used (Table 1). Baloğlu, 2001 developed a perceptual/cognitive items from the literature review and content analysis of Turkey's guidebooks and brochures and measured these on a five point scale.

Table 1: Perceptual/cognitive items Scale

<p>Quality of experience Standard hygiene and cleanliness Quality of infrastructure Personal safety Good nightlife and entertainment Appealing local food (Cuisine) Suitable accommodations Great beaches/water sports Interesting and friendly people</p>
<p>Attractions Interesting cultural attractions Interesting historical attractions Beautiful scenery/natural attractions</p>
<p>Value/Environment Good value for Money Unpolluted/unspoiled environment Good climate</p>

Source: Baloglu S., & Mangaloglu M. (2001). Tourism destination images of Turkey, Egypt, Greece, and Italy as perceived by US-based tour operators and travel agents. *Tourism Management*, 22, 1-9.

One of the most important characteristics, which affect the perceived image of a destination, is its beauty of historical and cultural heritage. Creaco & Querini (2003) suggested that for making tourism compatible, the preservation and good use of historical-cultural heritage carries an important role. To determine the feelings generated by beauty of historic-cultural heritage about Istanbul, the scale of Royo-Vela (2009, p. 423) was used, which can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Feelings Generated By Beauty of Historic–Cultural Heritage

<p style="text-align: center;">Feelings generated by beauty of historic–cultural heritage</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Feeling an authentic experience</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Feeling of personal and intellectual growth</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Feeling of admiration for the architecture of the past and how it stands the test of time</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Emblematic buildings or structures</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A place with a beautiful urban ensemble</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Feeling of getting a second wind, of filling up with energy</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Feeling of going back in the past of getting lost among the stones</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Monumental diversity</p>

Source: Royo-Vela M. (2009). Rural-cultural excursion conceptualization: A local tourism marketing management model based on tourist destination image measurement. *Tourism Management*, 30, 419–428.

To see the expected experience of the atmosphere or mood of Istanbul, the scale of Taşçı, Gartner and Çavuşgil (2007) which is showed on Table 3 has been used.

Table 3: The Atmosphere or Mood Expected

<p style="text-align: center;">The atmosphere or mood expected</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Istanbul has a calm/peaceful/relaxing atmosphere</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Istanbul has a busy/exciting/adventurous atmosphere</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Istanbul has a fun/happy atmosphere</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Istanbul has a different/unique/exotic atmosphere</p>
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Source: Taşçı A., Gartner W., & Çavuşgil S. (2007). Measurement of destination brand bias using a quasi-experimental design. *Tourism Management*, 28(6), 1529–1540.

Cohen (1972) defined familiarity as preference for the tourist which is an essential factor as comfort. According to Baloglu’s (2001) study; consumers familiar with Turkey had more pleasurable, arousing, relaxing, and exciting images of the country. Familiarity does not only occur by visiting the place. Infact it is a multidimensional issue. Baloglu (2001) defined three types of familiarity; informational: the extent of sources of information used, operationalized as single or multiple sources. The second was experiential: the extent of past experiences, operationalized as first-timer or repeater. The third type was self-rated: how familiar respondents thought themselves to be with a place. The work of Prentice (2003) added a fourth type to this typology; educational which indicates the extent of personal educational involvement with a place (p. 926).

To see how familiar the participants to Istanbul, the familiarity index of Baloglu (2001) was used. The index includes two parts; the experiential dimension, and informational dimension. For the experiential dimension, respondents were classified into three categories based on their past experience and number of visits; non-visitors, first-time

visitors and repeat visitors (2 or more visits). For the informational dimension, 9 kind of information sources were signified by Baloğlu, 2011: Travel Agents, Brochures/Travel Guides, Friends/Family Members, Airlines, Tour Operator/Company, Advertisements, Books/Movies, Articles/News, and Direct Mail from Destination. Together with Baloğlu's categorization of information sources, the categorization of (Alvarez, Korzay, 2011, p. 434): Previous experience, Word-of-mouth, Web sites, Television, Written Press, Books, Travel Agent, Tourism Offices was combined and used.

The country of origin is one of the most important factors which strongly affect the image of a product, service and a place. Thereby, the country image is a fundamental factor which affects the destination image of a city. Hence, in determining the factors which generate the worries about Istanbul, the factors which generate the worries about Turkey are very effective.

The scale of Sussmann and Ünel (1999) was used to discover the worries about being in Istanbul which affect its image. These factors include; personal safety, treatment of female, terrorism, helpfulness of police, local temperament, hospitality, friendliness, reliability of transport, religiousness, understanding English, honesty of locals and traffic congestion.

Finally, questions about demographics and nationality took place in the questionnaire. The survey instrument was prepared in two languages; English and Italian. English was the original language of the survey instrument. It was translated to Italian by two native half English, half Italian speakers. Participants were asked to choose the language they want to complete the survey in.

Sample

The target population for this study was university students who are staying abroad. The reason for choosing this sample was because of their growing interest in travel and being important potential visitors of Istanbul for the future. The survey was applied to the students in Torino-Italy in the university residence of University of Torino.

Limitations of the Study

Researchers detected two limitations in this research: First; though the number of the sample was sufficient according to the KMO and Bartlett's Test (0,728), the research

could have included a more number of participants. As mentioned in the limitation of the study, researchers had to settle with 218 participants due to the lack of time.

Findings And Discussion

The results of the research have been analyzed using several methods on SPSS 15. First, demographic breakdown and exploratory factor analysis was done. After the factor analysis, further analyses were carried out with the new structure of the dimensions. These analysis included multivariate ANOVA and correlation analysis.

Nationality and Other Demographics of the Respondents

Because of that this research took place in Italy, many of the respondents were from EU Countries. The nationalities of the participants are shown on Table 4.

Table 4: Nationalities of the Participants

EU Countries	180
Far Eastern Countries	13
African Countries	7
Balkan Countries	6
Russia	5
Middle Eastern Countries	3
Australia	2
Canada	2
TOTAL	218

%71.6 of the participants were BA students, %22.9 were MA and %4.1 percent were PhD students, while %1.4 selected “other” as their level of education. 147 participants were aged between 18-25, 54 between 26-35, 4 between 36-45 and 3 who mentioned to be older than 45. 119 of the participants were female and 99 were male.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

In the beginning of the study, 6 dimensions were detected to measure the perceptions about Istanbul. These were; quality of experience, attractions, value/environment, feelings generated by beauty of historic-cultural heritage, expected experiences and potential worries. Also, familiarity questions (experiential dimension and informational dimension) took place in the survey, which let the researchers see the previous visits of the participants to Istanbul and the sources used by the participants to get information about Istanbul.

After the factor analysis, the researchers ended up with 8 dimensions formed by 24 strong factors, which all passed the limit of 0.6. The three dimensions of quality of experience, attractions and value/environment was a set of perceptual/cognitive items developed by Baloğlu (2001). After the factor analysis, these 3 dimensions were again formed but with some questions changing places. Factors about potential worries formed 3 different dimensions. Factors concerning feelings generated by beauty of historic-cultural heritage and expected experiences again turned out to be dimensions after the analysis, but with the loss of some questions from the previous setting.

The results of the KMO and Bartlett's Test equaled to 0,728, which showed that there were enough number of participants in the research. All eigenvalues above 1.0 prove that the dimensions are strong. The first dimension has a variance of 18%, which is the highest. The result of the total Cronbach's Alpha was found as 0,618. The results of the exploratory factor analysis are seen on Table 5.

Table 5: Results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis

Interesting historical attractions	,834
Interesting cultural attractions	,811
Appealing local food (Cuisine)	,707
Suitable accommodations	,667
Beautiful scenery/natural attractions	,647
Personal safety	,845
Treatment of females	,801
Terrorism	,750
Helpfulness of police	,639
Friendliness	,866
Hospitality	,849
Understanding English	,616
Quality of infrastructure	,823
Standard hygiene and cleanliness	,794
Personal safety	,764
Unpolluted/unspoiled environment	,760
Great beaches/water sports	,726
Good climate	,660
Istanbul has a different/unique/exotic atmosphere	,755
Istanbul has a busy/exciting/adventurous atmosphere	,715
Feeling of going back in the past of getting lost among the stones	,774
Feeling of getting a second wind, of filling up with energy	,719
Traffic congestion	,845
Religiousness	,603

Relations of Nationality and Perceptions about Istanbul

To determine the relations of nationality and the perceptions about Istanbul, researches have applied multivariate ANOVA.

Perceptions about the first dimension, which is formed of; interesting historical attractions, interesting cultural attractions, cuisine, suitable accommodations and beautiful scenery/natural attractions are in the highest level among the Middle Easterners (mean=23,6667). The perceptions about these statements are in the lowest level among Far Easterners (mean=18,6923).

The second dimension is formed of the worries about personal safety, treatment of females, terrorism and helpfulness of police. These worries are on the highest level among the Balkan participants (mean=13,5000), while they are in the lowest level among Canadians (mean=9,0000). This was an unexpected result for the researches, due to the closer distance and relationships between Turkey and Balkan countries.

The third dimension is formed of the worries about friendliness, hospitality and understanding English. These worries are on the highest level among Far Easterners (mean=9,7692), while lowest among Canadians (mean=3,5000).

Perceptions about the fourth dimension which is formed by; quality of infrastructure, standard hygiene/cleanliness and personal safety are on the highest level among Middle Easterners (mean=11,3333). The perceptions are on the lowest level among Italians (mean=8,5411).

Perceptions about the fifth dimension which is formed by; unpolluted environment, great beaches and good climate are on the highest level among Middle Easterners (mean=13,3333), while they are on the lowest level among Australians (mean=9,5000).

Sixth dimension demonstrates the expected experiences, which is formed by the statements of; Istanbul has a different/unique/exotic atmosphere and Istanbul has a busy/exciting/adventurous atmosphere. These statements are mostly agreed by EU countries' members except the Italians (mean=7,7059). It was mostly disagreed by the Australians (mean=6,5000).

Seventh dimension demonstrates the feelings about Istanbul, using the statements; feeling of going back in the past of getting lost among the stones, feeling of getting a second wind, of filling up with energy. These statements are mostly agreed by the Canadians (mean=8,5000), while mostly disagreed by the Russians (mean=6,2000).

Finally, the eighth dimension includes worries of traffic congestion and religiousness. These worries are on the highest level among the Australians (mean=6,5000), while they are on the lowest level among the Canadians (mean=6,5000).

Effects of Familiarity on the Perceptions about Istanbul

Effects of familiarity on the perceptions about Istanbul has been measured in two different parts; experiential dimension and informational. Experiential part includes the number of visits and the informational part includes sources used to get information about Istanbul.

Table 6: Effects of Number of Visits on the Perceptions about Istanbul

	Number of visits	Willingness to visit	Descriptive Statistics	
			Mean	Std. Deviation
Dimension 1	Never	extremely	20,0098	2,96011
	Once	extremely	21,7333	2,05171
	more than once	extremely	22,5556	1,50923
Dimension 2	Never	not at all	16,4444	1,81046
	Once	not at all	12,6667	2,30940
	more than once	not at all	16,0000	
Dimension 3	never	not at all	9,7778	1,64148
	Once	moderately	8,7778	3,27024
	more than once	moderately	7,3333	2,08167
Dimension 4	Never	extremely	8,8922	1,68221
	Once	moderately	10,3333	1,73205
	more than once	moderately	10,6667	1,52753
Dimension 5	never	moderately	10,0299	2,46779
	Once	moderately	10,8889	2,36878
	more than once	moderately	11,6667	2,08167
Dimension 6	never	extremely	7,7255	1,55530
	Once	extremely	7,4667	1,35576
	more than once	extremely	8,6667	1,00000
Dimension 7	Never	extremely	7,3137	1,37142
	Once	extremely	7,7333	1,43759
	more than once	not at all	8,0000	
Dimension 8	never	not at all	6,8889	1,26930
	Once	not at all	8,0000	1,73205
	more than once	not at all	7,0000	

Effects of number of visits on the perceptions about Istanbul. By applying multivariate ANOVA, researches have reached the results which show the agreement levels of participants to each one of the eight dimensions, according to their number of visits and willingness to visit. For each of the eight dimensions, the table includes; the number of visits of all participants and the most frequently chosen answer from each group (never visited, visited once, visited more than once) to the question about willingness to visit Istanbul. In table 6, the mean variables and the standard deviations can be seen.

It is seen that, the most frequent answer given about the willingness to visit Istanbul is “extremely”. Mostly, the people who have never visited Istanbul indicated that they would extremely would like to visit. People, who have been to Istanbul before, have less desire to visit again. This result may be interpreted in two ways; first it is expected for people who have been there before to have less desire to visit because they have already seen it; second this may be based on the negative perceptions or experiences.

Looking at the results on the first dimension, experiential familiarity, which is increased by, visits are in direct proportion with the perceptions. People who have visited Istanbul more than once have the most positive perceptions, while people who have never visited have the least. In the second dimension that is composed of some potential worries, it is seen that people who have once been to Istanbul has less worries, while people who have never been there have the most. Interestingly, people who have been to Istanbul more than once have more worries than one-time visitors. In the third dimension, the perceptions and experiential familiarity are in diverse proportion. This shows that people who have been to Istanbul have more negative perceptions about; friendliness, hospitality and understanding English. In the fourth dimension a direct proportion exists between experiential familiarity and perceptions about; quality of infrastructure, standard hygiene and cleanliness and personal safety. The same ratio exists again for the fifth dimension which consists of; unpolluted/unspoiled environment, great beaches/water sports and good climate. The fifth dimension includes the perceptions about polluted/unspoiled environment; great beaches/water sports an good climate. Again, a direct proportion exists in this dimension. When the experiential familiarity to the destination increases, these perceptions also increase positively. Sixth dimension which is about the expected experiences is on the highest level among visitors who visited Istanbul more than once. In the seventh dimension which is on feelings generated by beauty of historic-cultural heritage, the direct proportion again exists among the level of experiential familiarity and

feelings. Finally, on the last dimension about worries, it is seen that people who have visited Istanbul have higher worries about religiousness and traffic congestion. This stands as an unexpected result for the researchers.

To have a brief evaluation of the relation between the number of visits (shows the experiential familiarity to the destination in this research) and perceptions about Istanbul, few outstanding points can be mentioned. First, it is seen that, mostly the experiential familiarity and perceptions are in direct proportion (except for friendliness, hospitality and understanding English). In other means, when number of visits increase, also the perceptions increase in a positive way. While people who have visited Istanbul have less worries about; personal safety, treatment of females, terrorism, helpfulness of police, quality of infrastructure, standard hygiene and cleanliness and personal safety. However, the worries about religiousness and traffic congestion increases.

Effects of information sources used on the perceptions about İstanbul. Using correlation analysis on SPSS 15, the researchers have detected the relations between the 8 dimensions with sources used to reach information about Istanbul. Thereby, the relations between the dimensions which form the perceptions about Istanbul destination image and the sources of information used by the participants were compared.

Usage of written press has the highest positive relation with the sixth dimension, while it has the lowest negative relation with the third dimension. This means that usage of written press increases the expected experience while decreases the worries about friendliness, hospitality and understanding English.

Direct mail from destination has the highest positive relation with the fourth dimension, while it has the lowest negative relation with the 1st dimension. This means direct mails from destination increase the positive perceptions about quality of infrastructure, standard hygiene/cleanliness and personal safety. It decreases the perceptions about interesting historical attractions, interesting cultural attractions, cuisine, suitable accommodations and beautiful scenery/natural attractions

Television has the highest positive relation with the 8th dimension, while it has the lowest negative relation with the fifth dimension. This means television increases the worries about traffic congestion and religiousness, while decreases the perceptions about unpolluted environment, great beaches and good climate.

Websites have the highest positive relation with the 1st dimension, while they have the lowest negative relation with the eighth dimension. This means websites increases the positive perceptions about interesting historical attractions, interesting cultural attractions, cuisine, suitable accommodations and beautiful scenery/natural attractions while decreases the worries about traffic congestion and religiousness.

Word of mouth has the highest positive relation with the seventh dimension, while it has the lowest negative relation with the third dimension. This means that word of mouth increases the positive feelings about Istanbul, while decreases the worries about friendliness, hospitality and understanding English.

Previous experiences have the highest positive relation with the 1st dimension, while they have the lowest negative relation with the third dimension. This means that previous experiences increases the positive perceptions about interesting historical attractions, interesting cultural attractions, cuisine, suitable accommodations and beautiful scenery/natural attractions, while decreases the worries about friendliness, hospitality and understanding english.

Articles/news have the highest positive relation with the eighth dimension, while they have the lowest negative relation with the third dimension. This means that articles/news increase the worries about traffic congestion and religiousness, while decreases the worries about friendliness, hospitality and understanding English.

Usage of books/movies has the highest positive relation with the sixth dimension, while it has the lowest negative relation with the second dimension. This means that usage of books/movies increases the expected experience while decreases the worries about personal safety, treatment of females, terrorism and helpfulness of police.

Advertisements have the highest positive relation with the second dimension, while they have the lowest negative relation with the fifth dimension. This means advertisements increase the worries about personal safety, treatment of females, terrorism and helpfulness of police, while decrease the perceptions about unpolluted environment, great beaches and good climate.

Tour operators/companies have the highest positive relation with the fifth dimension, while they have the lowest negative relation with the sixth dimension. This means information from tour operators/companies increases the perceptions about unpolluted environment, great beaches and good climate, while decreases the expected experience.

Information from the airlines has the highest positive relation with the sixth dimension, while it has the lowest negative relation with the seventh dimension. This means that with the information from the airlines, the expected experience increases while the feelings generated by beauty of historic cultural heritage decrease.

Friends and family members have the highest positive relation with the 1st dimension, while they have the lowest negative relation with the third dimension. This means that they increase the positive perceptions about interesting historical attractions, interesting cultural attractions, cuisine, suitable accommodations and beautiful scenery/natural attractions, while they decrease the worries about friendliness, hospitality and understanding English.

Brochures and travel guides have the highest positive relation with the sixth dimension, while they have the lowest negative relation with the eighth dimension. This means that brochures and travel guides increase the expected experience while decrease the worries about traffic congestion and religiousness.

Finally, travel agents have the highest positive relation with the eighth dimension, while they have the lowest negative relation with the sixth dimension. This means that travel agents increase the worries about traffic congestion and religiousness while decreases the expected experience.

To summarize the results; seven of the information sources (direct mail, websites, previous experiences, articles/news, books/movies, tour operators, friends and family members) increase the perceptions about Istanbul in a positive way. Three of them (written press, airlines, brochures/travel guides) increase the expected experience from Istanbul; one of them (word of mouth) increases positive feelings, while three of them (television, advertisements and travel agents) increase the worries about Istanbul. Eight of the sources (written press, websites, word of mouth, previous experiences, articles/news, books/movies, friends/family members, brochures/travel guides) decrease the worries. Three of them (direct mail, television, advertisements) decrease the perceptions in a negative way. Tour operators/companies and travel agents decrease the expected experience. Airlines decrease the feelings generated by historical heritage.

Conclusion

In this research, the researchers have found two main results; results about the nationality's effects on perceptions about Istanbul and results about familiarity's effects on the perceptions about Istanbul.

There were several points which stand out in the results about relations of nationality and perceptions about Istanbul. The researchers have found that among all nationalities, Middle Easterners turned out to have the most positive perceptions about Istanbul while having less worries. Concerning the geographical distance of Turkey to the Middle East, this was an expected result for the researchers. Also, it is thought that religious factors are important in decreasing the worries among Middle Easterners, while it increases the worries among people who are not Muslim. An interesting result for the researchers was that, participants from the Balkan countries which are geographically near to Turkey have more negative perceptions about several issues than the participants from very far countries like Canada have more positive perceptions. It turned out that Europeans have less negative perceptions and less worries about Istanbul than it was expected. On the other hand, the results do not show that they have very positive perceptions either.

Familiarity was measured in two ways; experiential and informational. Out of the three dimensions on perceptual/cognitive items, two of them are increased by experiential familiarity. Out of the three dimensions about worries, two of them are decreased by experiential familiarity. The dimension about feelings generated by beauty of historic-cultural heritage increases with experiential familiarity, as well as the dimension about expected experience. Looking at the informational familiarity, seven of the fourteen sources increase positive perceptions. Three of them increase the expected experience, one of them increases positive feelings, three of them increase the worries, eight of the sources decrease the worries, three of them decrease the perception, two of them decrease the expected experience and one of them decreases the feelings generated by historical heritage. So, the researchers ended up with the results that experiential familiarity and informational familiarity increase the positive perceptions about Istanbul. But looking at the results of this study, the researchers suggest that experiential familiarity have more positive effects on the perceptions about Istanbul.

Suggestions for Future Research

Researchers detected two limitations in this research: First; though the number of the sample was sufficient according to the KMO and Bartlett's Test (0,728), the research could have included a more number of participants. As mentioned in the limitation of the study, researchers had to settle with 218 participants due to the lack of time. Therefore, the research may be expanded in the future. The second limitation is that, this study has only been done in Italy, in a place where there are students from other nationalities. However, the sample includes mostly Italians. Further research may be done with a sample that contains a balance in the participants nationalities. Also, the study may be focused on only one nationality.

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