THE IMPACT OF DESTINATION IMAGE ON DESTINATION RECOMMENDATION

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ABSTRACT

Increasing tourism expenditures play important role in the economies of countries especially developing ones. Therefore destinations which want to attract more tourists should consider what factors affect people's travel decision-making process. Destination recommendation is one of the most efficient noncommercial information sources on travel decision-making process. The impact of destination recommendation on travel decision is important as much as the factors that construct the destination recommendation. It is considered that destination image, which is one of the most efficient determinant on destination choice process, has an effect on destination recommendation. Thus, in this research the impact of destination image on destination recommendation is investigated through foreign visitors who traveled to Cappadocia, Turkey. The research results show that destination image affects destination recommendation.

Keywords: *Destination Image, Destination Recommendation, Word-of-Mouth.*

DESTİNASYON İMAJININ DESTİNASYON TAVSİYESİ ÜZERİNE ETKİSİ

ÖZET

Artan turizm harcamaları özellikle gelişmekte olan ülke ekonomilerinde önemli rol oynamaktadır. Bu yüzden daha fazla turist çekmek isteyen destinayonlar, kişilerin seyahat karar verme süreçlerini nelerin etkilediğini dikkatle ele almalıdırlar. Destinasyon tavsiyesi kişilerin seyahat karar verme süreçlerinde en etkin olan ticari olmayan bilgi kaynaklarındandır. Destinasyon tavsiyesinin seyahat kararındaki etkisi kadar destinasyon tavsiyesini nelerin etkilediği de önemlidir. Destinasyon seçim sürecinde en etlili belirleyicilerden olan destinasyon imajının destinasyon tavsiyesini etkilediği düşünülmektedir. Buradan hareketle bu çalışmada destinasyon imajının destinasyon tavsiyesi üzerindeki etkisi Kapadokya'yı ziyaret eden yabancı turistler üzerinden araştırılmıştır. Araştıma sonucu destinasyon imajının destinasyon tavsiyesini etkilediğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Destinasyon İmajı, Destinasyon Tavsiyesi, Ağızdan Ağıza İletişim.*

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1. Introduction

Tourism sector is pivotal, especially for the economies of developing countries. Therefore, countries which have tourism potential want to host more tourists to strengthen their economies. Tourist revenues may have a great influence on national and regional development. So it is important to canalize destination marketing efforts to what affects the tourist destination choice process. There is a general consensus about the effect of destination image on destination choice (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gallarza et al., 2002; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Beerli & Martin, 2004). Destination recommendation which is a component of destination loyalty is also considered another important factor using by tourists when they get to decide to travel (Opperman 2000).

Positive destination image and destination loyalty cause increase travels to destinations (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989; Gartner & Shen, 1992; Jenkins, 1999; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gursoy et al., 2014). Therefore, understanding characteristics of the destination image is important due to its effects on tourist behaviors (Lee et al., 2005). Tourist behavior can be evaluated in three phases, pre-, during- and post visit (Chen & Tsai, 2007).

Tourists are exposed with numerous sources of information while making the travel decision. But not all information sources are trustworthy. Consumers must be attentive when relying on information sources (Gershoff et al., 2001). Word-of-mouth is regarded as the most reliable information source (Lambin & Schuiling, 2012). Thus, the impact of word-of-mouth on the behavioral intention that includes willingness to recommend and revisit intention (Wee et al., 1995; Chen & Tsai, 2007) should be taken into consideration, especially for destination marketing efforts.

Cappadocia shines out as an important destination with its unique landscape, fairy chimneys, underground cities, cave monasteries and churches, natural rock formations and historical heritage in Turkey. Thus, Cappadocia is one of most preferred destonation especially among foreign tourists with its unique attractions.

Tourists use a lot of information sources in the period of deciding where to travel. Destination recommendation gives information on destinations and it is also one of the most powerful sources that influence travel decision. The aim of this study is determining importance of destination image on destination recommendation throught foreign tourists who travelled Cappadocia. Data gathered from 402 English spoken participants by convenience sampling for this study. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, regression analysis and correlation analysis are used in this study. Regression analysis result demonstrates destination image affects destination recommendation. This study shows that Cappadocia is able to provide the expected level of satisfaction and therefore it is recommended at 93%.

2. Literature Review

Destination image can be defined as a person's all sort of beliefs, thoughts and feelings (Crompton, 1979; Gartner, 1986) or a person's overall perception about a destination and it is claimed that it considerably influences tourists' travel decision (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). If a person has positive thoughts and feelings about a particular destination, he will probably choose this destination among its alternatives (Sonmez & Sirakaya, 2002). Destination image affects tourist behaviors directly (Tasci & Gartner, 2007).

The concept of destination image is one of intensively investigated subjects in tourism related studies, but there is no consensus about the dimensions of it (Stephchenkova & Mills, 2010). Some authors propose that destination image is composed of three components; cognitive, affective and conative image (Gartner, 1993; Pike & Ryan 2004; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Agapito et al., 2010), while some evaluate destination image only with cognitive and affective components (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004). Cognitive component concerns peoples' knows and thoughts about a destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Pike & Ryan, 2004). The affective component refers to people's emotions about a destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004). The conative component express tourists' behaviors, visiting/revisiting intentions to destination (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008). According to Boulding (1956), conative image is how a person acts while using the information about a destination.

It is noted that there is an interrelation between affective and cognitive image. The researchers agree that the cognitive image is a predecessor of affective image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Baloglu, 2000).

Gunn (1972) was the first who identified three factors in the cognitive image formation process, namely respectively, organic, induced and modified-induced. Organic image is composed of non-commercial information sources (books, documentaries, word-of-mouth). Induced image is related to the promotional marketing activities of a destination (guidebooks, TV promotions, magazine articles). Modified induced image which is a mixture of actual experience of visiting the destination and previous image (Prebensen, 2007). While modified induced image requires visit to a destination, organic and induced images do not.

According to Gartner (1993), image formation process includes eight components:

1. Overt induced I- advertising activities,
2. Overt induced II- information asked from tour operators, travel agents,
3. Covert induced I- well recognized people,
4. Covert induced II- stories, reports or articles about a place,
5. Autonomous- independent information sources, for instance movies, documentaries, news,
6. Unsolicited organic- uninvestigated information received from relatives, friends,
7. Solicited organic- requested information from word-of-mouth,
8. Organic- individual travel experience.

Baloglu & McCleary (1999) pointed out that there are two groups of factors that influence the image formation process: personal and stimuli factors. While personal factors involve social and psychological attributes, stimulus factors involve commercial, noncommercial information and previous experiences. Word-of-mouth is one of the most efficient non-commercial stimulus information sources.

Providing pleasant experiences in a destination, encourage positive word-of-mouth (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Murpy, 1999). Positive perception of a destination also develops positive behavior toward a destination (Opperman, 2000). Willingness to recommend and revisit intentions are usually referred to destination loyalty (Opeerman, 2000; Yoon & Uysal,

2005). Destination loyalty is also one of components of customer based destination equity (Boo et al., 2009; Pektas 2017). Loyal customers are excellent word-of-mouth advertisers (Shoemaker & Lewis 1999).

The significance of word-of-mouth on the success of companies and destinations is widely debated and investigated, especially since the world adopted internet technologies, which multiplied the effect of word-of-mouth (Goldenberg et al., 2001). Online reviews are important information sources (Pan et al., 2007) that have direct effect on tourist behavior (Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012).

3. Research Methodology

Destination image scale consists of cognitive, affective evaluation/image parts that are taken from Baloglu & McCleary (1999). Destination recommendation is used as both destination loyalty and conative image variable (Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Agapito et. al., 2011). In this research destination recommendation is measured with the question ''Please indicate if you would or not recommend Cappadocia to your friends and relatives''.

In order to measure cognitive evaluation of Cappadocia, respondents were asked to rate 13 attributes of Cappadocia on a 5-point scale (offers very little, offers very much). Due to the fact that there is no beach in Cappadocia, Great Beaches/Water Sports question which exists in the study of Baloglu & McCleary (1999) was not used in the survey. Affective evaluation of Cappadocia was measured again with 5-point bipolar scale (very arousing-very sleepy, very pleasant-very unpleasant, very exciting- very gloomy, and very relaxing- very distressing). Recommendation of Cappadocia was measured 5-point scale, not recommend at all- definitely recommend.

The sample of the survey consists of the English-speaking foreign tourists who visited Cappadocia, Turkey. The data were gathered by the convenience sampling with questionnaire form. The 402 questionnaires filled by 470 English speaking tourists were suitable for analysis.

It is agreed that destination image is constructed cognitive and affective image in several disciplines (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Research model is built up as destination image affects destination recommendation. The research model is given in the Figure 1.

Figure 1: Research Model
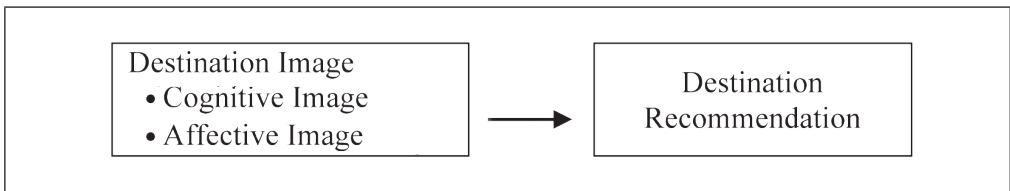
Research hypothesis is derived as follows.

H_1: Destination image affects destination recommendation.

The statistical programs AMOS and SPSS are used in order to analyze the data. Frequency analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, explotary factor analysis and correlation analysis and regression analysis are used in the study.

4. Results

The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1. The genders of respondents were 54.5% female (219) and 45.5% male (183). The majority of the respondents' ages were between 18 and 34 (68.7%), followed by between 35 and 44 (15.9%). The respondents were from 36 different countries. First three countries of residence were Italy (20.4%), France (16.2%) and South Korea (15.2%) respectively. Most of the respondents were single (69.1%). Most of the respondents with 54.2% have a bachelor degree, and with 33.6% have a master/ PhD degree. The monthly income of the respondents is between 2.000 and 4.999 $ (36.3%) placed on the top.

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

Nationality	n	%	Gender	n	%
Italy	82	20,4	Male	183	45,5
France	65	16,2	Female	219	54,5
S. Korea	61	15,2	Total	402	100
Australia	28	7,0	**AGE**	n	%
USA	21	5,2	18-34	276	68,7
Spain	20	5,0	35-44	64	15,9
Brazil	15	3,7	45-54	50	12,4
Canada	14	3,5	55 years and older	12	2,7
China	13	3,2	Total	402	100
Hong Kong	12	3,0	**Marital Status**	n	%
UK	11	2,7	Married	102	25,4
Japan	11	2,7	Single	278	69,1
Germany	6	1,5	Divorced/Widowed	14	3,5
Netherlands	5	1,2	*Unknown	8	2,0
New Zealand	4	1,0	Total	402	100
Sweden	3	,7	**Graduation**	n	%
Kuwait	3	,7	Grade School	8	2,0
Poland	3	,7	High School	39	9,7
Chile	2	,5	University	218	54,2
Thailand	2	,5	Masters/PhD.	135	33,6
*Others	21	4,7	Total	402	100
Total	402	100	**Montly Income $**	n	%
			Less than 2.000	116	28,9
			2.000-4.999	146	36,3
* Croatia, Switzerland, India, Belgium, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Costa Rica, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Qatar, Mexico, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania, Singapore, Taiwan.			5.000-7.999	36	9,0
			Over 8.000	55	13,7
			*Unknown	49	12,2
			Total	402	100
			* Not given information.		

Confirmatory factor analysis is used on condition that the relationship is well-tried and the factors and relevant items are known (Orçan 2018). Therefore, confirmatory factor analysis was used for the destination image scale used in this study. In order to reach Model Fit index, suitable accommodations and interesting historical attractions items are taken out from cognitive image scale. The fit indexes of the model created for cognitive evaluation/image (χ^2= 118.985, df = 41, χ^2/df=2.902, CFI=0.93, GFI=0.95, RMSEA=0.69) and for affective evaluation/image (χ^2= 5.427, df = 2, χ^2/df=2.714, CFI=0.98, GFI=0.99, RMSEA=0.65) are good and acceptable.

Although the goodness of fit values were achieved after confirmatory factor analysis, the cognitive image factors could not provide convergent validity. In order to provide validity, outliers were removed by mahalanobis distance. The data were reanalyzed by using covariance based AMOS and variance based PLS Smart programs but the desired validity could not still be obtained. Therefore, exploratory factor analysis was used instead of confirmatory factor analysis. The results of factor analysis of cognitive image items are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Factor Analysis of Cognitive Image Items

Rotated Component Matrix

	Factor Loadings			
	1	2	Mean	S. Devition
Quality of infrastructure	**,768**	,275	3,5831	,86090
Standard hygiene and cleanliness	**,754**	,180	3,3224	,92759
Good nightlife and entertainment	**,751**	,013	2,9553	1,03531
Personal safety	**,701**	,306	3,9116	,89146
Beautiful scenery and natural attractions	,000	**,833**	4,5274	,64765
Interesting cultural attractions	,158	**,735**	4,1072	,81607
Suitable accommodations	,298	**,642**	3,9494	,78531
Good climate	,285	**,614**	3,9246	,85134
% of Variance	30,111	27,813		
Cumulative Variance	57,924			

Explanatory factor analysis was performed for 13 cognitive image items. The adequacy of 13 cognitive image items for factor analysis was tested by Bartlett's test of sphericity (792.185, p<0.001) and the test KMO measure of sampling adequacy (.822). Both appealing local food (cuisine) and unpolluted and unspoiled environment which have factor loadings below .50 were excluded after factor analysis. Interesting historical sites was also excluded from factor analysis as it was the only item under one factor. The remaining 8 variables were analyzed and gathered under 2 factors. AVE and CR scores for the first factor (AVE=.55336, CR=.831975) and the second factor (AVE=.505819, CR=.801368) indicate convergent validity of cognitive image scale. Cronbach's alpha is the most widely used measure in order to assess the reliability of the entire scale (Hair et al., 2014). The Cronbach's alpha value of first (α= .774) and second (α= .710) factors and total Cronbach's alpha value of cognitive image indicated that the scale is reliable (α= .800).

Baloglu & McCleary (1999) used 4 point bipolar affective image scale. Its validity and reliability tested before by different studies. The same scale was used in this study as 5 point bipolar. The results of factor analysis of affective image items are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Factor Analysis of Affective Image Items

	Factor Loadings	Mean	S. Devition
Gloomy- Exiciting	,755	4,1163	,64359
Unpleasant- Pleasant	,739	4,5092	,65610
Sleepy- Arousing	,738	3,7500	,83381
Distressing- Relaxing	,657	4,1063	,69119
Cumulative Variance	52,323		

Bartlett's test of sphericity (219.907, p<0.001) and the test KMO measure of sampling adequacy (.728) indicates that affective image items suitable for factor analysis. AVE and CR scores for affective image (AVE=.52311, CR=.813967) indicates convergent validity of the affective image scale. The Cronbach's alpha value may decrease to .60 in exploratory analysis (Hair et al., 2014). The affective image scale used in this study provides reliability (α= .695).

When the result of recommendation of respondents for Cappadocia examined, it is clearly seen that there is big consensus among respondents about the recommendation of Cappadocia with 93.3 %. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Respondents' Recommendation of Cappadocia

	Not recommend or recommend		Recommend		Definitely recommend		Missing	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Recommendation of Cappadocia	10	2.5	142	35.3	234	58.2	16	4

N=402.
*No one chooses not recommend at all and not recommend.

Linear regression analysis was conducted in order to specify the relationship between destination image and destination recommendation, while the correlation analysis was used in order to determine the direction and strength of relationship between variables. The results demonstrated in Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5: Result of Regression Analyses

	t	p	β	F	df	p	adj. R²
Overall Model				123,047	1	,000	,233
Destination Image	9,781	000	485				

A significant regression equation was found (F(1, 400)= 123.047, p < ,000, R^2=235, $R^2_{Adjusted}$ =233). Destination image is a significant predictor of destination recommendation. As a result of regression analysis, destination image affects destination recommendation.

Table 6: Result of Correlation Analysis

	Destination Recommendation
Destination Image	,485[**]

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There are significant relationships between destination image and destination recommendation (r(401)=,485,p=.00). When the results of correlation analyses are examined, there is a positive correlation at $p < 0,01$.

5. Conclusion

The findings of the regression and correlation analysis revealed positive effect of destination image on destination recommendation. Thus, this study supports studies that demonstrated positive relationship with destination image and destination loyalty or component of destination loyalty (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Prayag, 2009; Agapito et. al., 2011; Lerputtarak, 2012; Artuğer et. al., 2013).

A destination which has an affirmative cognitive image will also have a positive affective image and will be recommended. Consequently, the importance of the destination image in order to get more tourists via destination recommendation that is one of unpaid and effective marketing tools.

The remarkable education level of sample should be considered with 54.2% bachelor degree, and with 33.6% master/PhD degree. It is apparent that Cappadocia is chosen as a destination, especially by highly educated people. This is a significant advantage for Cappadocia. Because educated people have much more environmental consciousness and their incomes are likely to be more than the others.

Another important result of the study is the percentage of recommendation of Cappadocia (93.3%). Therefore, it is possible to say that Cappodacia satisfies its guests' needs and expectations.

The cognitive and affective image scales of this study were taken from the study of Baloglu & McCleary(1999). Since the cognitive image scale failed to provide validity, explanatory factor analysis was used in this study. This situation, which is related to cognitive image scale, should be taken into consideration in future studies. In addition, different factors affecting destination recommendation can be addressed in future studies.

This study contributes to the literature by supporting similar studies in terms of showing the effect of destination image on destination recommendation. In this study, convenience sampling was used in terms of time and budget shortage. Therefore, the convenience sampling used in the research can be considered as a research constraint.

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