

The Significance of the Pull Factors in Immigrants' Entrepreneurship and Self-employment: The Case of Syrian Immigrants in Gaziantep

Göçmenlerin Girişimcilik ve Serbest Meslek Çalışmalarında Çeken Faktörlerin Önemi: Gaziantep'teki Suriyeli Göçmenler Örneği

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Abstract

Over the last nine years, more than three and a half million Syrians have moved from Syria to Turkey. In Gaziantep, almost a quarter of its residents are from Syrian immigrants. These immigrant groups have their own needs represented by the consumable products and a space to practice their culture. A group of Syrian immigrants in Gaziantep took advantage of their immigration to establish their own enterprises and initiate small businesses. This paper examines the main pull factors of Syrian entrepreneurs in Gaziantep including; the enclave, the language, the religion, and the statuses of the immigrants, through qualitative data analysis of forty semi-structured interviews.

Keywords: Syrian, Entrepreneurs, Small businesses.

Öz

Son dokuz yılda üç buçuk milyondan fazla Suriyeli Suriye'den Türkiye'ye taşındı. Gaziantep'te ikametgahının neredeyse dörtte biri Suriyeli göçmenlerdendir. Bu göçmen grupların tüketilebilir ürünlerle temsil edilen kendi ihtiyaçları ve kültürlerini uygulama alanı vardır. Gaziantep'teki bir grup Suriyeli göçmen, kendi girişimlerini kurmak ve küçük işletmeler kurmak için göçlerinden faydalandı. Bu makale, Gaziantep'teki Suriyeli girişimcilerin başlıca çekici faktörlerini incelemektedir; kırk yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmenin nitel veri analizi yoluyla göçmenlerin yerleşim bölgesi, dili, dini ve statüleri.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Suriyeli, Girişimciler, Küçük işletmeler.

Introduction

“It is no accident that the most dynamic cities are those with a relatively high share of migrants” (Goldin et al., 2018, p. 17). With each immigration wave, there is a group of immigrants have a vital role in the new destination; they take the risk of establishing their own business, putting their funds and expertise to cover the various needs of their enclave and to provide a new taste to the host community (Alahmad, 2020). However, the immigrants do not choose what to do and where to establish their business arbitrarily, there are many factors encourage them to make their decisions and move forward, which are the pull factors (DeFreitas, 1991).

After 10 years of the first Syrian forced immigration wave, Turkey now hosts around four million Syrians over its territory (DGMM, 2020). Nowadays, any visitor to Turkey can easily realize the new sense of the city, represented by the Syrian shops and markets (Milliyet, 2021). Yet, this phenomenon is more obvious in the big cities like Istanbul, Ankara, Mersin, Konya, and Gaziantep.

This paper examines in depth the significance of the pull factors and its impact on Syrian immigrants' entrepreneurship by studying a group of the micro and the small enterprises in Gaziantep. Besides, it is worth mentioning that, the original work is part of a Master's thesis titled "Syrian Immigrants as Urban Entrepreneurs: Small Business Ownership and The Sense of Place in Gaziantep" (Alahmad, 2020), the Study was prepared by Ziad Alahmad, and Supervised by Assist. Prof. Sinan Tankut Gülhan. Yet, despite adopting the same methodology, this paper has its unique view and it presents the most updated statistics.

The Pull Factors in Immigrants' Entrepreneurship

The complicated environment we live in, and we are a part of, is what entrepreneurship stems out from, consisting of the financial laws and the social reforms taking place in the society (Kaymakçioğlu, 2015, pp. 16-19). In a simple sentence, the word entrepreneurship refers to the start of a business activity that does not have any prior reservations toward the financial risks, with the aim of making a profit (Kaymakçioğlu, 2015, pp. 16-19).

For a long time, the immigrants have their own share of the entrepreneurship in the host countries, as the idea of migration has been in existence for a long time. It has shaped the humanity because it is our motivation and capability to achieve our dreams and as well as to avoid drought, famine, pandemics, wars and other disasters and look for new places to live on earth. Societies are advanced by immigrants when they adapt, innovate, and integrate and offer ideas to the host communities (Goldin et al., 2018, p. 17). Moreover, our economies have been influenced by migration as it signifies the collective contribution of various individuals.

The immigrants do not become entrepreneurs out of sudden rather they start their way due to several factors, which could be categorized as push and pull factors. Push factors refer to the reasons why immigrants are forced to move from their home country to other countries. Studies on migration have presented several "push" factors, leading examples being the lack of opportunities, insufficient number of jobs, inadequate medical care, inability to practice religion, natural disasters, loss of wealth, threats to themselves or their families, inadequate housing, pollution, bullying, landlords, political instability, insecurity, and so on (Kainth, 2009).

However, the "pull" side of the equation is as important as the "push" side. The "pull" effects serve as the motivation for the immigrants to choose self-employment and entrepreneurship. In general, individuals are encouraged by the pull factors to set up their own business as they identify an opportunity that can be capitalized. According to DeFreitas (1991) "pull" factors are basically those factors that concentrate on the positive aspects of self-employment and entrepreneurship that attract individuals towards it.

According to Clark and Drinkwater (2000) Immigrants decide to become self-employed essentially due to four pull factors: enclaves, languages, religion, and immigrants' statuses.

Starting with the "enclave" Clark and Drinkwater have described the 'enclave' as the gathering of individuals coming from the same ethnic background in a particular geographical location (Clark & Drinkwater, 2000, p. 600). Enclaves play a part in identifying the secured market of the ethnic group because of which it becomes possible to carry out business with each other in their own language. In such enclaves, ethnic minority representatives are aware of the taste and preferences of the ethnic group within the ethnic market, which serves as a good reason to become part of the market; however, this makes it even more difficult for them to enter into the wider community market. Ethnic group members are said to have a common origin, and this is frequently cited as the reason for creating not just solidarity, but also limitations (Dalhammar, 2004, p. 9). In contrast, such entrepreneurs also face several challenges. For

example, there will be high competition among the members of the same ethnic group, which creates a limitation on the entrepreneurial opportunities, thus decreasing the income for this kind of business (Clark & Drinkwater, 2000, p. 606).

It is worth mentioning that, the Enclave concept is defined firstly by Bourdieu as the 'social capital', according to Bourdieu (1986, p. 249) social capital refers to: "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition.". This means that this may be a pull factor and the immigrants may have access and link to their social capital and enclaves in a constructive approach when they shift to a new community that has high proportion of immigrants of the same origin.

Another reason why the immigrants decide to opt for self-employment and entrepreneurship is that they are not fluent in the native language, because of that they are not able to acquire the proper jobs with paid employment opportunities in the local market. Therefore, language has high importance for immigrants when they come to a host country. This is why a few ethnic groups have to set up their own business and carry out trade within their own ethnic group, using their home language. In other words, it is believed that immigrants are not well-skilled in the language of the host community would come across a greater number of challenges compared to others, and this creates a high rate of self-employment and entrepreneurship (Clark & Drinkwater, 2000, p. 606).

A few religions consider self-employment to be an appropriate way of moving ahead in life. People usually start a business in Muslim and Sikh communities at a higher rate compared to those from other religions (Clark & Drinkwater, 2000, p. 607). Hence, a significant part is also played by religion in forcing individuals to join the entrepreneurial field. According to Hinduism beliefs, a few specific castes have expertise in business activity, and so these people strongly prefer entrepreneurship over other fields (Clark & Drinkwater, 2000, p. 607).

Besides, the rates of self-employment and entrepreneurship among immigrants increase with the time spent living in the host country. The reason for this is that there is high cost of entry into self-employment (Clark & Drinkwater, 2000, p. 606). Hence, the immigrants take their time to understand the market and the needs.

Though there are several pull factors that are deemed to encourage the immigrants to get settled at their new location and establish their start-up, several problems may still be experienced by the immigrants, in addition to the cultural and language barriers which may make it difficult for them to start their own business. Some of these problems that have also been mentioned in the policy guide of The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2018, p. 17) on entrepreneurship for immigrants and refugees are such as; the lack of rights and laws allowing immigrants to work and/or become self-employed, and the unclarity of the consequences of entrepreneurial activity.

It needs to be asserted here that there are considerable advantages of supporting immigrant entrepreneurship, for migrant entrepreneurs and their enclave as well as the host societies and countries of origin. Immigrants frequently bring vital skills and expertise in the host countries. With respect to countries of origin, diaspora and returnees can influence entrepreneurship development by using the skills, resources, networks and knowledge that they obtained through migration, by functioning as counsellors for local entrepreneurs or by facilitating cross-border trade and marketing activities (UNCTAD, 2018, p. 10).

The Case of the Syrian immigrants in Gaziantep

Syrian immigrants have been residing in Turkey for almost ten years now, and they could likely to stay more than that as no clear solution for the Syrian crisis is on the horizon.

The Directorate General of Migration Management [DGMM] data showed that by 25th August 2020, registrations of a total of 3,609,003 Syrians were carried out under Temporary Protection. This constitutes 3.6% of the population of Turkey. Merely 61,594 of the Syrians are living in camps in Turkey, whereas the rest are settled in urban cities (DGMM, 2020).

The city of Gaziantep started hosting Syrian immigrants who left their countries due to the civil war taking place in 2011 and came to Gaziantep because it is strategically positioned over the Syrian border and also because it has a commercial, cultural and historical link with Aleppo (Gültekin, et al., 2018, p. 77). The latest statistical report by DGMM (GEÇİCİ KORUMA, 2020) showed that temporary protection has been awarded to 450,759 Syrian immigrants in Gaziantep, which constitutes around 21.78% of the population of the city (DGMM, 2020).

Table 1: The number of Syrians under TP living in Turkey (DGMM, 2020).

| Rank | City | Registered Syrians | City Population | Percentage of Syrians to Turkish |
|------|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | KİLİS | 108.209 | 142.490 | %75,94 |
| 2 | HATAY | 435.530 | 1.628.894 | %26,74 |
| 3 | ŞANLIURFA | 420.664 | 2.073.614 | %20,29 |
| 4 | GAZİANTEP | 450.759 | 2.069.364 | %21,78 |
| 5 | MERSİN | 215.736 | 1.840.425 | %11,72 |
| 6 | ADANA | 249.143 | 2.237.940 | %11,13 |
| 7 | MARDİN | 88.809 | 838.778 | %10,59 |
| 8 | OSMANİYE | 48.447 | 538.759 | %8,99 |
| 9 | KAHRAMANMARAŞ | 92.105 | 1.154.102 | %7,98 |
| 10 | BURSA | 176.829 | 3.056.120 | %5,79 |

It has been reported by DGMM that there are 450.759 Syrians living in Gaziantep province under temporary protection, which constitutes 21.78% of the total Turkish citizens in the city (DGMM, 2020). One out of four people in Gaziantep is a Syrian; hence, it would be very common to find Syrians in the street, at the workplace or at outdoor shopping places.

Following the closure of the temporary accommodation centers (TACs) in the governorate, all the Syrian immigrants in Gaziantep live in Urban areas and distributed as follow: 44% of the Syrians live in Şahinbey district, 21% live in Şehitkamil district, 7% in Nizip district, and 28% live in rest of the six districts (Sandal, Hançerkıran, & Tıraş, 2016). It is worth

mentioning that Nizip 1 camp was shut down in August 2018, followed by the closure of Nizip 2 camp in July 2019, which was the last camp under the Gaziantep governorate (Milliyet, Geçici Barınma Merkezleri Kapatıldı, 2018)

In 2018, Gaziantep University carried out a comprehensive research regarding the Syrians residing in Gaziantep, and presented the results at the start of 2019. It was shown in the results of the study that 90.3% of the interviewed Syrians are residing in Gaziantep had arrived from Aleppo province and that 64.8% of these Syrians lived in Aleppo city in urban settings (Gültekin, et al., 2018, p. 77).

According to the study, a large number of Syrians in the city are married, and each household has 4.2 children on average, which is greater than the average rate in Turkey, which is 2 children in each household (Gültekin, et al., 2018, p. 88).

Furthermore, Syrians select their area of residence in Gaziantep city in accordance with their economic, cultural and social beliefs and perspectives (Sönmez, 2016, p. 395). Besides that, according to the Gaziantep University research, almost 97.8% of the Syrians rent places for living, for example separated flats and houses, which costs 500 TL on average per month (Gültekin, et al., 2018, p. 95). It was also found that 81% of the working Syrians work on all time jobs, and on estimate, each individual earns around 880 TL per month (Gültekin, et al., 2018, p. 112).

It is also reported in the study that a household has 6.6 people on average (Gültekin, et al., 2018), which shows that the working member of the family would have to earn a significant amount of money to fulfil the needs of a large family, while also having a stable stream of income.

Moreover, the DGGM data shows that Turkish government awarded Turkish citizenship to 92,280 Syrians throughout the country by 1st August, 2019. Nonetheless, it was found in the GAUN study that Turkish citizenship is held by 3.6% of the people interviewed (Gültekin, et al., 2018).

The findings of another research demonstrated that in Gaziantep, Syrians work in around 154 professions, chiefly as tradesmen, dress makers, shoe makers and teachers (Sandal, Hançerkıran, & Tıraş, 2016, p. 477).

As the Syrians started entering Turkey, they had two options; they could either live in the TACs, where the Turkish government represented by Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency [AFAD] was providing basic shelter and needs. However, those living in the TACs were not permitted to work in the camp.

The other option was to live in the urban areas. Majority of the Syrians preferred to live in the urban areas, as shown in the reports of DGMM (2020). Yet, the ones who lived in urban areas had to arrange for accommodation on their own and had to provide for their own expenses.

Because of the inadequate opportunities for living, the lack of formal legislation for organizing their work and the various barriers foremost among them, language Syrians faced issues in gaining employment in Turkish firms. As a response, efforts were persistently made by the Syrian immigrants to come up with solutions on their own on the basis of three key factors: their prior work experiences, savings, and the needs generated by the large number of Syrians in the city. They shifted their business to the inner city areas to achieve a secure source of income in addition to supporting other fellow immigrants that are looking for employment opportunities.

It is shown in the activity report of Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce [GTO] (Faaliyet Raporu 2019, 2020) that towards the end of 2019, from the total of 2380 companies registered

in Gaziantep, Syrian nationals owned 2010 companies. This shows a significant increase from the situation in 2011.

The details of the 2380 companies under foreign ownership are presented below:

Table 2: The registered companies in GTO per nationality (GTO, 2020).

| Nationality | Number of enterprises | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Syria | 2010 | 84 % |
| Iraq | 188 | 7 % |
| Germany | 22 | 0.9 % |
| Iran | 14 | 0.6 % |
| USA | 14 | 0.6 % |
| Afghanistan | 14 | 0.6 % |
| Saudi Arabia | 13 | 0.5 % |
| Lebanon | 12 | 0.4 % |
| Jordan | 8 | 0.3 % |
| Pakistan | 7 | 0.3 % |
| Other nationalities | 78 | 3.3 % |

After compiling the data with GTO's online database (Üyeler, 2019), the increase in the number of registered Syrian-owned companies in Gaziantep is shown below:

Table 3: The registered Syrian companies in GTO during the last nine years (GTO, Faaliyet Raporu 2019, 2020).

| Year | Registered Enterprises |
|-------------|------------------------|
| Before 2011 | 12 |
| 2011 | 20 |
| 2012 | 31 |
| 2013 | 122 |
| 2014 | 347 |
| 2015 | 571 |
| 2016 | 974 |
| 2017 | 1247 |
| 2018 | 1802 |

| | |
|------|------|
| 2019 | 1949 |
| 2020 | 2010 |

Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce's online database (Üyeler, 2019) showed that towards the end of September 2019, the registered Syrian enterprises in each category are as follows:

Table 4: The registered Syrian companies in GTO per category (GTO, 2019).

| Category | Number of Enterprises |
|---|-----------------------|
| Wholesale and retail | 986 |
| Computer and communication | 34 |
| Accommodation and food | 42 |
| Manufacturing and Production | 582 |
| Construction | 62 |
| Logistics and storing | 25 |
| Professional, science, and technical activities | 135 |
| Real estate | 10 |
| Finance and insurance | 5 |
| Education | 24 |
| Other | 44 |
| Grand Total | 1949 |

In addition, the data gathered by Gaziantep Chamber of Artisans showed that by the end of September 2019, a total of 822 Syrian-owned enterprises were officially registered in the chamber. The table below shows the details of these enterprises:

Table 5: The registered Syrian enterprises in GESOB per category.

| Category | Number of Enterprises |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Shoes shops and manufacturing | 68 |
| Market | 220 |
| Computer and technology | 9 |
| Barbershop (Men) | 96 |

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| Barbershop (Women) | 15 |
| Butcher | 17 |
| Clothing | 59 |
| Cosmetic | 13 |
| Jewelry | 14 |
| Restaurants | 45 |
| Grocery | 8 |
| Cars services | 13 |
| Sweets shops | 15 |
| Electronic devices repairs | 13 |
| Electronic devices (retailers) | 33 |
| Haberdashery | 17 |
| Other | 167 |
| Grand Total | 822 |

The Syrians who got their business enterprises registered in their names are part of the data given above. This data does not include all those who are working in partnership with Turkish nationals and whose businesses are registered under their partner's names.

Apart from the given area, the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) stated that throughout Turkey, 3,875 Turkish companies commenced their business with international partners in 2013, while the number of such companies increased to 4,736 in 2014. In 2015, this figure increased to 4,729, out of which 1,599 were established with Syrian partners. Finally, towards the end of 2017, a total of 6,611 companies were created by Syrians throughout Turkey (TOBB, 2019, p. 14).

Finally, the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV) reported that in the initial six months of 2019, the total capital of the Syrian owned enterprises was around two hundred million Turkish Liras (TEPAV, 2019).

Methodology

As the main purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of the Pull Factors on Syrian immigrants' entrepreneurship in Gaziantep, between 11th and 30th of October 2019, using the simple random sampling method (Lune & Berg, 2018, p. 38), 40 semi-structured interviews with micro and small business owners in Gaziantep were conducted as a part of a field research to complete a Master's thesis (Alahmad, 2020).

The study was mainly conducted in five areas: Karataş, Güneykent, Binevler, and İnönü Boulevard that is located in Kolejtepe neighborhood and forms a link between Antep Lisesi and the old Çarşı. Those five areas were selected as they have a high percentage of Syrian residents

and a large number of Syrian enterprises. It should be pointed that the ages of the participants are quite widespread; the youngest was 21 years old and the oldest was 63 years old; however, the average of the ages was 37.6 years. Whereas, the largest group was between 30 to 39 years old.

In addition, all of the interviewed entrepreneurs were males, which creates a question mark about the role of women in the field of business and investments among the Syrian immigrants.

Table 6: The interviewed entrepreneurs per neighborhood and business category.

| Row Labels | Binevler | Cumhuriyet | Güneykent | İnönü Blvd. | Karataş | Grand Total |
|--|----------|------------|-----------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| Restaurant | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 9 |
| Small Restaurant (* less than 5 tables) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Stationery shop | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Clothes shop | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Market and grocery store | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 8 |
| Cell phones and accessory | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 4 |
| Houseware shop | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Furniture shop | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Men's Barber | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Sweets shop | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Perfume shop | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Coffee beans shop | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Grand Total | 6 | 8 | 5 | 14 | 7 | 40 |

The highest number of the interviews were conducted in İnönü Boulevard because the largest number of the Syrian enterprises are located there. It is also called *The Iranian Street* by Syrian immigrants and locals as Iranian tourists used to visit this area for shopping years ago (gaziantephaberler, 2009).

The analysis of the data was done following Schmidt's (2004, pp. 253-258) notes on analyzing the semi-structured interviews. After completing the interviews and typing the scripts, a computer-based application (NVivo 12 Pro) was used to code the data using its auto coding function, afterwards the irrelevant codes were corrected manually using Microsoft Excel. Finally, the overall results were presented in tables and graphs. Besides, interpretations

were made and the most relevant quotes were highlighted to emphasize the uniqueness of the case study, and to examine it within the theoretical and the legal frameworks.

Nonetheless, the interviewees were given pseudonyms instead of their real names or using codes as they are real human not only research data and numbers.

Results

Year of arrival:

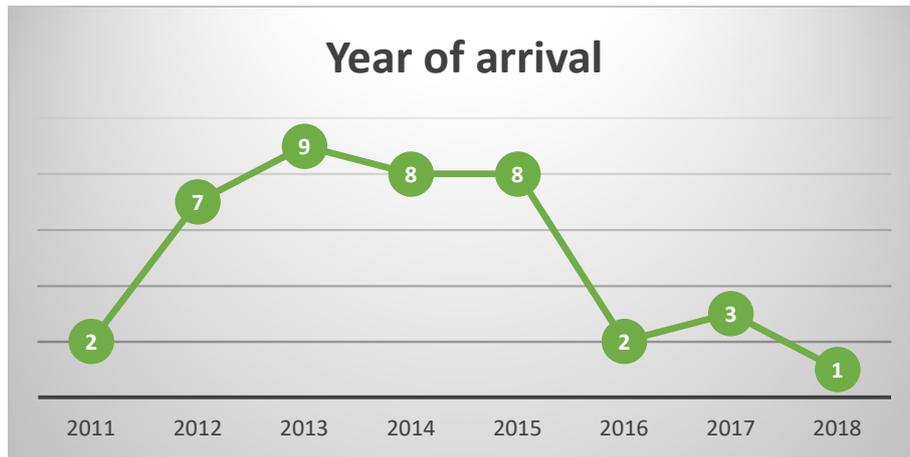


Figure 1: The interviewees per their year of arrival to Turkey.

The collected data through the interviews shows that the majority of the entrepreneurs arrived in Turkey between the years 2012 and 2015. This shows that they have been living in Turkey for a long time now and are more capable of taking decisions regarding making investments in Turkey, this is reminding to what Clark and Drinkwater (2000, p. 606) asserted regarding the importance of timing to start a business. As Sabri pointed,

Once I arrived to Turkey, I thought it is just a short visit then I will go back to my country when the situation gets better; however, after three years of waiting, I decided to have a try, and thankfully it was successful.

Why Turkey?

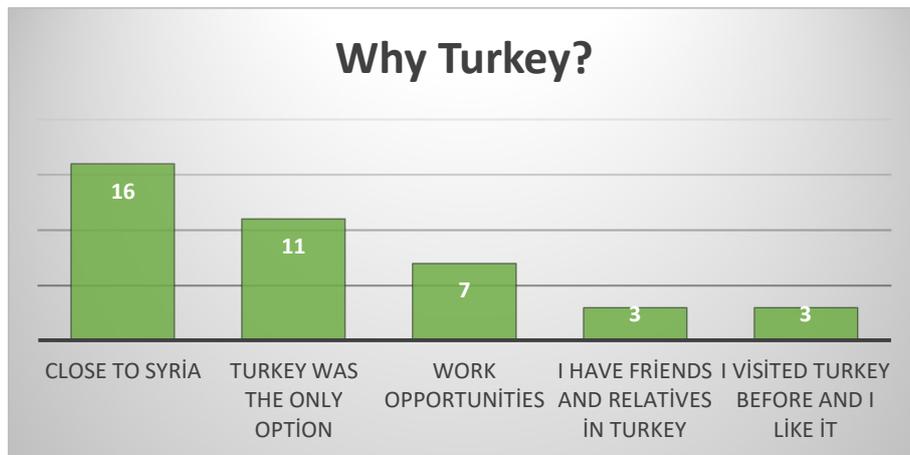


Figure 2: The interviewees per their reason behind choosing Turkey as a destination.

The analysis of the results shows that, Syrians preferred to come to Turkey for three main reasons. First, the short distance between Syria and Turkey, as it is the closest country and the easiest way to escape from the instable situation, especially for the ones who came from Aleppo and Idlib governorates.

The second group forced to choose Turkey because it was the only option for them. Even if they were willing to go to other countries, they cannot because of various reasons such as visa requirements. In addition, due to the ongoing civil war, for some of them, Syrians cannot travel through Syrian government areas because of security reasons especially for the ones living out of government control in northern Syria,

The third group took their decision based on a clear opportunity analysis. Their main reason of coming to Turkey was to look for work or investment opportunities in the country so that they can get settled there.

In addition to the mentioned reasons, there is a group had mixed experiences and reasons to make their decision, one of them is Fatih who stated:

I came to Turkey because of the situation in Syria; as I had to leave to another country, I went to Egypt first then Lebanon, but I could not survive there because of the racism and the instable political situation there. Then I decided to go to Turkey because it was the most convenient option.

In addition, Obada said; “I preferred Turkey for many reasons, first; because I have been in Turkey many times as a tourist and I like it, and the other reason is that our Turkish brothers supported us more than our Arab neighbors did.”

Why Gaziantep?



Figure 3: The interviewees per their reason behind choosing Gaziantep as a destination.

Syrians have three options to choose from when deciding which city to settle down in Turkey. The first alternative is settling down in cities near the Syrian border, such as Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Hatay or Kilis, to stay close to Syria and avoid the far and the big cities. Secondly, cities in western Turkey such as İzmir, Aydın, and Muğla would be preferred so that they can reach other European cities via sea route. As a third option, big metropolitan cities such as Ankara and İstanbul can be quite attractive for Syrian immigrants (Eraydın, 2017, p. 8) as they expect better work opportunities.

The analysis of the interviews carried out shows that the main factor for choosing Gaziantep to settle was the presence of friends and the relatives in the city; for some of them,

their friends and relatives came before them, after 2011, in other words Syrian immigrants prefer to be surrounded by people they know to feel safer. In addition, others have kin relationship and relatives living in Gaziantep from even before 2011.

Work opportunities was the second main factor to choose Gaziantep. Because it was important for the Syrians to work to secure their income and sustain a good life, they found Gaziantep to be an excellent option as the city is already known to Syrians as a business and industry center because of its location close to Syria.

Culture was the third factor for choosing Gaziantep; Syrian people believe that Gaziantep has the closest culture to Syrian cities, especially Aleppo, as some of them had visited the city before or heard about it from their friends and relatives. It was explained by Alaa that, “we got some recommendations telling us that it is similar to Aleppo culturally”. In other words, this factor could be linked to the social identity theory (Hogg, Abrams, Otten, & Hinkle, 2004), as the Syrian immigrants were looking for a similar culture and the closest social identity to what they were familiar with.

The last factor was the location of Gaziantep. Since it is very close to the Turkish-Syrian border, Syrian immigrants preferred to stay in Gaziantep. They were hopeful of going back to their country soon, so they prefer not travelling to cities that are far from the border. According to Obada, “I can feel Aleppo breezes from here.” which explain his desire to stay close to his hometown.

First visited city:

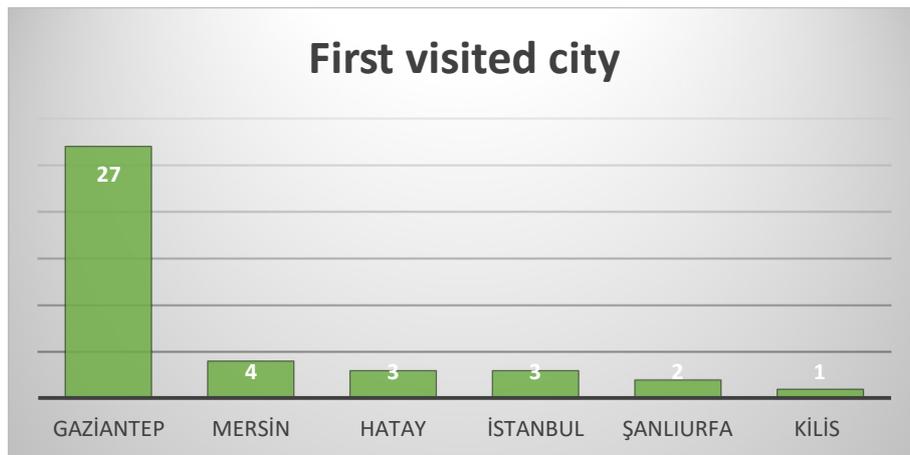


Figure 4: The interviewees per the first city they settled in when they arrived to Turkey.

It is worth mentioning that 67.5% of the interviewees came directly to Gaziantep city; the others were staying in other Turkish cities, mainly Mersin, Hatay, Istanbul and Şanlıurfa, after which they decided to move to Gaziantep due to different pull factors, including work opportunities generated by the presence of Syrians.

Yahya stated that; “I stayed in Mersin at the beginning for two years without doing anything; when I decided to start my own business I came to Gaziantep because it is the most suitable city for business.” Which means that Gaziantep was one of the best options for Yahya to work and invest instead of staying at home and spending his savings.

Turkish language skills:

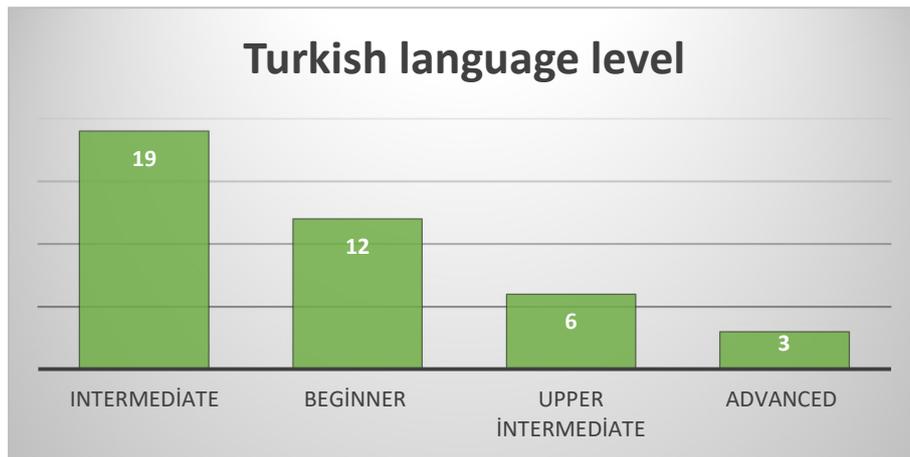


Figure 5: The interviewees per Turkish language level.

It is important to know and evaluate the Turkish language level of the Syrian entrepreneurs in Gaziantep. 77.5 percent of the interviewees stated that they have beginner or intermediate level language skills. However, when the interviewees were saying intermediate level, they were adding and explaining it as; “I can understand very well but it is hard to speak” (Fatih).

The beginners also have a justification for their poor language skills, including time and not having any connection with Turkish community, as Sabri stated, “I just deal with Syrians at work and daily life.” Similar to Sabri, Ihsan as well has poor language skills due to the missed communication line with the host community, he stated: “My Turkish language skills are zero because I do not work or deal with Turkish people.” Omar also has the same proficiency level, for him the main reason is the lack of time, Omar claimed that, “I did not have time to study Turkish, I work 12 hours a day!”

In addition to that, a big share of the beginner level of the interviewees were adding; “but my children know very well”, which give two hints as well; first one is their children are supporting them positively in their businesses and daily life. The second hint is that the younger generation is more eager to learn Turkish language and to be integrated within the new community.

Main reasons to be self-employed:

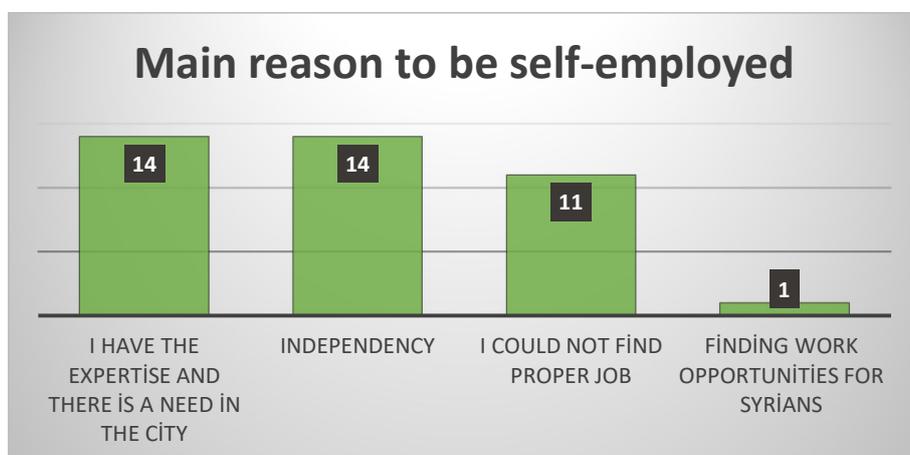


Figure 6: The interviewees per the main reason behind encouraging them to be self-employed.

One third of the interviewees took their decision to start their own business and to be self-employed because they had the required expertise. In addition, they found that there is a need in the city they could cover and invest in. In other words, this reason could be translated as the opportunity structure theory asserted; they are aware of the preferences of their co-ethnic customers, and are able to provide services more comfortably because they converse in the same language and have the skills needed to provide service to customers from the same ethnic background (Evans, 1989). "I have the experience, and I saw there is a need in Gaziantep for such a business." Mahmoud stated. Which means that the presence of the same ethnic community in the city is a major factor to generate specific needs in the community uncovered by the locals. From there side, the entrepreneurs take the risk using their experience to cover this gap.

The second third were thinking about being independent, and they were constantly saying; "I do not want to be working under the management of someone else". In addition to that, it was also about sustainability, as Oday said;

I had worked in different jobs before this, I got very low salaries, but when you have family you should take decision to do something for yourself. On the other hand, it seems like I am staying here for a longer period.

This implies the responsibility and sustain an income source for the family. In other words, the entrepreneurs expect higher income if they work independently rather than receiving fixed salary.

More than quarter of the interviewees stated that, they took this adventure because they have no other chance; some of them were exploited, and the others worked under unfair conditions with respect to their "Age and Educational background". Fatih explained it as follows "After two years of working under unfair work conditions; I decided to start my own business and to learn something new". Which is matching with the disadvantage Theory by Light (1979) who asserts that it is the disadvantage experienced by immigrants in acquiring a job that push them to become self-employed and entrepreneurs.

The average of Syrian customers' percentage:

The percentage of Syrian customers varies from 50 percent to 100 percent and 82 percent on average. It was stated by some of the interviewed enterprises that 100 percent of their customers are Syrians and Turkish people do not come and buy from them for various reasons. Some examples of these are stated below:

"Some Turkish customers enter the place because they do not know that we are Syrian, when they found that we are Syrian, they leave the place without buying anything and some of them buy but they never come back" (Samer).

"Turkish do not come to us because they think that Syrian enterprises sell unofficial stuff or smuggled products" (Bashar).

"I feel that Turkish do not buy from us because of racism; they do not like us, and they do not trust us" (Marwan).

This demonstrates the worries of the host community to deal with the immigrants, which could be due to language barrier, type of products or other reasons like racism. However, all of the comments mentioned indicate that there is a high need for social cohesion between the two communities in different dimensions.

On the other hand, some of the interviewed entrepreneurs stated that they have the same number of Turkish customers as the Syrians, which is up to 50 percent. The comments and opinions of this group regarding gaining Turkish customers are also presented below:

“Turkish come to here because they like the taste and the quality of the product” (Bilal).

“Turkish come to here because our prices cheaper, and everything clean and we care about them so much” (Zaher).

“Usually, Turkish customers do not come because we provide something they are not familiar with. However, some of them come out of curiosity” (Fatih).

This also suggests that there is a share of Syrian immigrants managed to be integrated into the new community and attract the host to their market.

Customers' nationality according to business (%):

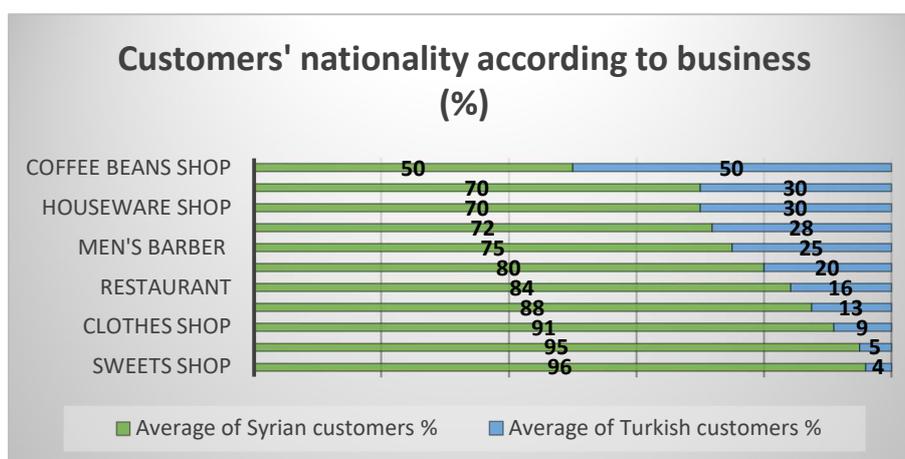


Figure 7: The interviewees per nationality of customers and business category.

Nonetheless, the segregation of the results in respect to business type shows that the sellers of coffee beans products and also of furniture shops have the biggest share of the Turkish customer.

On the other hand, sweets, perfume, clothes, and cell phones and cell phone accessories have the least percentage of Turkish customers, respectively.

This variation may be due to language barriers and variety of cultures and tastes. Alternatively, just like what Adeeb said “Turkish usually enter the place and do not buy anything because they have alternatives in the Turkish markets, appropriate to their taste and style, as well as it is cheaper than what we sell”, which is natural in the open markets that have many alternatives and plenty of options.

Conclusion

The presence of 450.759 Syrians in Gaziantep metropolitan area and the special needs they generate is one of the main pull factors for the Syrian entrepreneurs to move into Gaziantep and start a business, in addition, it is one of the main reasons for their success, hence their success opportunities would be very low without their enclave.

In respect to Clark and Drinkwater's (2000) discussion of pull factors, the enclave, the language, the religion, and the statuses of the immigrants, the results of the field study here

show that the enclave is a major factor pulling the Syrian immigrants into Gaziantep and led to their shift into entrepreneurship and self-employment. Furthermore, the presence of the enclave and the immigrants' community in the city secures their customers, so they design their businesses and services accordingly.

Concerning the language factor, not being proficient in Turkish language is a considerable issue for the majority of the Syrian immigrants living in the city. On the other hand, all Syrian immigrants speak Arabic, which is an important reason to seek self-employment and establish their businesses in the city, as they speak the same language with their customers.

With respect to the religion factor, it is not a main factor for the Syrian entrepreneurs to choose self-employment in Gaziantep. However, the results of the field study show that the cultural similarities between the Turkish community and the Syrian community was one the logics to choose Gaziantep as a destination.

As to the immigrants' status, the findings show that the largest group of the entrepreneurs are the ones who arrived to Gaziantep between 2012 and 2016. In other words, the Syrian immigrants take their time to understand the needs and to evaluate the option as well as to avoid the high cost of self-employment entry.

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