

CULTURAL DESTINATION ATTRIBUTES, OVERALL TOURIST SATISFACTION AND TOURIST LOYALTY: FIRST TIMERS VERSUS REPEATERS

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the effects of the cultural attributes of tourist destinations on the satisfaction levels of visitors and the impact of this satisfaction rating on visitor loyalty. Additionally, a multiple-group analysis was conducted to compare the responses of first-time visitors and repeat visitors. For this study, a self-administered questionnaire was used to survey 411 international tourists who were visiting Istanbul, Turkey, through convenience sampling. The findings indicated that cultural attractions at the destination impacted the overall satisfaction rating of the visitors, and that this specific satisfaction rating determined the loyalty of the tourist to return to the destination. This relationship between cultural attractions, satisfaction and visitor loyalty was a significant factor for both groups.

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INTRODUCTION

A cultural tourism destination is considered as a place with a variety of cultural attractions that meet the requirements of visitors (Atsiz et al., 2020) and, ultimately, impact their overall satisfaction with the destination (Huh & Uysal, 2004). While tourism is the focus of these destinations, their cultural attractions have a determining role in the overall satisfaction and loyalty of visitors to that destination (Huh et al., 2006). Therefore, the standard and performance of these venues have a vital function in ensuring

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tourist satisfaction and loyalty. An analysis of these key attributes is critical in providing a successful marketing and development strategy to attract tourists to a destination (Eusébio & Vieira, 2013). Examining the impact of cultural attractions on visitor satisfaction is particularly important to ensure that the destination remains competitive, as positive feedback to these attributes will enhance the loyalty of tourists to return to the destination (Baloglu et al., 2004).

The literature highlights several studies on the effect that the facilities and features of a tourist destination have on visitor satisfaction and loyalty (Baloglu et al., 2004; Eusébio & Vieira, 2013; Ozturk & Gogtas, 2016). Moreover, the impact of destination attributes on tourist satisfaction was examined by some prior studies (Albayrak & Caber, 2013; Alegre & Garau, 2010; Biswas et al., 2020; Hui et al., 2007; Kozak, 2002; Kwanisai & Vengesayi, 2016) or tourist loyalty (Vareiro et al., 2019). Moreover, these studies generally investigate the general features of a destination rather than on specific aspects such as culture or heritage. Although its cultural attractions are fundamentally important to a destination and motivate many interested tourists to visit (Akova & Atsiz, 2019; Atsiz et al., 2020), inadequate holistic research has been conducted on the impact of these attractions on tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, this evaluation can offer different results as it depends on whether the tourist was a first timer or a repeat visitor (Moniz, 2012). A review of the literature failed to yield any research that compared the experiences of first time and repeat visitors in this regard.

Istanbul, the most populous city in Turkey with over 15 million inhabitants (Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), 2020), which attracted a similar number of tourists in 2019 (İstanbul Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, 2020), was the selected destination for this research. The city has many cultural and historical attractions that were included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1985 (UNESCO, 2020). The cultural heritage areas that were registered are "Sultanahmet Archaeological Park", "Suleymaniye Conservation Area", "Zeyrek Conservation Area", and "Land Walls Conservation Area." Additionally, Istanbul has numerous tangible and intangible cultural assets (Gursoy et al., 2021). Despite its many attractions, Istanbul has failed to capitalise on tourism revenues from the worldwide cultural tourism market (Gezici & Kerimoglu, 2010). With this tourism trend on the rise, many destinations are developing their cultural attractions to encourage potential visitors and to promote repeat visits (Altunel & Erkut, 2015). To date, studies on the cultural attractions of Istanbul have not featured in the literature. This study, therefore, aims to

fill the gap in the research by analysing the impact of cultural attributes on the overall satisfaction response of tourists and visitor loyalty. The research will employ PLS-SEM, which is partial least squares-structural equation modelling. Additionally, this study will compare this evaluation according to the frequency of visits by tourists (i.e. first time and repeat tourists) through multi-group analysis. This analysis, as a composite-based technique, is recommended and deemed to be more appropriate for PLS-SEM research (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017).

This study will make a considerable empirical contribution to the literature in terms of the impact of cultural characteristics of a destination on tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, it will add to the knowledge by revealing the differences in satisfaction and loyalty of first time and repeat visitors to a cultural destination, and by providing a comparison between the specified tourist groups in terms of frequency of visit. Thus, the literature on tourism also will benefit from a methodological contribution. In addition, the findings will be beneficial to planners in tourist destinations in creating policies for cultural tourism and for tourism scholars.

The study has been divided into several parts. The first part provides a theoretical appraisal of the cultural attributes of the destination, tourist satisfaction and loyalty, and the development of hypotheses. The research method and results will be presented in subsequent sections, followed by discussion and a detailed demonstration of the implications of the findings. Finally, the limitations of the research and suggestions for further studies will be provided.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Cultural Destination Attributes

Destinations, as “amalgams of tourism products, offering an integrated experience to consumers” (Buhalis, 2000, P.97), have various attributes (e.g. nature, history, local culture, hospitality, infrastructure, service quality, accessibility, attractions both cultural and natural) that encourage tourists and allow the destinations to differ from others by providing unique offerings (Moon & Han, 2018; Sirakaya et al., 1996). Among others, attractions particularly based on culture and heritage have gained in popularity and importance in many destinations (Gursoy et al., 2021; Huh & Uysal, 2004).

This reflects the long-held high level of interest by tourists in these attractions and activities. Cultural tourism has been widely examined by tourism scholars in different settings since 1970 (McKercher, 2020). Much of the previous work focused on documenting the market size, examining cultural tourists, and the economic impacts of cultural assets on destinations (Richards, 2018). Additionally, lists of cultural and heritage characteristics of a destination have been identified and their impact on tourists and destinations have been investigated (Huh & Uysal, 2004).

These attributes comprise many tangible and intangible cultural elements, services and other amenities that may attract tourists to a destination (Huh & Uysal, 2004; Lew, 1987). They are pivotal attractions that enrich the experience of the tourist in the destination (Prentice, 1993), while Reisinger et al. (2009) stated that they are among the essential components that have rich potential in creating future tourism demand. These attractions have been operating in numerous guises, but no standardised mechanism exists in the literature for their evaluation. In the tourism literature, several researchers identified and grouped the main or general cultural attributes of a destination. For example, a study by Huh and Uysal (2004) identified four main cultural attributes in a destination. The first relates to cultural attractions that include "museums, galleries, culture villages, historic buildings, and monuments", while the second focuses on heritage attractions, such as "handcrafts, architecture, traditional scenery, and the arts". Apart from these attributes, general tourist attractions and maintenance factors are considered as major attributes of a cultural destination. The general tour attractions comprise elements such as "religious sites, souvenirs, theatres, theme parks, tour packages, food, shopping venues, and guides", while the maintenance factors can be defined as facilities that satisfy the needs of tourists in terms of accessibility, events, information, and accommodation. Kim et al. (2007) also identified four main cultural destination attributes, which included musical events, commercial activities, indigenous festivals, and fairs and activities for those seeking an educational or aesthetical experience. Leask (2010) determined that museums, galleries and heritage attractions are some of the most important cultural attributes. Ghosh and Sofique (2012) detected two main cultural heritage attributes of a destination that impact the overall satisfaction of tourists – civil attractions (organised trips, music and dance, festivals and events, theatres and drama) and heritage attractions (monuments and historic buildings and architecture). Kim (2014) highlighted the role of local culture, events and activities, and hospitality as

some attributes of a cultural destination that would provide memorable experiences for visitors.

Although many studies have examined the attributes of cultural destination both separately and holistically, there is no clear consensus on which cultural attributes should feature in a destination (Jumanazarov et al., 2020). Some scholars have emphasised that these attributes could differ across destinations because the attractions are unique to that destination. However, a study by Huh and Uysal (2004) shows the most promise as it clarifies the main attributes for a cultural destination.

Tourist Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is measured by comparing their experience of the destination with their expectations (Pizam et al., 1978). According to Eusébio and Vieira (2013), tourist satisfaction involves an emotive response to experiences at the destination. Satisfied tourists show that their expectations of the destination have been fulfilled and their experience was as good as anticipated (Chon & Olsen, 1991). Therefore, the aspirations or expectations of the tourist prior to the visit and their actual experience of the destination are major factors that affect the level of satisfaction for tourists (Biodun et al., 2013). Other findings also highlighted the mental and emotional responses of tourists to their experience at a destination (del Bosque & San Martín, 2008).

Tourist satisfaction is regarded as an essential element for a destination, as it provides the advantage of distinguishing it from other locations, it boosts its reputation, and determines the repeat selection of a destination by the visitor who has appreciated the services and attributes provided by the destination (Eusébio & Vieira, 2013). An evaluation of the overall satisfaction levels of tourists would be beneficial to those working in hospitality and tourism, so that they may meet the needs of visitors, determine the main advantages and disadvantages of the venue, and identify issues that are crucial for providing a successful experience for the tourist (Meng et al., 2008). It has been widely recognised that the cultural attributes of a destination greatly enhance the overall satisfaction and distinctive experience of a destination for visitors.

Tourist loyalty

Many studies have acknowledged the significance of loyalty in the marketing of tourism and destinations (Gursoy et al., 2014; Suhartanto et

al., 2020). Tourist loyalty has been shown to be a key factor in creating and maintaining the social and economic development of a region. This concept has been highly researched in the tourism sphere, and while previous research focused on the general attractions of a destination, limited attention has been paid to the cultural aspects. Research on loyalty mainly utilises two approaches – behavioural and attitudinal loyalty (Zhang et al., 2014).

Behavioural loyalty is measured by the frequency of visits to a business, attraction, or destination, and provides a genuine portrayal of how the performance of an attribute compares with others (Suhartanto et al., 2020). However, behavioural measurements of loyalty have been criticised for their lack of hypothetical analysis and their constricted appraisal of the multifaceted and energetic behaviour of tourists (Suhartanto, 2018). In addition, evaluating loyalty with this approach can hinder the measurement of real loyalty (Gursoy et al., 2014). Therefore, behavioural loyalty is not a helpful method for examining tourist loyalty to cultural attributes of destinations. Another method for examining loyalty (i.e. loyalty intention or conative loyalty) is through attitudinal methods (Almeida-Santana & Moreno-Gil, 2018). This refers to the dedication of visitors to buy goods or services (Cong, 2016), to recommend destinations that they have visited, and to buying the same product or service even if its price has increased (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). This is the conative element of the attitudinal method (Ajzen, 2005). Attitudinal loyalty should be anticipated as it is constructed on the tourist revisiting a destination with the intent to promote and support the attractions and the hospitality in the location (Suhartanto et al., 2020). Anticipating this type of behaviour is critical for the tourism sector (Reichheld, 2003). Therefore, it is appropriate for this research to use attitudinal loyalty when theorising and measuring loyalty towards attributes of cultural tourism.

Relationships between variables and hypothesis

According to Babolian Hendijani (2016), it is crucial to investigate the determinants of tourist satisfaction for a destination to derive a long-term competitive advantage. Tourist satisfaction has been broadly studied in the hospitality and tourism arena. Various scholars have attempted to assess the determinants of satisfaction and its effect on the behavioural intentions of tourists. The studies show that numerous factors determine satisfaction with a destination, such as the quality of service, the tourist experience, the perceived value, destination image, socio-demographic characteristics, and the attributes of the destination (Cetin, 2020; Chen & Myagmarsuren, 2010;

McDowall, 2010). Additionally, there is limited value in investigating the influence of these attributes on the overall satisfaction levels of visitors to different tourist settings (Johann & Ghose, 2018; Kozak, 2002; Ozturk & Gogtas, 2016). To get a better knowledge about the tourist evaluation towards cultural/heritage attributes and tourist satisfaction on these attributes has a pivotal role for destination managers, planners, and marketers in terms of destination positioning and promoting (Chi & Qu, 2008; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Many scholars have demonstrated that the general attributes of a destination impact and determine overall tourist satisfaction (Alegre & Garau, 2010; Biswas et al., 2020; Eusébio & Vieira, 2013; Johann & Ghose, 2018; Kozak, 2002). In addition, Ghosh and Sofique (2012) emphasise that heritage attractions have a key role in creating tourist satisfaction. Huh and Uysal (2004) also state that the cultural and heritage attributes of a destination influence tourist satisfaction. Therefore, the forthcoming hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1: General tour attractions affect overall tourist satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Heritage attractions of destination affect overall tourist satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: Maintenance factors of destination affect overall tourist satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4: Cultural attractions of destination affect overall tourist satisfaction.

The link between tourist satisfaction and loyalty has been widely studied (Eusébio & Vieira, 2013; Gursoy et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2011; McDowall, 2010; Suhartanto et al., 2020). The research emphasises that understanding the satisfaction level of tourists can be helpful in creating tourist loyalty to the destination. Additionally, these studies concluded that tourist satisfaction determines loyalty. Thus, the next hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 5: Tourist satisfaction influences tourist loyalty.

This study also examines these variables according to the frequency of visits by tourists, both as repeat and first timer visitors, by employing a multi-group analysis. In the extant literature, this comparison is generally conducted on the image of the destination or the experience of the tourist (Schofield et al., 2020). Chi (2012) conducted a study on first-time and repeat visitors to examine loyalty to and satisfaction with a destination. According to this research, tourist satisfaction is key to creating loyalty to a destination among first-time visitors. The use of multi-group analysis to determine satisfaction with the attributes of cultural destinations and the loyalty of

tourists measured by the frequency of their visits is not evident in the existing literature.

We sum up the set of hypotheses to be examined in Figure 1.

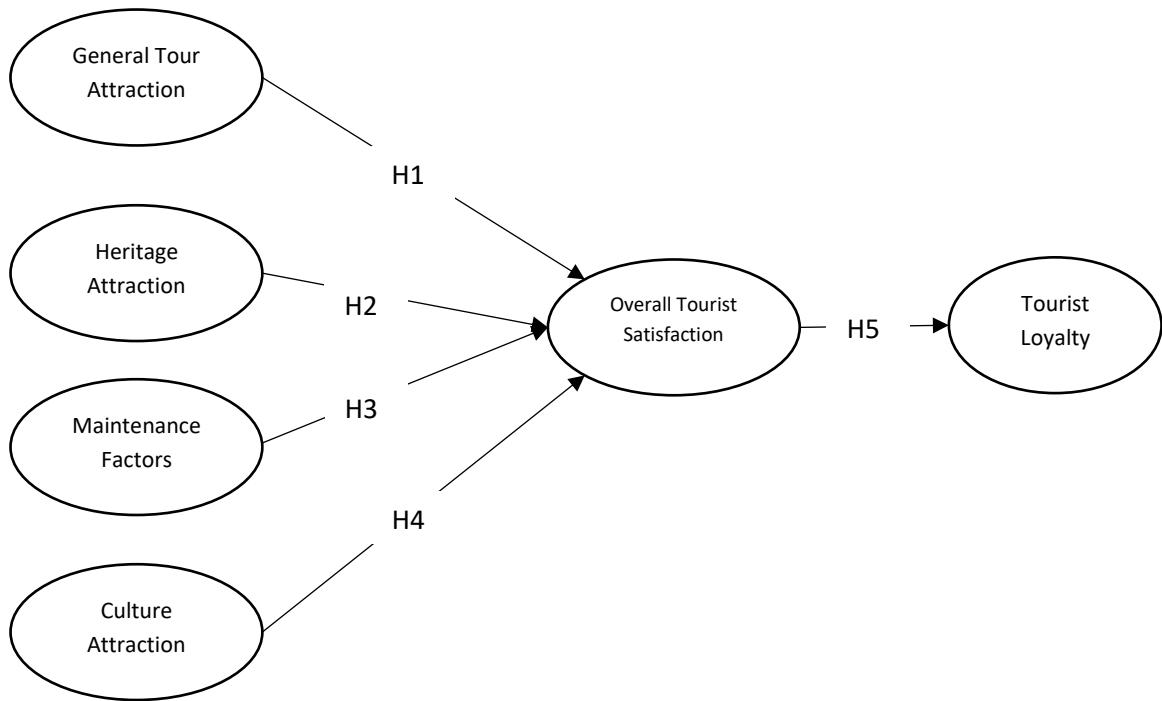


Figure 1. *The proposed model*

RESEARCH METHOD

Research approach and instrument

A quantitative research method was adopted in this study. Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was utilised to understand the role of the attributes of cultural destinations, overall tourist satisfaction and loyalty. A self-administered questionnaire was employed for this study. The first part of the questionnaire deals with the measurement of these cultural attributes under 23 headings (Huh & Uysal, 2004). In this section, four headings relate to overall tourist satisfaction (Oliver, 1980) and three to tourist loyalty (Zhang et al., 2014). All headings in this section were measured by the 5-point Likert scale, where 1 equals strongly disagreed and 5 is strongly agree. The second part includes demographic information about the participant, such as age, gender, education, and previous visits to Istanbul. The research instrument was

reviewed and revised by four tourism academics before the data was collected.

Sampling and surveying

Data was gathered from tourists visiting Istanbul through convenience sampling between March 10 and 16, 2019. This is an economical sampling method that allows for swift data collection. A self-administered questionnaire was conducted with tourists in the departure terminal of the airport. First, they were asked whether they had visited and experienced the cultural attractions of Istanbul. They were then asked to participate in the survey questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed to groups or individual tourists. In all, 450 questionnaires were distributed and collected. However, of this number, 411 were suitable (95% confidence and at least 5%) for data analysis. Cochran's formula (Parvin et al., 2020) state that 384 samples are sufficient for huge or large populations (approximately 15 million tourists arrived in Istanbul in 2019).

Common-method bias

Since the data was collected via a questionnaire, a bias can occur during the research process. Respondents were first asked to join in the research freely and willingly. This was done to lessen the social desirability bias of the responses (Podsakoff et al., 2003). This study then evaluated the likelihood of common method variance utilising Harman's one-factor test (Fuller et al., 2016). According to this test, the common factor explains 31% of the variance in the model. Finally, a full collinearity assessment was used to assess common method bias, and variance inflation factor (VIF) values were evaluated. According to this approach, VIF values are expected to equal 3.3 or lower (Kock, 2015). In this research, all values ranged between 1.409 and 3.271, indicating acceptable.

Data analysis

The data was investigated by utilising the statistical software SPSS 24.0 and Smart-PLS. An exploratory factor analysis was tested by utilising SPSS 24.0, and measurement and structural models were conducted using Smart-PLS 3 to assess the link between constructs recommended in the research model.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Demographic profile assessment

Table 1 illustrates the participants' demographic information. There were more male (57.7%) than female participants (42.1%), whereas only 1.5% of the respondents were aged 65 years or older. Respondents between the ages of 25 and 44 years (60.3%) predominated the sample. Regarding levels of education, 33.1% of the participants had a bachelor's degree, while 28% held a master's qualification. Most of those surveyed were single (58.6%), with 41.1% married. The majority of the respondents had visited the destination independently (83.2%). The results also showed that 52.3% of the respondents were first-time visitors.

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Variable	Description	Frequency	%
Age	15-24	111	27
	25-44	248	60.3
	45-64	45	11
	65+	6	1.5
	Unspecified	1	0.2
Gender	Female	173	42.1
	Male	237	57.7
	Unspecified	1	0.2
Marital Status	Single	241	58.6
	Married	169	41.1
	Unspecified	1	0.2
Education	Basic Education (Primary or secondary school)	18	4.4
	High school	52	12.7
	College diploma	67	16.3
	Bachelor's Degree	136	33.1
	Master	115	28
	Ph.D.	20	4.9
	Unspecified	3	0.7
Type of travel	Independent	342	83.2
	Organized Package	68	16.5
	Tour		
	Unspecified	1	0.2
Have you been in Istanbul before?	Yes	215	52.3
	No	196	47.7
Total		411	100

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

As illustrated in Table 2, Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, and p values are appropriate to

employ EFA. With EFA, factor loadings should be higher than 0.40 (Stewart et al., 2001). In this study, four items (i.e. theatres, tour packages, food, and arts) of cultural destination attributes that were less than 0.40 were excluded from the analysis. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 2. Additionally, the cumulative percentage of variance (ranged between 5.44% and 74.605%) and Eigenvalue > 1 (Kaiser's criteria) rule were adopted for the EFA, as shown in Table 2 (Williams et al., 2010). Finally, the values for skewness and kurtosis were proposed as +2 and -2 for normal distribution (George & Mallery, 2010), thus confirming this study's normality.

Measurement model test

The item consistency, convergent, and discriminant validity of the scales were examined for a measurement model test. All the outer loadings of items (except 'guides') surpassed the 0.50 threshold (Bagozzi et al., 1991). The items below 0.50 were excluded from the model and only one item was deleted from the process, as presented in Table 2. The convergent and discriminant validity were assessed in the model. Internal consistency was examined by means of convergent validity. Therefore, composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficients, and rho_A were used to ensure internal consistency reliability. As shown in Table 2, all of Cronbach's alpha coefficients, which show the reliability of constructs and reflect how the observed constructs investigate the latent variable, are ranged from 0.688 to 0.878, so the results indicate adequate reliability for this model (Taber, 2018). Composite reliability is another reliability measure that should be above 0.70 (Chin, 2010), and all values were above 0.85, which was satisfactory for the measurement model. In addition, rho_A was another indicator that should be calculated for a consistent reliability measure of the partial least squares. In this measurement model, the values of rho_A were above the 0.70 thresholds that are seen as acceptable levels (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). Considering all three indicators, it can be concluded that internal consistency reliability was established for this model. Therefore, there was no lack of internal consistency reliability for this study.

Table 2. Internal consistency results of exploratory factor analysis (EFA), measurement model and reliability of factors

		EFA				Measurement Model		
Construct/item	FL	E	VE (%)	CA	SFL	rho_A	CR	AVE
General Tour Attraction		7.61	40.077	0.798		0.834	0.856	0.546
✓ Religious places	0.625				0.762			
✓ Souvenirs	0.814				0.846			
✓ Theme parks	0.753				0.786			
✓ Festivals/events	0.602				0.634			
✓ Shopping places	0.462				0.644			
✓ Guides	0.462				[del]			
Maintenance Factors	2.01	10.580	0.812			0.814	0.859	0.551
✓ Accessibility	0.702				0.792			
✓ Indoor facilities	0.634				0.749			
✓ Atmosphere/people	0.669				0.755			
✓ Information centers	0.777				0.753			
✓ Accommodations	0.640				0.656			
Heritage Attraction	1.67	8.794	0.791			0.807	0.879	0.709
✓ Handcrafts	0.434				0.784			
✓ Architecture	0.780				0.870			
✓ Traditional scenery	0.757				0.869			
Culture Attraction	1.03	5.44	0.878			0.882	0.910	0.670
✓ Museums	0.746				0.831			
✓ Galleries	0.738				0.783			
✓ Culture villages	0.689				0.811			
✓ Historic building	0.576				0.855			
✓ Monuments	0.532				0.812			
KMO: 0.886								
Bartlett's Test of sphericity; 907.254; p<0.000								
Tourist satisfaction	Overall Tourist Satisfaction	2.984	74.605	0.877		0.884	0.920	0.741
	✓ Overall I am satisfied in Istanbul.	0.858			0.853			
	✓ I believe I received what was promised during my trip.	0.881			0.872			
	✓ My visit to Istanbul met my expectations.	0.914			0.909			
	✓ My visit to Istanbul exceeded my expectations	0.798			0.807			
	KMO: 0.647							
	Bartlett's Test of sphericity; 291.350; p<0.000							
	Tourist Loyalty	1.966	65.527	0.683		0.772	0.848	0.653
	✓ I would visit Istanbul in the future.	0.823			0.861			
	✓ I will share my experiences with others when I return home.	0.867			0.860			
Tourist Loyalty	✓ I will share my experiences online with others when I return home.	0.732			0.691			
	KMO: 0.644							
	Bartlett's Test of sphericity; 291.051; p<0.000							
Remark: FL (Factor Loading); E (Eigenvalue); VE (Variance Explained); CA (Cronbach Alpha); SFL (Standardized factor loadings); CR (Composite Reliability); AVE (Average of variance extracted); [del]: Deleted item.								

Convergent validity was calculated with average variance extracted (AVE), which should have values above 0.50. As shown in Table 2, AVE scores ranged between 0.546 and 0.709. These values, therefore, confirm convergent validity. Discriminant validity was established based on the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Table 3) and HTMT (Table 4) ratio. This method highlights the distinction of constructs from one another (Hair et al., 2016). The square root of AVE for each of the latent dimensions should be higher than the correlations of any other latent dimensions, in accordance with the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Chin, 2010). This criterion was adopted for this research. Additionally, the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio of correlation (HTMT) was proposed to assess the discriminant validity, and all values of this approach should be below 0.9 (Henseler et al., 2014). As shown in Table 4, all scores are below 0.9. In summary, it can be inferred that discriminant validity is well established for this measurement model.

Table 3. Discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion)

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6
Culture Attraction (1)	0.819					
General Tour Attraction (2)	0.519	0.739				
Heritage Attraction (3)	0.668	0.513	0.842			
Maintenance Factors (4)	0.479	0.418	0.558	0.742		
Overall Tourist Satisfaction (5)	0.441	0.324	0.371	0.286	0.742	
Tourist Loyalty (6)	0.327	0.286	0.290	0.289	0.286	0.808

1.**All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level ($p<0.001$).

2.Boldface numbers are the square root of the AVE.

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6
Culture Attraction (1)						
General Tour Attraction (2)	0.617					
Heritage Attraction (3)	0.794	0.646				
Maintenance Factors (4)	0.586	0.560	0.646			
Overall Tourist Satisfaction (5)	0.497	0.362	0.560	0.330		
Tourist Loyalty (6)	0.409	0.391	0.362	0.385	0.842	

Structural model test

The structural model of the research was established according to the outputs of the measurement model test. The research findings show that a variance of 21% is shown for overall tourist satisfaction and 48% for tourist loyalty. Therefore, the coefficient of determination (R^2) values for overall tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty are greater than the 0.20 cut-off proposed by Hair et al. (2016). In addition to the calculation of R^2 , predictive

relevance was used to ensure an additional model fit assessment (Geisser, 1975; Hair et al., 2016). This practice shows the competence of the model to forecast the manifest indicators of each latent construct (Rahman et al., 2020). The cross-validated redundancy (Stone-Geisser Q²) was calculated to investigate the predictive relevance utilising a blindfolding process. Hair et al. (2016) proposed that the Q² value should be greater than zero. In this research, the Q² values of overall tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty were 0.152 and 0.305, respectively, which indicated a good fit.

Table 5. Path coefficients

Independent to dependent	β	SD	t-values	P	Result
H1: General Tour Attraction→ Overall Tourist Satisfaction	0.097	0.058	1.665	0.096	Not Supported
H2: Heritage Attraction→ Overall Tourist Satisfaction	0.090	0.065	1.386	0.166	Not Supported
H3: Maintenance Factors → Overall Tourist Satisfaction	0.048	0.064	0.753	0.452	Not Supported
H4: Culture Attraction→ Overall Tourist Satisfaction	0.307	0.064	4.783	0.000	Supported
H5: Overall Tourist Satisfaction→ Tourist loyalty	0.695	0.029	23.835	0.000	Supported

The Bootstrapping method was implemented with 5,000 resamples to examine the structural model for this research (Hair et al., 2011). The confidence intervals of the bootstrapping technique are precise (Mooney & Duval, 1993). The outputs of the structural model test are demonstrated in Table 5. The path coefficients of cultural destination attributes on overall tourist satisfaction differ. The outcomes of the model showed that the effect of the general tour attraction ($\beta = 0.097$), heritage attraction ($\beta = 0.090$), and maintenance factors ($\beta = 0.048$) among the destination attributes on overall tourist satisfaction were insignificant. In contrast, the impact of the culture attractions on overall tourist satisfaction ($\beta = 0.307$) was significant. Finally, the impact of overall tourist satisfaction on tourist loyalty ($\beta = 0.695$) was also significant at the level of 0.01. In summary, based on the structural model test, H1, H2, and H3 were rejected, while H4 and H5 were supported.

Multi-Group Analysis (MGA)

The assessment of variations among the two groups, i.e. first time and repeat visitors, was tested through MGA. First, measurement invariance was analysed before the investigation of MGA for both parties and the measurement invariance of composites (MICOM) was seen as appropriate for PLS-SEM (Henseler et al., 2016). Rasoolimanesh et al. (2017, p.10) proposed three three-stage procedures consisting of a) “*a configural invariance assessment*”, (b) “*the establishment of compositional invariance assessment*”, and (c) “*an assessment of equal means and variances*”. In compliance with MICOM, the partial measurement invariance of first time

and repeat visitors was built to compare and infer the MGA analysis for both groups in the PLS-SEM (Table 6; Henseler et al., 2016).

As shown in Table 7, Henseler's MGA and the permutation test were selected (Henseler et al., 2009; Matthews, 2017). These methods provided significant differences for the variables mentioned above across both groups (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). Utilising these two procedures, the results of MGA in the permutation test indicate a significant difference in the impact of overall tourist satisfaction on tourist loyalty for first time and repeat tourists. As a threshold, 0.1 was considered for the significance level, which is common for MGA (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). Therefore, the overall tourist satisfaction for repeat visitors was much higher than for first timers. Other relationships show no differences in both methods.

DISCUSSION

Destination attributes are crucial dynamics for attracting visitors to a destination (Dann, 1977), although the most appropriate attributes for specific destinations is still matter for discussion among tourism scholars. Among these attributes, previous research pinpointed cultural attractions as being the most important in encouraging potential tourists to visit a destination, and they been found to be a key contributing factor for the economy of that destination (McKercher, 2020). Additionally, it is vital that tourists are satisfied with the cultural attractions of a destination to create loyalty through repeat visits.

To understand the satisfaction levels and loyalty of cultural tourists, it is critical to know which attributes play a major role. The results of the structural model demonstrate that general tour attraction, heritage attraction and maintenance factors among the attributes of cultural destinations have not a significant effect on overall tourist satisfaction. These results were not consistent with the outcomes of work by Huh and Uysal (2004) and Huh et al. (2006). In addition, the extant literature concluded that general tour attraction and maintenance factors (Alegre & Garau, 2010; Biswas et al., 2020; Eusébio & Vieira, 2013; Johann & Ghose, 2018; Kozak, 2002; Ozturk & Gogtas, 2016) and heritage attributes (Ghosh & Sofique, 2012; Kim et al., 2007; Leask, 2010) impact tourist satisfaction. According to those studies, these attributes can be beneficial when creating overall tourist satisfaction. However, the findings of this study were not consistent with previous research.

Table 6. Results of Invariance Measurement Testing Using Permutation

Constructs	Compositional invariance (Correlation = 1)			Partial measurement invariance established	Equal mean assessment			Equal variance assessment			Full measurement Invariance established
	Configural Invariance	C=1	Confidence Interval (CIs)		Differences (First-Timer/Repeater)	Confidence Interval (CIs)	Equal	Differences (First-Timer/Repeater)	Confidence Interval (CIs)	Equal	
Culture Attraction	Yes	0.998	[0.994, 1.000]	Yes	0.069	[-0.164, 0.179]	Yes	-0.176	[-0.244, 0.240]	Yes	Yes
General Tour Attraction	Yes	0.970	[0.965, 1.000]	Yes	0.059	[-0.161, 0.158]	Yes	-0.003	[-0.174, 0.181]	Yes	Yes
Heritage Attraction	Yes	0.998	[0.987, 1.000]	Yes	0.160	[-0.159, 0.181]	Yes	-0.269	[-0.246, 0.223]	No	No
Maintenance Factors	Yes	0.966	[0.965, 1.000]	Yes	0.015	[-0.169, -0.167]	Yes	-0.153	[-0.256, 0.225]	Yes	Yes
Overall Tourist Satisfaction	Yes	0.999	[0.999, 1.000]	Yes	-0.023	[-0.160, 0.158]	Yes	0.047	[-0.244, 0.273]	Yes	Yes
Tourist Loyalty	Yes	0.999	[0.995, 1.000]	Yes	-0.014	[-0.165, 0.153]	Yes	0.217	[-0.288, 0.323]	Yes	Yes

Table 7. Estimated structural model: Multi-Group Analysis (PLS-MGA)

Relationships	Path Coefficient		Confidence Interval (95%) Bias Corrected			P-value Difference			Results
	First-time Visitor	Repeat Visitor	First-time Visitor	Repeat Visitor	Path Coefficient Difference	Henseler's MGA	Permutation test		
CA→OTS	0.272	0.341	[0.074, 0.463]	[0.186, 0.509]	-0.069	0.592	0.278	No/No	
GTA→OTS	0.048	0.163	[-0.163, 0.214]	[0.022, 0.300]	-0.115	0.332	0.178	No/No	
HA→OTS	0.114	0.061	[-0.078, 0.306]	[-0.088, 0.235]	0.053	0.677	0.328	No/No	
MF→OTS	0.091	0.035	[-0.066, 0.215]	[-0.140, 0.189]	0.056	0.636	0.340	No/No	
OTS→TL	0.651	0.748	[0.540, 0.730]	[0.679, 0.811]	-0.097	0.089	0.050	No/Yes	

Note: In "Henseler's MGA process, a p value lower than 0.05 or greater than 0.95 shows 5% level significant differences between two groups" (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017).; CA: Cultural Attraction; GTA: General Tour Attraction; HA: Heritage Attraction; MF: Maintenance Factors; OTS: Overall Tourist Satisfaction; TL: Tourist Loyalty

The cultural attraction of a destination affects overall tourist satisfaction. A study by Huh and Uysal (2004) found that cultural attraction determines the overall satisfaction of tourists with a destination. Specifically, Altunel and Erkut (2015) found that visits to museums, culture villages, historical attractions, galleries, and monuments impact not only the quality of the experience for tourists but also satisfaction with the destination. The study by Huh et al. (2006) indicated that cultural experience determines overall tourist satisfaction. This finding supports previous work conducted at different cultural tourism destinations.

As demonstrated above, most tourism scholars show that tourist satisfaction impacts tourist loyalty (Eusébio & Vieira, 2013; Gursoy et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2011; McDowall, 2010; Suhartanto et al., 2020). In line with these studies, this study found that overall tourist satisfaction with cultural attributes influences tourist loyalty. Therefore, a visitor who is satisfied from the attractions of a destination is expected to make a return visit. Additionally, loyalty to a destination may also occur following recommendations from other visitors.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Contribution

The overarching aim of this paper was to investigate the influence of cultural destination attributes on overall tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty. Additionally, this research compared tourist groups according to their frequency of visit, such as first time and repeat visitors. This study is the first to attempt an examination of these roles for Istanbul. Therefore, this research will contribute to the relevant literature on visit frequency. The literature does not include holistic research on cultural attributes, satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, the model tested in this study will be a useful contribution to the tourism literature.

Theoretical implications

This research has some important implications that may be helpful in future research. First, this study expanded the scope of destination attributes and focused specifically on cultural attributes. Therefore, the results of this study reinforce the message contained in the marketing literature for tourist destinations. For example, this study has shown that cultural attractions have a major impact on tourist satisfaction, and this was supported by extant research. However, other attributes, such as general tour attraction,

maintenance factors and heritage attractions do not affect overall tourist satisfaction. Therefore, these findings will assist researchers in formulating models for further research.

Second, this research has some major implications for future studies of visit frequency. This study aimed to compare the differences between path coefficients of first time and repeat visitors. MGA was employed to ascertain the differences between both groups. According to this analysis, it was concluded that only one difference in the impact of overall tourist satisfaction on tourist loyalty occurred among the groups, in accordance with the permutation test. This finding using MGA will aid scholars when they compare their research results.

Managerial implications

This research also provides a broad outline for those managing and marketing tourist destinations of which attributes are crucial for tourist satisfaction and the future behavioural intentions of the visitor. Cultural attractions are key attributes for destinations in terms of encouraging tourists to visit. To increase the satisfaction of international travellers visiting Istanbul, and tourist loyalty to it as a cultural destination, this research suggests that more cultural attractions should be provided, including historic buildings, monuments, culture villages, galleries, and museums. Marketing teams can then use these attractions when promoting the destination on various social media or promotional platforms. Fundamentally, all cultural attributes of a destination are critical and necessary to ensure tourist satisfaction and to create tourist loyalty. Based on the findings of this study, this segment of the tourism market should be targeted through the promotion of cultural attractions. Those involved in the tourism sector should make themselves aware of the specific attractions that motivate first-time visitors to become repeat visitors and they should focus on preserving and improving these attributes.

Limitations and future research lines

This research was conducted in Istanbul, so the findings are specific to this destination. Therefore, similar research could be conducted in other tourism settings. The literature shows that the influence of destination attributes on the image of a destination (Chahal & Devi, 2015), and on the motivation of visitors to travel to these destinations (Levitt et al., 2017), is well known. Additionally, future studies can illuminate the role of cultural destination attributes on the variables referred to in this study, which adopted a

quantitative methodological approach. Further research could include qualitative interviews with tourists visiting cultural destinations to determine the main cultural attributes of those destinations. This research was conducted prior to the outbreak of COVID-19. However, some potential future tourists visited several cultural and heritage sites through virtual reality technology during the pandemic (Atsız, 2021). Therefore, this study suggests that further research is conducted on the satisfaction levels of these virtual visitors to cultural attractions and how this experience may impact their future intentions to physically visit the city. Finally, cultural tourism destinations are essential to maintain the existing tourism environment. As such, an examination of the cultural attributes that determine tourist satisfaction and loyalty is strongly recommended.

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