Exploring memorable travel experiences in urban tourism: Insights from five vibrant cities

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ABSTRACT

Being a traveler's city is about understanding travelers' behavior and experiences. This makes it easier to know who is going to visit a city and why. In this context, this study explores the attractions that transform travelers' experiences into memorable travel experiences in urban tourism destinations. However, the research's contributions are mainly for cities aiming to become urban tourism destinations. The study was conducted with urban tourism, urban travelers, and memorable travel experience concepts. Interviews were conducted with 79 travelers in two European cities (Prague and Berlin), two Asian cities, (Kyoto and Busan), and a bridge city between Asia and Europe (Istanbul). Hence, the main attractions were determined. As a result, architecture, cultural heritage, art, pedestrian orientation, trust in locals, flavor varieties, transportation, nightlife, events, ethnic districts, low-cost opportunities, shopping markets, lively/vibrant atmosphere, and freer districts emerged as attractions that transform travelers' experiences into memorable travel experiences. These attractions also may transform urban experiences into memorable travel experiences for all visitor groups.

1. Introduction

Sartre (1969) claims that perceptions are shaped according to spaces and the content of spaces depends on how individual gazes. It also depends as much on the individual's view as on the objects themselves. Therefore, perceptions of spaces in cities show that what stands out in urban tourism districts is related to the perceptions of visitors (Crang, 1997). Rather, in the urban tourism context, we should look at all forms of visitors' experiences and how visitors surround themselves. Within the context of urban tourism, it is important to consider all types of visitors' experiences and how visitors engage with their surroundings. Therefore, this study was structured with urban tourism, urban travelers, and memorable travel experience concepts.

Ashworth (1989, 2003) described the city as an important setting for tourist activities. According to his studies, spaces in cities offer social, cultural, physical, and aesthetic scenes where touristic activities are performed. However, city and its services tend to be concentrated rather than scattered in most cities (Hayllar, Griffin & Edwards, 2008, p. 8). These concentrations may include cultural heritage districts and iconic places. However, creating unusual attractive spaces for cities is about visits by travelers because they welcome cosmopolitanism (Thompson & Tambyah, 1999) and describe themselves as a global persona (Rofe, 2003). At the same time, travelers aim to go

beyond traditional tourist places and experience neighborhoods in the real city since these places have historical and complementary meanings and people engage in various aspects of daily life there (Cartier & Lew, 2005, p. 3). What distinguishes urban tourism areas from each other and makes them unique is to offer the touristic attraction created by the everyday sites of tourist practice. For instance, ordinary places transform into tourist attractions in Kreuzberg, Berlin (Füller & Michel, 2014).

According to Franklin and Crang (2001, p. 3), travel experiences are less separated from everyday life in terms of time and space, and tourism has developed into a significant structure for globalized modern living. According to Wang et al. (2012) and Park and Santos (2017) travelers' experiences consist of three phases. The pre-travel phase is the anticipatory phase in which travelers gather information, consider their options, and make travel arrangements. The during travel phase is the experiential phase where the physical experience takes place. The post-travel phase is the reflective phase in which travelers create opinions about their previous travel experiences and share them with others.

This study includes the experiential phase since urban travelers are a vibrant and diverse group of people who are drawn to the energy and excitement of city life. They look out for new experiences in the urban life. However, many researchers have discussed that travel experiences are not

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spontaneously transformed into memorable travel experiences (Knobloch et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2018; Azis et al., 2020). Although every traveler can engage in similar activities in the same destination, their experiences differ (Kim, 2018). Memorable travel experiences are only reconstructed when travelers describe a unique travel experience (Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick, 2012; Zhang et al., 2018; Seyfi, Hall, & Rasoolimanesh, 2020). Accordingly, not all experiences are memorable travel experience (Kim & Ritchie, 2014). Therefore, several research has been studied to conceptualize and reveal memorable travel experiences (Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013, 2015; Kim & Ritchie, 2014; Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Chen & Rahman, 2018; Zhang et al., 2018; Kim, 2019; Kim & Chen, 2021; Kim, 2019; Sthapit & Björk, 2019; Wei et al., 2019; Williams, Yuan & Williams 2019; Zare, 2019; Vada et al., 2022).

According to Tung and Ritchie (2011), a memorable travel experience is a significant experience that remains in one's memory when describing a travel encounter. The study specifically focuses on memorable travel experiences that are satisfying and unforgettable for travelers, particularly in the context of positive experiences at urban attractions. Therefore, understanding memorable travel experiences of travelers provides the city to understand how to be an urban tourism destination. In this context, the study aims to explore the attractions that transform travelers' experiences into memorable travel experiences in urban tourism destinations. However, the research mainly focuses on contributing to cities aiming to become urban tourism destinations. Therefore, cities and tourism practitioners can create attractions that transform travelers' experiences into memorable travel experiences.

2. Literature Review

The different demands of visitors have induced tourism to go beyond entertainment and recreation. In today's world, cities have vital combining roles such as global cities (Sassen, 1991) and gateway cities that manage tourist flow (Short et al., 2000). The business world, historical places, and cultural heritage sites have inevitably made metropolitan cities attractive places for travel (Ritchie & Peirce, 2007). Accordingly, studies on urban tourism, travelers and memorable travel experiences have obtained momentum. Therefore, following the purpose of research, the literature review has been managed within the scope of urban tourism, urban traveler, and memorable travel experience.

Urban Tourism

Cities have a fundamental role in enabling tourism activities. According to Ashworth (2003), urban spaces encompass a wide array of social, cultural, physical, and aesthetic environments. These spaces not only provide tourism-related services but also possess a distinct spatial, cultural, social, and economic identity when various

attractions converge. This combination of factors establishes urban tourism concept. Therefore, as an urban tourism destination, cities serve as vital environments where touristic activities can take place, offering a rich tapestry of experiences and contributing to the overall tourism industry.

Visitors are a transient population that uses cities as gateways (Bellini & Pasquinelli, 2017). Therefore, the urban population is expanding. Visitors interact with the destination during their stay and various effects emerge from this interaction. Therefore, he studies on urban tourism have previously been managed with geographic and urban planning perspective (Wall & Sinnott, 1980; Law, 1985; Jansen-Verbeke, 1986; Burtenshaw et al., 1991; Getz, 1993; Pearce, 1998). Afterward, new concepts have been developed such as economic development of regions (Judd, 1995) and tourism regions (McDonnell & Darcy, 1998).

Furthermore, there are studies on cities that Judd and Fainstein (1999, p. 36) define as pure tourist spaces. In the case of Baltimore, the authors claimed that Harborplace is a residential district that divides and keeps visitors from the crime, poverty, and urban deterioration of the other Baltimore. Hayllar and Griffin (2005, 2006) explored visitors' experiences in Sydney's Rocks District and Darling Harbour. Additionally, Maitland (2006) emphasized the significance of the uniqueness of the space in London. On the other hand, Mazanec and Wöber (2009, p. 208) found that European capitals have connotations with fondness, friendliness, lust, amazement, fun, trust, contentment, gladness, devotion, and adoration.

More recently, urban tourism has been studied in terms of many aspects. Planning is one of the most critical topics in urban tourism since not paying attention to city planning may cause weaknesses (Uğur, 2017; Lalicic & Önder, 2018; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2019; Ahmadi et al., 2021). On the contrary, many of the tourist attractions can be further developed with appropriate planning (Ahmadi et al., 2021). According to Lalicic and Önder (2018), advances in technology reshape urban planning and with the application of smart principles in destinations, managerial challenges can also be overcome.

The development of transportation systems directly affects visitor experiences. Therefore, the diversification of inter-city and intra-city transportation systems (waterbus, high-speed train, tram, electric scooters, etc.) and reaching the main tourist attractions of the city positively affect visitor experiences (Gronau, 2017; Wang, Niu & Qian, 2018; Kim, 2019). Urban spaces and gentrification are part of a transformation process that has an impact on cultural life. According to the studies (Borseková, Vaňová & Vitálišová, 2017) the urban spaces and their shapes determine the structure of a tourism city. However, gentrification efforts also have the potential to sterilize the city. Doing so can miss the essence of urban life and the

excitement of traveling since smells, sounds, sights and special places are key parts of urban experience.

Sustainability, environment, and carrying capacity are other topics discussed in terms of the relationship between tourism activities and urban wellbeing, since green tourism initiatives help control energy consumption and urban destination to develop within the framework of environment and sustainability (Maćkiewicz & Konecka-Szydłowska, 2017; Shoval, 2018; Stahan, 2018; Romão & Bi, 2021; Yang, et al., 2021; Zeng, et al., 2021). Thus, by supporting sustainable urban tourism, a balance may be achieved between economic benefits and ecology. Furthermore, the link between climate change and urban tourism is increasing significance for interdisciplinary research (Aall & Koens, 2019; Pandy & Rogerson, 2019; Lopes, et al., 2021). According to Pandy and Rogerson (2019), it is vital to raise awareness of climate change. Lopes et al. (2021), on the other hand, revealed that although climatic conditions influence visitors' bioclimatic comfort, they are tolerant of higher and lower temperatures. However, it is important to consider the average thresholds for bioclimatic comfort in tourism.

Another determinant of the attractiveness of urban tourism is the tourist-local relationship (Kavaratzis, 2017; Sevin, 2017; Boivin & Tanguay, 2019). According to Boivin and Tanguay (2019), communication processes should be prioritized for a tourist-local relationship. Furthermore, the correct interpretation of the perspectives of locals and tourists (Sevin, 2017) form a tourism city atmosphere. Thus, a city emerges where tensions turn into harmony and contrasts turn into wealth. Eventually, urban tourism has been studied in terms of tourism and tourist types (Andersson, 2017; Lazzeretti, Capone & Casadei, 2017), events (Liberato et al., 2020), smart cities (Cohen & Hopkins, 2019; Kwag, Hur & Ko, 2021; Mo & Ren, 2021), branding and image (Ferrucci, et al., 2017; Bobo, Mudombi & Gopo, 2021) and covid-19 (Aldao, et al., 2021; Li, et al., 2021).

Urban Travelers

Travelers and tourists have different motivations and behavioral tendencies. Since this study focuses on travelers, it is necessary to know the distinction between tourists and travelers. Mehmetoglu (2004) discussed the tourist-traveler dichotomy from a sociological perspective. The author stated that Boorstin (1992) had a considerable influence in creating an opposition between tourists and travelers. According to Boorstin, while the traveler is active, the tourist is passive. Therefore, the traveler seeks to experience and adventure. On the other hand, the tourist is a pleasure-seeker who expects something to happen for them. However, Cohen (1988) and MacCannell (2013) criticized Boorstin and designed different tourist typologies.

The concepts of urban traveler and tourist summarize the various travel trends, needs, and pleasures of urban

experiences. According to Ashworth and Page (2011), once the historical perfection in cities is seen, urban tourists create memories of the city. They buy local (standardized) cultural products or artifacts with high symbolic content. On the other hand, urban travelers are actively engaged in urban experiences. This active participation is summarized with experiential learning (Bellini & Pasquinelli, 2017). This learning process makes possible by the direct experience of urban mediocrity. In other words, the learning process traces a link between history and urban progress. It is almost imperative for urban travelers to learn about the urban ordinary. This is about living like a local (Richards, 2014) and relations with locals since travelers learn by public transport and walking to experience ordinary life and engage in urban mobility.

According to Bellini and Pasquinelli (2017, p. 40), urban tourists' visiting target is cultural institutions and iconic places. Tourists look for the new stories and purchase symbolic products. On the contrary, urban travelers' visiting target is about new experiences and a sense of new life. They link to the past and future, by experiencing the streets as past/present relations. They travel for learning periods. The authors also compared urban tourists and travelers in terms of their touristic behaviors (Table 1).

Table 1. Urban Tourist vs. Urban Traveler

Urban Tourist	Urban Traveler
Tourism is a non-essential good	Travelling is a right
Buys a tourist package	Co-creates the travel experience
Visits cultural heritage	Active engagement, exercises creativity
Buy cultural products	Experiential learning
Is satisfied with staged authenticity	Lives like a local
Look for aesthetic/historic perfection	Looks for daily life, risks and futures, progress, and ways to cope with contemporary challenges

Source: Bellini & Pasquinelli, 2017, p. 34

Travelers deliberately seek daily life in the urban space. They want to go beyond the popular tourism places and discover new spaces where "multi-purpose spaces in which a wide range of activities and people co-exist" (Edensor, 2001, p. 64). Traveling away from the tourist places, travelers value daily life and the presence of locals. In doing so, they contribute to practices of gentrification that foster the city's image (Maitland & Ritchie, 2009). By making frequent visits, some begin to feel that travelers belong to the place they are visiting. This mobility in urban tourism, starting with the discovery of unusual places by travelers, improves traveler-local communication and interaction. Thus, the behaviors of travelers overlap with the consumption demands and behaviors of the locals, helping to shape cities (Metro-Roland, 2011). Furthermore, as travelers prefer places with specific behavioral standards, they select destinations where some rules linked to daily life are relaxed (Bingöl & Aydın, 2022).

Memorable Travel Experience

Travel experience research started with authenticity (MacCannell, 2013) and phenomenology (Cohen, 1979) research (Kim & Chen, 2021). Afterward, experience-based approaches were conducted to characterize tourist behavior (Andereck et al., 2006). Memorable travel experiences are positive memories that visitors obtain due to having unique experiences characterized by meaningful experiences (Kim et al., 2012) and enhance the remembrance of satisfying memories of the destination experience (Vada et al., 2022).

According to Larsen (2007), travel experiences should be meaningful. Therefore, memorable travel experiences have expanded to understanding visitors' behaviors (Antón et al., 2017; Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Chen & Rahman, 2018; Sthapit & Björk, 2019). Many studies created learning in memorable travel experiences by associating experience with memory (Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013, 2015; Kim, 2014; Kim & Ritchie 2014; Park & Santos, 2017; Kim & Chen, 2021). These studies primarily revealed varied factors and analyzed influences of experiences on decision-making.

Kim et al (2012) created a scale of memorable tourism experiences as well as indicated seven factors consisting of hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, and knowledge. On the other hand, Chandralal and Valenzuela (2013) proposed perceived meaningfulness, perceived opportunities for encountering authentic local experiences, perceived significance, perceived novelty, perceived opportunities for social interactions, local hospitality, serendipity and surprises, perceived professionalism of local guides, and positive emotions as the backgrounds of memorable travel experiences. Furthermore, while Chandralal et al. (2015) offered seven factors related to memorable experiences, Park and Santos (2017) studied the central components of memorable travel experiences.

Whereas Chen and Rahman (2018) revealed that memorable travel experiences affect tourists' intention to revisit a destination, Sthapit and Björk (2019) stated that the uniqueness, usability, and functionality of souvenirs support memorable travel experiences. Furthermore, Kim and Chen, (2021) analyzed the relationships between memorable travel experiences and their recollection functions. Accordingly, memorable travel experiences tend to influence social function the most. Similarly, Wei et al. (2019) indicated that the recollection of memorable travel experiences was positively affected by novelty, involvement, and social interaction.

While Williams et al. (2019) identified characteristics and attributes of gastro tourism experiences linked to memorability, Zare (2019) studied the role of culture on memorable travel experiences in Iranian culture. Also, Seyfi et al. (2020) developed, a theoretical model of memorable cultural tourism experiences, and six key factors emerged. On the other hand, Wong, Lai, and Tao (2020) explored the relationship between sharing memorable ethnic minority tourism experiences. After all, the memorable travel experiences concept has been studied in many aspects such as destination enthusiasm (Kim & Chen, 2021) ordinary experiences and extraordinary experiences (Ye, et al., 2021), family cohesion (Lee & Lee, 2021), travel companionships Vada, et al., 2022), and relevance of keywords related to memorable tourism experiences (Sihombing & Antonio, 2022). These studies have offered considerable understanding in improving the theoretical framework concerning to memorable travel experiences.

3. Method

This research was built on memorable travel experiences of travelers using the qualitative research method. In this context, research has been conducted with a phenomenological research design to explore the attractions that transform travelers' experiences into memorable travel experiences in urban tourism destinations. Phenomenology, which understands how people experience the world, transforms experiences into the textual expression (Van Manen, 1990, p. 36). A holistic description is made by defining the essence of the data collected about a phenomenon. This description consists of what and how the participants experienced. It is important for tourism research that researchers such as Crang (1997), Ryan (2000), Fullagar (2001), MacCannell (2001), and Hayllar and Griffin (2005) used phenomenology to understand travel experience.

The population of the research is international travelers staying in hostels. The sample was selected with the quota sample technique, which is one of the non-probability sample techniques. Quota sampling is practical and cost-effective for describing the targeted population. However, it may lead to researcher bias in the sample since researchers have the flexibility to meet the quota criteria by selecting participants, potentially overrepresenting those who are more easily accessible or willing to participate in the research (Sencer & Sencer, 1978, p. 482-485). As a result, the research does not aim to generalize its findings to the entire international travelers.

Before starting the field research, the sample size was not limited to an exact number. However, the sample was selected among those who stayed in hostels located in five different cities. Semi-structured interview technique was preferred for data collection and interviews were conducted in different cities starting in August 2019. The primary reason for selecting these cities is their status as tourism destinations located in diverse geographical regions. This choice aims to achieve sampling diversity and facilitate a comparative perspective. Furthermore, the researcher had multiple opportunities to travel to these cities, making data collection more accessible and convenient.

The data were collected through in-depth semi structured interviews and these interviews were analyzed descriptively and systematically. The interviews first started with a total of 12 travelers in two different hostels in Busan for four days. Then, in Kyoto, interviews were held with 17 travelers in five days. After the Covid-19 break, interviews were held with 30 travelers in four hostels in Prague and Berlin, and with 20 travelers in two hostels in Istanbul. The researcher stayed in these hostels throughout the interviews, The difference in the number of participants across cities is due to varying acceptance rates of travelers participating in the interviews during the researcher's stay in each city.

 The hostels were selected from "booking.com" and "hostelworld.com" applications with a score above 8/10 points. Booking.com was selected for this study because it possesses the highest number of comments and ratings. On the other hand, hotelworld.com was chosen because it enables travelers in the same destination to interact and communicate with one another through the application.

The first questions of the interviews were: how long have you been in the destination? do you describe yourself as a traveler or tourist? As a traveler, can you talk about your destination selection process and travel experiences? Thus, the interviews continued with the participants who described themselves as travelers and those who had been at the destination for at least three days. Afterward, other questions (e.g., what kind of attractions affected your experience positively in this destination? which experiences do you remember the most? etc.) were asked to determine the memorable travel experiences of travelers in the destination.

As a result, 12 questions were created based on findings from the relevant literature. However, due to the in-depth semi-structured interview technique, some additional questions were also asked to the travelers during the interview process. The travelers were from different nationalities/language backgrounds. But the interviews were conducted in English and lasted between 35-70 minutes.

The transcriptions of interviews were involved in an expert panel with three researchers. Afterward, the panelists and the author generated the coding process as a data reduction approach (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) to describe the data and manage them into meaningful classifications independently. Manual coding, instead of a software package program, was chosen since manual coding is more effective than coding with software package programs (Krippendorf, 2004), which enables researchers to be productive in qualitative analysis (Patton, 2002). After coding independently, the author reviewed the codes and constructed the categories. The data analysis process continued by emphasizing concepts, relating concepts, and interrelating categories. The categories were analyzed and interpreted descriptively and systematically.

The process was maintained until it achieved the phase where no other categories emerged since the data saturation was applied for this research. Theoretical data saturation, which is used in qualitative research designs, refers to the point where the data collected for analytical categories start to give similar results, and more data to be obtained will not change the explanation (Morse, 1995; Fusch & Ness, 2015). The theoretical saturation is determined by the researcher based on Legard, Keegan and Ward (2003, p. 152) that the perspectives of the participants are fully understood. Finally, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria were considered for the reliability of the study.

4. Results

The research aims to explore the attractions that transform travelers' experiences into memorable travel experiences in urban tourism destinations. In this context, the transcripts of the interviews were systematically examined and analyzed within the framework of the interviewees' narratives about the cities they visited. Thus, the attractions were determined for cities that want to be an urban tourism destination. As a result, architecture, cultural heritage, art, pedestrian orientation, trust in locals, flavor varieties, transportation, nightlife, events, ethnic districts, low-cost opportunities, shopping markets, lively/vibrant atmosphere, and freer districts emerged as attractions that transform young travelers' experiences into memorable experiences. However, it is useful to start with demographic characteristics and interviews.

Demographic Characteristics and Interviews

At first, the researcher created a detailed table to obtain all information about the demographic characteristics of travelers. Afterward, the researcher evaluated the demographic characteristics and interviews of 79 urban travelers (Table 2). According to the data, the age range of most of the travelers emerged as 18-28. Although the number of male travelers is higher, there is no significant difference between males and females. Furthermore, most urban travelers have bachelor's degrees or are ongoing. Although the occupations of urban travelers vary, students are the majority. Finally, most travelers were from developed countries such as Australia, Germany, the USA, and France.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics and Interviews

Destination	# of participants	Interview Period	Age Range	Participants Mostly From
Busan	12	1-4 August 2019	20-54	France
Kyoto	17	7-11 August 2019	17-32	Australia
Prague	17	20-26 September 2021	16-28	Germany
Berlin	13	27-30 September 2021	18-35	Spain
Istanbul	20	10-15 October 2021	19-36	Germany

Source: Elaborated by Author

Architecture

Architecture is the way a city is perceived. Urban architecture is shaped by artifacts of the past characterized by historical structures, as well as by new modern large, and complex man-made works (Rossi, 1984). A city can be shaped by many elements such as streets, shopping, environments, eating, and drinking areas. However, perhaps no element makes a city take attention as much as its architecture. The design of a city, whether it is in harmony with modern urban planning or historical buildings, explicitly defines it. Periodical architectural styles such as ancient, classical, medieval, modern, post-modern, contemporary, futurism, green, rural, and artistic can be considered the main architectural styles that determine the architectural concept of a city.

The architecture has emerged as an element that directly affects travelers. The opinions of the travelers interviewed in Berlin, Prague, Kyoto, Busan, and Istanbul about architecture can be summarized as follows:

> *"Although there are those who find Berlin cold and unpleasant compared to other European cities, the city's architecture is engaged with history in a way you cannot see elsewhere. It is great…"*
> *"Prague really fascinated me. I am totally feeling in Gothic era. It is like a fairy tale. Despite the cold, I am so happy because I forget everything about my daily life… Of all the cities I've seen, Prague is the most fascinating for me."*
> *"Kyoto is a wonderful city that affects with its historical sites. Countless temples of different structures, low-rise buildings, the history-smelling of Gion is very impressive…"*
> *"There are different buildings and architectural styles in four different regions in Busan. I really liked all of them…"*
> *"Istanbul hosts many chaotic and also beautiful building and historical places. I find them really interesting…"*

City architecture takes its final form when historical buildings meet the modern world. All cities, including the cities that have been inhabited since ancient times (Athens, Roma, Cairo), have obtained their fresh faces with modernization. However, it is not always easy for this new face to have a tourist value. Whether it is old or new buildings, it must be interesting by creating harmony. Furthermore, this harmony must be compatible with the cultural structure and image of the country since the basic elements that shape architecture, such as culture, art, traditions, religion, and lifestyle, are also elements of touristic attraction. Consequently, the architecture of a urban tourism destination offers a broad perspective covering many elements.

Cultural heritage

Visiting a city with a historical past means being in the culture, art, literature, and past lifestyles. Therefore, cities that have a rich cultural heritage and appeal to travelers at the same time begin to be referred to as traveler's cities. The importance of cultural heritage for a city was described by travelers as follows:

> *"Anyone who really wants to love Berlin must research for it. This is not a place for tourists who come just to look. To live to study. But it is necessary to learn starting from Frederick the Great. It is necessary to learn about the extremism of the Weimar Republic and the wars that followed. You must learn about Hitler. Then, of course, the wall… That is when it becomes more meaningful to walk, think and be surprised on the streets of Berlin…"*
> *"I love Prague very much after going abroad for the first time, and then I came back to it after living abroad for years and visiting more than 30 countries. Because Prague blends European culture and Soviet philosophy in every sense, from locals to buildings, from weather to river. It is a cold but warm city with a modest lifestyle, rich in art and culture…"*
> *"…Kyoto still lives up to the Geisha culture. Walking in Gion was like experiencing a completely different culture… I read that there are seventeen places on UNESCO's World Heritage list. I am here to get to know old Japan…"*
> *"Busan offers important cultural values with different lifestyles in each region…"*
> *"Istanbul is literally a magnificent blend of cultures and history. …Hundreds of years of history blended with eastern and western traditions, all united in a single city. You can see the Byzantine ruins, Mosques of Mehmed, Atatürk's wise hand, and much more…"*

Cultural heritage impresses travelers with the stories and experiences it creates. Even some things that have ceased to exist or demolished places still take their place in travelers' memories, even though the years have passed. Cultural heritage has long been a dominant driver of touristic activities since traveling long distances to discover the stories of the past is not a new concept. It is a crucial reason city with cultural heritage offer travelers unique experiences.

Art

Travelers are aware of the artistic soul in the cities since art, together with aesthetics, means freedom. Travelers in three cities other than Istanbul and Busan described the impact of art on their travels as follows:

> *"Art reminds me of freedom. Therefore, the more artistic activities there are in the city, the freer traveler, and locals there are. So, I was very impressed. Murals, graffiti, street art, and their messages are all beautiful in Berlin…"*
> *"… Street musicians are definitely very successful in Prague. While walking around to visit museums and historical buildings, they offer special art experiences. There are also theaters, museums, and galleries all over the city…"*
> *"Zen temples, Geisha arts in Kyoto, and a beautiful Manga in the old Japanese quarter. I wanted to see the works in streets and museums."*

Art is about experiences in cities, with tourism's unique origins. Hence, a city's reputation with art does not happen overnight. Art needs to meet the community first and then the travelers. Thus, art can be used as a tool to enliven and promote the community and make places more inviting. With art, cities become more successful in becoming travelers' cities since when it comes to art in a city, art lovers and travelers act. Cities that wish to be creative can achieve this with art. The first stage of creating a creative

place is creative locals. Thus, street art, landscape, artistic works reflecting history, city icons, and other creative tourism activities take place.

Pedestrian orientation

Walking to various shops, restaurants, bars, cafes, parks, and shopping places, particularly in traffic-free areas, provides a high level of touristic experience since travelers tend to spend more time in such cities where they feel comfortable (Hayllar & Griffin, 2006). To achieve this, it is necessary to be a pedestrian-oriented city and design a city with pedestrian ways, wide sidewalks and squares, and bicycle ways. In the interviews, the opinions about being pedestrian-oriented in five cities are presented by travelers as below:

> "... Berlin is bike-friendly. I am cycling through the bike. Also, it is very easy to walk around the large streets, most of which have bikeways. We even walked on the wide sidewalks with 10 people we met at the hostel. I had the pleasure of walking in the most crowded places without bumping into anyone..."
>
> "Prague means walking all day. Using public transport in the city is pointless because you can walk around the streets and squares freely for days..."
>
> "Kyoto center is flat. It is possible to reach almost everywhere by bike. In the center, there are bike parking places in front of almost every place, market, etc. You can definitely visit the whole city on foot and by bike... That is why it is my favorite city as a traveler who has visited many cities in the world."
>
> "I liked walking comfortably in the long shopping streets in Busan without cars and noise..."
>
> "Although it was very busy, it was still special to be able to walk historical areas in İstanbul. Tomorrow I will walk from Blue Mosque to Galata..."

Designing spaces for pedestrians' comfort and enjoyment is one of the key aspects of cities. Pedestrian-oriented city means that, besides having car-free streets, and squares, pedestrians move freely in places open to traffic. Therefore, pedestrian-oriented cities offer comfort to travelers with their interconnected pedestrian-oriented routes.

Trust in locals

A city is less likely to appeal to travelers if the locals are not friendly and welcoming since the traveler-locals relationship depends on mutual trust. Traveler-friendly, open to communication, and foreign language-speaking locals play a key role in the traveler's visit. These behaviors of locals make travelers feel safer in the city. Travelers described the need for mutual trust in interacting with locals as follows:

> "Berlin is the most open-minded city in Europe. It is a free meeting point of all ideas, hosts movements such as refugees welcome, social justice, queer Muslims. I am very happy that the community is so warm and open to everyone..."

> "In Prague I am walking comfortably and safely whenever I want. I usually sit alone in the park or street. Nobody disturb me everyone is smiling."
>
> "I arrived in Busan very late and walk to my hostel. When I went out to the street, I still saw street vendors and young people having fun. I was very relieved after that..."
>
> "It is disturbing because many taxi drivers and seller are persistently trying to make more money in Istanbul. But I was relieved that ordinary people were helpful and friendly..."

Tourism development in cities with locals helps to value a destination's cultural heritage. It also provides employment and economic benefits for the community. Visiting the diverse cultures in the city provides an enriching experience for travelers and locals alike. Therefore, locals should see travelers first as guests and then as one of locals.

Flavor varieties

Local food is a core element of culture and an important part of the traveler's experience. Travelers seeking local culture are also interested in tasting local products. Thus, local food and drinks increase the attractiveness of a city since local products have emerged because of culture, religion, lifestyle, and past experiences. This means the sum of tourist attractions. The opinions of the travelers about flavor varieties were as follows:

> "Berlin has its beer and snacks. But more importantly, you can find all kinds of food from all over the world. So, if you have a lot of time, you can try something different every day."
>
> "When I think of Prague, I think of beer, pastries, and meats. Traditional Czech foods and beers are one of the best duos together in the world."
>
> "In Kyoto, Okonomiyaki, Sushi, and Kobe Beef are not found anywhere else in the world. That's why it is so valuable..."
>
> "Busan's food is entirely based on seafood. Even their soups always contain seafood. All the seafood is amazing..."
>
> "Istanbul, baklava, doner kebab... No, no, just kidding. I will come again for all the meals I tried, including breakfast and street food which is never mentioned."

Travelers also prefer experience for reasons such as learning, authenticity, togetherness, and different culture together. Therefore, besides local food and beverages, travelers seek flavor varieties in the city since discovering different kitchens together attracts travelers.

Transportation

Public transport begins with the travelers' airport landing and ends with their return. Therefore, the first service that greets travelers is public transport. However, cities have been losing their ability to control transportation due to the increase in traffic density. Tour buses, taxis, and private vehicles occupy the historical areas of cities, especially during periods of high tourist flows. Therefore, travelers prefer public transport, which is a local public service. Rail systems such as trams and subways and the explanatory connection networks of these systems help travelers. The importance of public transport in cities was narrated by travelers as below:

"When I think of Berlin, I remember the S-Bahn and the U-Bahn because it makes my travel so much easier. Also, the bike sections in their car impressed me…"

"It is incredible to get to Prague old town in half an hour and so cheap with a single bus from the airport. It was the easiest and cheapest airport-city connection in my life. It is very nice to take a short trip in the city with the cute trams accompanied by the scenery. … it is possible to reach everywhere by metro or tram. The public transport network is great."

"The trains to reach and leave Kyoto are very accessible and fast. I think the best transportation is bike, but I can say that the bus networks are well established…"

"I prefer the subway system in Busan. There is a very understandable metro network. I feel very comfortable with transportation…"

"If you are a tourist in Istanbul, transportation can be very expensive and difficult because there are more taxis than people and they are expensive for tourists. But if you are a traveler, everything is very easy with Istanbulkart and everywhere is very close to each other… Local trams and ferries provide easy access to all major tourist attractions."

While deciding on a travel destination, public transportation may not be considered important at first, but convenient and easy public transportation is important for the traveler's experience. Enriching the traveler's experience and influencing the choice of the city, public transport caters specifically to travelers who want to live like locals.

Nightlife

Nightlife includes after-dinner entertainment such as street parties, eating, drinking, theater, cinema, bar, and café activities. Tourist-focused events, such as extreme experiences for alcohol and sex, and nightly festivals have taken place. There is also an extension of daytime tourism activities towards the night. Touristic attractions remain open all night during high tourism seasons. This expands opportunities, especially for traditional urban tourists who want to make the most of short stays. For urban travelers, it allows them to take part in nightlife to integrate with the city more, socialize, and have fun. The opinions of travelers on nightlife were as follows:

"Berlin really doesn't sleep much. So, when I think the general boringness in other German cities, there is really a place where I am doing whatever I want at all hours. The fact that it is an activity to be held all the time offers many opportunities to have fun…"

"Prague is where nightlife is so fun and cheap. I can say that I have experienced all kinds of music and entertainment to the fullest…"

"I attended the nightly hostel entertainment in Busan the most. I loved that all travelers had a fun time together."

It is critical to go beyond the standard hours and take part in the after-work dynamism of the locals. Concept bars, special parties, and other events allow travelers to have an enjoyable time in the city whenever they want as a city that never sleeps. The colorful and crowded streets, especially at night, reinforce this phenomenon.

Events

Socio-cultural effects are manifested by hosting an event, such as an increase in the standard of living and community soul and interest, strengthened the traditions of the host region (Hall, 1992). Therefore, besides cultural, artistic, and traditional festivals, events such as Fool moon parties, Holy fest, Exit fest, Rio Carnival, and October Fest directly affect travelers. Namely:

"…I visited the most beautiful cities in Europe, but Berlin is number one for me. It is huge that lives 24/7. The pearl of event capitals. No other entertainment or atmosphere filled the place of those 3 nights I spent… Berlin is in a truly exceptional position compared to German standards in terms of activity or entertainment in general…"

"I attended many events in Prague, such as theater, opera, Medieval night, and jazz music events. There was a different event every evening for five days. I wanted to stay longer, but the traveler's first purpose is to be on the road…"

"I always think of Kyoto with Nara because I am moving between two cities and attending many events with its old narrow streets, Japanese gardens, and girls in kimono…"

Cities should host more tourism events to reduce seasonality. Particularly festivals that last for a few days are more convincing for travelers to visit a city. In the context, it is of immense importance to understand tourism events since the systematic planning of events to create touristic attraction and image adds value. They also contribute to the locals by raising awareness of the place and as a catalyst for the creation of new accommodations.

Ethnic districts

Ethnic districts show how cultural diversity shapes city spaces. These are important places for travelers who want to get to know the city based on ethnic experience since *"ethnic districts are an example of the spatial dimensions of ethnic diversity in cities"* (Rath, 2006). The main views on ethnic districts emerged as follows:

"There is the main gate in Kreuzberg, one side in German and one side in Turkish, and the Kreuzberg center is written. Its streets are packed to the brim. DJ booths and concert platforms set up on the streets, Turkish stalls selling all kinds of food and beverages. Here is a completely different place…"

"It is impressive even to know that there is a Jewish quarter in Prague. It is important that there is a small synagogue right next to the old town square…

"It is called the Gion Geisha district in Kyoto. That is what all of Kyoto is actually…"

Ethnic districts bring together both private and public spaces where cultural and symbolic places come to the fore. These districts are with traditional and other places that are the primary attraction of travelers. Districts such as Chinatown, Indiantown, Arab Street, Little Italy, Vietnamatta, and Little Turkey are the focal points of travelers.

Low-cost opportunities

Low-cost establishes the necessary financial systems to take advantage of the best travel deals. Low-cost airports, hostels, street food, and affordable and budget places are essential for travelers. Namely:

"Berlin is one of the cheapest cities in Western Europe. I am finding different foods and drinks from many countries cheaply here. Even cheaper than those countries…"

"Hostel prices in Prague are ridiculously cheap compared to Europe… Food is really cheap. Beers are very cheap..."

"In Busan, hostels and street food are cheap enough to save the traveler's budget…"

"Turkish food and snacks in Istanbul were excellent and cheap, especially in and around Taksim. Street vendors and city transportation prices are also good enough…"

The perception of travelers to reduce expenses such as transportation and accommodation encourages them to spend more in the city. Travelers' low-cost travel savings are transferred, at least in part, to higher expenditures for destinations. The low-cost revolution affecting the tourism sector, at first glance, creates wider travel opportunities. As the impact of low-cost on airlines has significantly lowered prices across all tourism services.

Shopping markets

Shopping is perhaps the most universal tourist activity. It offers shopping villages, streets, indoor areas, and tourist-oriented services and combines urban environments since shopping is a common and basic tourist activity for visitors. Travelers shared their opinion about shopping market as below:

"There are streetside shopping opportunities all over Berlin. Walking in the flea market Oberbaumbrücke in Mauerpark, I was also able to buy incredible pieces by the kilo. And I will go to the second-hand shops…"

"Food markets are very special in Kyoto. I like to visit public markets. I have been to Bangkok and Busan other than here…"

"Jagalchi in Busan is a fish market that reflects the traditional life of Korea. It has everything from octopus to shrimp. But there is already a food market all over Busan…"

"There are more shops in Istanbul than there are people… I have never seen such an intense spice in a single place in the so-called Egyptian spice bazaar…"

In many cases, shopping is a critical factor in destination choice (Moscardo, 2004). Therefore, travelers tend to visit iconic shopping venues, including local markets, and buy various symbolic goods since travelers know that places such as street markets, handicrafts, and shopping villages are also an element of the city.

Lively/vibrant atmosphere

Another essential element for travelers is the warm and friendly atmosphere. It creates a lively ambiance where travelers meet each other and with locals. Travelers prefer a living city with a lively atmosphere since travelers seek a new vibrant lifestyle. We could understand this in travelers' statements as below:

"Berlin is where I could spend a lifetime just wandering around the streets. This is Berlin and this is not a sterile, decent city. Nor is it a giant museum like Rome. Berlin lives. People are free. If you stay for a long time or travel with a local, you understand why Berlin is special…"

"I could not get enough of Prague to breathe and wander around. I am here to look at the river from the bridge, to get lost in the streets, to experience because there is a very nice atmosphere. And it is like a never-ending spell…"

"Each place of Kyoto offers a different ambiance. It makes me feel different and special because I got lost in a different culture…"

"Busan both offers all the possibilities of a big city and offers a life in which I get lost…"

"When I say Istanbul, the first word that comes to my mind was chaos. Crowds of people running around, traffic jams, and car horns. Lively, dynamic, cosmopolitan, very friendly, and authentic… It is incredible to see Asia when I look at the Bosporus…"

The world's exciting cities have a few things in common. Therefore, a lively/vibrant atmosphere means where travelers meet with each other in the city which presents a pleasant ambiance.

Freer districts

Travelers prefer freer, more autonomous, and more borderless districts. The main purpose of this may be escape, quest, fun, or a feeling of real freedom. But no matter what, travelers prefer places where alcohol consumption is not condemned, where they dress as they want, kiss, make love, and use marijuana. Although not every city offers this, it has emerged as one of the attractions. The travelers' statements on this subject were as follows:

"Limitless parties in Berlin, alcohol, drugs, and sex… This is Berlin…"

"In Prague, marijuana is legal. More precisely, it is free to carry up to a certain amount. But no one knows how much that amount is. There are always matches and sheets in the bars. It is nice to feel a little dizzy…"

"Kyoto Geisha for a night… Who would not want to…"?

"Gay bars, private streets, and home parties at the night in Beyoglu (Istanbul) mean a lot to travelers."

If you have heard of Christiania, the autonomous region in the capital city of Denmark, Redlight in Amsterdam, or perhaps Ko Pha Ngan in Thailand, it is probably thanks to travelers.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In today's world, which is evolving towards experience-oriented tourism, touristic activities are increasing with the participation of visitors in the cities (Wise, 2016). While the precise limits of urban tourism have not been established, it generally refers to visits made to engage in tourism activities within a city (Adamo et al., 2019). Thus, cities tend towards activities that will bring that city to the fore. Particularly, metropolitan cities are with cultural

meaning (Van der Wusten, 2000). Cities are not only open-air museums and cultural heritage places but also homes and workplaces for the large populations living in the surrounding suburbs. Therefore, besides the iconic places that cities offer, other places have also obtained importance. This importance started when travelers spent more time in cities and explored different places. Within the scope of the research, travelers who visited Prague, Berlin, Kyoto, Busan, and Istanbul offered a broad perspective to understand them in different geographies. Thus, the research results will help cities how to influence travelers and become an urban tourism destination.

According to the findings obtained from the interviews, architecture, cultural heritage, art, pedestrian orientation, trust in locals, flavor varieties, transportation, nightlife, events, ethnic districts, low-cost opportunities, shopping markets, lively/vibrant atmosphere, and freer districts are the main attractions for memorable travel experiences. These attractions may be considered the characteristic of urban tourism destination. However, any analysis was not conducted for the order of importance of these attractions since the main purpose of the research is to understand the travelers to help cities that aiming to become an urban tourism destination rather than making a priority order. Thus, cities can evaluate their position and act to become an urban tourism destination.

In the study travelers also use negative words such as chaos, expensive, difficult, traffic jams, disturbing, crowds, and make more money when describing their experiences. Surprisingly, these negative words were associated with a positive sense of chaos, depending on the memorable experiences they had. This suggests that the negative aspects mentioned by travelers contribute to the overall appeal and excitement of a destination.

Another important finding is that travelers tend to distance themselves from typical tourists, allowing them to selectively ignore negative aspects whenever they desire. This highlights the idea that urban environments and the movement of travelers and tourists create a harmonious blend that leads to memorable experiences. Consequently, cities can enhance their attractiveness by being perceived as vibrant, dynamic, cosmopolitan, friendly, and authentic.

Hayllar et al. (2008) revealed historic or heritage precincts, ethnic precincts or quarters, cultural precincts or quarters, entertainment precincts, red-light districts, or bohemian quarters, and festival marketplaces factors that influence city visitors. Furthermore, according to Mazanec and Wöber (2009), architecture, culture, and art & entertainment events are the main factors to visit a city. Likewise, transportation (Gronau, 2017; Wang et al., 2018) and tourist-locals relationship (Kavaratzis, 2017; Sevin, 2017; Boivin & Tanguay, 2019) are important subjects for cities. All these factors overlap with some outcome of this study. Therefore, considering on behalf of travelers, tourists and visitors, individuals have some common expectations from cities. However, recreational or tourism

business districts, waterfront precincts (Hayllar et al., 2008), landscape, nature, climate, overall quality of accommodation, comfort & cleanliness of accommodation, and friendly service staff (Mazanec & Wöber, 2009) factors were different from this study.

On the other hand, several studies, discovered memorable travel experiences. For instance, while Kim et al. (2012) discovered hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, and knowledge as memorable travel experiences, Chandralal and Valenzuela (2013) proposed perceived meaningfulness, perceived opportunities for encountering authentic local experiences, perceived significance, perceived novelty, perceived opportunities for social interactions, local hospitality, serendipity and surprises, perceived professionalism of local guides, and positive emotions. However, these studies are mostly experiences based on internal motivations. In this study, external attractiveness was studied.

Furthermore, Hayllar and Griffin (2005) discovered a range of visitor types based on different visitors' experiences. One of them is explorers. Explorers want to go beyond the city center, find their way, and explore its inner complexities. The travelers in this study seem to act like explorers. Therefore, several types of visitors are in a city for varied reasons. The fact that they spend more time, see more places and participate in different activities in the city. Thus, there are relatively many factors and attractions for a city to become an urban tourism destination. In addition, it seems that other visitors also have some commonalities with their travel reasons. As a result, a city that has managed to become an urban tourism destination will, in a brief time, come to a level that will appeal to all other visitor groups. This was perhaps the main result of the research.

Despite the many benefits of urban travel, it may also come with challenges. Cities can be crowded, noisy, and overwhelming, and urban travelers must be prepared to navigate these challenges to make the most of their experiences. This may involve planning, staying organized, and being flexible to adapt to unexpected changes or obstacles. However, to build an urban tourism destination, multidimensional studies and an integrated tourism approach should also be generated. Therefore, it should be handled from a broad framework that prioritizes the participation of the locals as well as the demands and wishes of the visitors since building an urban tourism destination does not happen by itself. All stakeholders need to be ready and willing to do so.

This study has several limitations. The most important limitation of the study is that it only covers five urban tourism destinations and travelers staying at hostels. Future studies can contribute to urban tourism and other visitor groups in different cities. Thus, future studies can expand the frame of this research to other tourism destinations around the world by involving memorable travel

experiences in urban tourism destinations. Second, the study involved only travelers' memorable experiences, but the perceptions of other travelers and tourists were not covered. Third, the study was conducted with a qualitative research approach. Though the data were analyzed and presented with expertness and individuality, investigating the memorable travel experiences of travelers applying quantitative approaches are required for confirming these findings. Finally, it is worth noting that new experiences or changes in travelers' experiences might arise due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the considerable distances between the selected cities, and the extended period of the publication process. These factors could potentially impact the data collected and the overall findings of the research.

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Exploring memorable travel experiences in urban tourism: Insights from five vibrant cities

Abstract

Being a traveler's city is about understanding travelers' behavior and experiences. This makes it easier to know who is going to visit a city and why. In this context, this study explores the attractions that transform travelers' experiences into memorable travel experiences in urban tourism destinations. However, the research's contributions are mainly for cities aiming to become urban tourism destinations. The study was conducted with urban tourism, urban travelers, and memorable travel experience concepts. Interviews were conducted with 79 travelers in two European cities (Prague and Berlin), two Asian cities, (Kyoto and Busan), and a bridge city between Asia and Europe (Istanbul). Hence, the main attractions were determined. As a result, architecture, cultural heritage, art, pedestrian orientation, trust in locals, flavor varieties, transportation, nightlife, events, ethnic districts, low-cost opportunities, shopping markets, lively/vibrant atmosphere, and freer districts emerged as attractions that transform travelers' experiences into memorable travel experiences. These attractions also may transform urban experiences into memorable travel experiences for all visitor groups.

Keywords: *Urban tourism, urban destination, urban traveler, memorable travel experience*

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Serhat Bingöl:	*Conceptualism, Methodology, Software, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Data Curation, Writing - Original Draft, Visualization*	*100%*