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Staging Mass Participation Marathons in Heritage Tourism Destinations: Seeing Through the Eyes of Distance Runners

Chin-Kuang Chen[1] (Rikkyo University)

Abstract

This study attempted to explore how World Heritage sites and mass participation marathons may have an effect on each other. Feedback and comments of marathon runners (*N*=530) who participated in the World Heritage Himeji Castle Marathon and the Mt. Fuji Marathon were content analyzed to investigate: (a) How runners perceive the image of a World Heritage site featured in a marathon; (b) How is a value proposition that bundles heritage and marathon experiences accepted by runners. The findings showed that despite the featured World Heritage status appearing to be the key element in designing the value proposition, operational elements and social interaction elements also played vital roles in the value cocreation process. Aiming to use heritage tourism resources as a differentiating factor, marathon organizers need to ensure the quality of operational elements and better involve local businesses and residents as active participants.

Keywords: World Heritage, marathon, sports tourism, Japan, social interaction

Introduction

Heritage tourism is among the oldest forms of travel. Since the ancient Egyptian and Roman eras, people have travelled to admire places of historic importance (Timothy & Boyd, 2006). After centuries of development, heritage tourism is widely leveraged by places nowadays to attain objectives ranging from local development to sustainable utilization of nature and cultural heritage (Ashworth, 2000).

Similarly, traveling to watch or participate in sports has a long history as far back as the ancient Greek Olympics and the days of Roman gladiators (Huggins, 2013). However, the term "sports tourism" has only become the focus of mass media and academic research in the recent decade (Weed, 2009). Sports tourists travel to participate in or experience sports as active participants (cycling, running, etc.) or passive spectators (FIFA World Cup, Olympics, etc.). Extant literature has investigated the impacts of sports events (Waitt, 2003), sports tourists' experiences and behaviors (Smith & Stewart, 2007), and the role of sports tourism in developing destination image (Lepp & Gibson, 2011).

At a first glance, heritage tourism and sports tourism may seem to be two independent phenomena; however, it is not unusual to see crossover between various forms of tourism. For example, researchers have investigated the relationship between heritage tourism and shopping tourism. While extant research suggested that heritage and shopping make a symbiotic and complementary relationship (Timothy, 2005), the understanding of how

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heritage tourism interacts with other forms of tourism, such as sports, is rather limited (Timothy & Boyd, 2006).

Using a content analysis approach (Franzosi, 2008), the study aims to investigate how sports tourism may interact with heritage tourism through two cases of mass participation marathons held in heritage tourism destinations. Specifically the study focuses on the runners who participated in marathons featuring, respectively, the World Heritage site of Himeji Castle and Mt. Fuji in Japan. Feedback and comments of marathon runners (N=530) who participated in the World Heritage Himeji Castle Marathon and the Mt. Fuji Marathon were content analyzed to investigate: (a) How runners perceive the image of a World Heritage site featured in a marathon; (b) How is a value proposition that bundles heritage and marathon experiences accepted by runners.

The result is expected to contribute to a better understanding of the interaction between heritage tourism and sports tourism. Moreover, by using a content analysis approach the study responds to the call by Smith and Weed (2007) for exploiting the potential of narrative research. Finally, the study provides evidence-based insights for event organizers and local tourism stakeholders in developing sports/heritage tourism products and strategies.

Literature review

From the perspective of heritage tourism destinations, staging sports events may bring in additional sources of tourists and revenue. First, sports activities and events function as tourist attractions and may generate counter seasonal inflow of tourists (Higham, 2005). In addition, destinations may utilize sports as an initiative to strengthen or even alter the destination image (Smith, 2005; Kaplanidou, Jordan, Funk, & Rindinger, 2012). Nevertheless, a naive assumption of easily achievable harmony between heritage and sports is impractical at its best and may even be misleading. This is especially true for heritage tourism destinations featuring World Heritage sites as the main attraction. While the designation of World Heritage status represents a globally significant recognition that carries additional appeal for tourists, ensuing issues of heritage preservation complicate the process of achieving a win–win relationship between sports and heritage.

From the perspective of sports tourism development, staging sports events plays an important role in providing a strategic toolkit for the hosting destination to develop, convey, and sustain place brand equity. While mega sports events such as the Olympics and the World Cup Soccer have received the most attention with respect to their economic impacts and country re-imaging effects (Kasimati, 2003; Chung & Woo, 2011), non-elite sports events such as city marathons in contrast have a participatory character. Coleman and Ramchandani (2010) investigated the economic impacts of non-elite sports events in the United States, United Kingdom, and Europe and argued that city marathons can generate economic impacts comparable to elite sports events, while putting less burden on public finances. In addition to the economic and city branding benefits, city marathons also contribute to a healthier population through long-term sports participation (Long, 2004; Lechner, 2009). Moreover, the active participation of volunteers and local residents in the staging of a marathon is manifested—when positioned on a decentralizing continuum—such an event matters to them. In particular, the involvement of citizens young and old signals their pride in an event and such bonding may give affordance to bridging the generation gap (Coleman & Ramchandani, 2010), and by extension fosters further social cohesion.

On one hand, a destination may capitalize on the potential of sports events as a place marketing instrument to strengthen or even change a destination's image (Kaplanidou et al., 2012). On the other hand, a sports event may leverage the tourism resources or brand equity of the hosting destination to differentiate itself from similar events (Aaker, 2004). As the number of marathons increases and competition among them intensifies, it was even suggested that "race organizers are no longer selling the running, but rather, the location at which to undertake the running" (Coleman & Ramchandani, 2010, p.31).

Research design

Based on the above discussions, it is expected that a heritage tourism destination could benefit from hosting sports events; however, what kind of coordinated collaboration between heritage and sports is required to make it happen? From this enquiry emerges the purpose of this study: to advance the understanding of how heritage tourism resources may interact with sports tourism products, with a specific focus on the relationship between World Heritage sites and mass participation marathons. For this purpose, the research aims to answer the following two research questions (RQs):

RQ 1: How runners perceive the image of a World Heritage site featured in a marathon?

RQ 2: How is a value proposition that bundles heritage and marathon experiences accepted by runners?

The geographical location of this research was set in Japan, where a running boom has been taking shape since the first edition of the Tokyo Marathon was launched in 2007. Observing the huge success of the Tokyo Marathon, other cities and places across Japan followed suit, and the number of running events (including marathons, half marathons, and road races) has grown from less than 1,000 in 2007 to nearly 2,000 in 2014. Moreover, the percentage of Japanese people participating in running or jogging at least once a week has increased from 2.9% in 2006 to 5.3% in 2014 (Sakakawa Sports Foundation, 2014). Therefore, Japan provides a rich pool of potential research targets.

Guided by the research question, the criteria for choosing the research targets can be simply boiled down to two keywords: marathon and World Heritage. In other words, it has to be a marathon (42.195km) whose main feature is a World Heritage site. Half marathons and road races (usually shorter than 10km) are excluded on the basis of comparability with extant literature. Marathons featuring just some heritage elements are also excluded.

After a preliminary screening of all the World Heritage sites in Japan, four candidates were identified: Kyoto, Nara, Mt. Fuji, and Himeji Castle. Kyoto and Nara are world-renowned tourism destinations and started staging city marathons in 2012 and 2010, respectively (Runners Magazine, 2016). Though it's fair to say at least some participants are attracted by the many heritage sites in Kyoto and Nara, it's hard to say their marathons have World Heritage sites as the main appeal. In contrast, Himeji Castle is the most celebrated attraction in Himeji. The race organizer actively promoted the marathon using the castle's World Heritage designation, and even stressed the World Heritage status by incorporating it into the title of the marathon. Similarly, Mt. Fuji enjoys a worldwide reputation and has been the symbol of Japan. "Run alongside Mt. Fuji, Japan's most beautiful sacred mountain and a World Heritage site," was the pitch stated on the race website. Given a good weather condition, runners can have a good view of Mt. Fuji in around two-thirds of the course.

Consequently, marathons held at Mt. Fuji (Mt. Fuji Marathon) and Himeji (World Heritage Himeji Castle Marathon) were chosen as the research subjects.

Data collection

The feedback of runners who participated in the Mt. Fuji Marathon 2013 (hereafter referred to as Mt. Fuji Marathon) and the World Heritage Himeji Castle Marathon 2015 (hereafter referred to as Himeji Castle Marathon) was collected in August 2015 from RUNNET, the largest marathon races information provider in Japan. The website of RUNNET functions as a portal for runners to search and register for marathons, as well as rate and comment on marathons in which they have participated. To rate and comment on any marathons, one has to be a registered user of RUNNET. Moreover, a checking mechanism is in place to ensure if the user really participated in the marathon he or she intends to comment on. A complete feedback is composed of numerical rating (maximum 100 points) and free text (maximum 500 words in Japanese) regarding how he or she thinks of the marathon. Regarding the feedback of the Mt. Fuji Marathon, data for 2013 was used instead of the latest available data because bad weather condition during the 2014 race day may have biased the runners' feedback.

Table 1. Summary of runners' feedback

	Sample size	**Numerical rating**			**Narrative comment (word counts)**		
		Max	Min	Average	Max	Min	Average
Mt. Fuji Marathon	313	100	14	68.8	499	11	278
Himeji Castle Marathon	217	100	51	94.4	496	10	263

Source: Original data gathered from the website of RUNNET and then organized by the author.
Note: 1. The sample size reflects the number of runners who left their feedback for the marathon.
2. Total numbers of marathon runners for the Mt. Fuji Marathon and the Himeji Castle Marathon were 13,267 and 6,034, respectively. (Retrieved from http://fujisan-marathon.com/history, and http://www.himeji-marathon.jp/2015/archives/1718)
3. The higher the numerical rating, the more a runner is satisfied with the marathon. The maximum possible rating is 100 points.
4. Narrative comments are free text written in Japanese. The system allows a maximum of 500 words, which roughly corresponds to 250 words in English.

Table 1 summarizes the runners' feedback. Most feedback was left within two weeks after the marathon took place (Mt. Fuji Marathon: 79%; Himeji Castle Marathon: 95%). The sample size reflects the number of runners who left their feedback for the marathon. Numerical ratings represent a measurement of runner's satisfaction. Narrative comments illustrate how runners evaluated their experiences in running the marathon. A typical comment may contain positive and negative experiences, as shown in the following example:

> "I was really moved by the hearty cheers along the running route. Even in the mountainous area, it felt like all the villagers had come out to cheer for us. I was also thankful to the up-close cheers along the riverside cycling route. I enjoyed all the aid and food prepared for us, including citron tea, *amazake*, soba porridge, rice cake, chocolate, and fish cake. Moreover, onion soup, American hot dogs, and warm *amazake* refueled me after finishing. Though the weather was not the best I could hoped for, I'd say it's the best one among the 10 marathons I've run. The only thing I

> could complain about is the location for picking up the finisher's certificate. It's a bit far away, and the sign was not clear enough". (Runner #203)

The ratings and comments formed a rich content for analysis. In particular, the narratives provided insights into how the runners perceived and evaluated their experiences. In contrast to conventional surveys in which themes are usually set and confined to suit the research topic, the narratives used in this research were spontaneously posted by committed runners on a public Internet platform without instruction by the researcher. To ensure reliability and a proper interpretation of the narratives, clear procedures were developed to guide the analysis, which will be defined in the next section.

Data analysis

The retrieved data were organized into an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed manually using a conceptual content analysis approach. To answer RQ1, the data were examined to identify the perceived image of World Heritage sites among runners. To answer RQ2, the data were analyzed to investigate how runners evaluated the identified practices and activities.

The concept chosen for answering RQ1 is World Heritage. While the choice of concept for RQ1 is rather straightforward, concepts involved in answering RQ2 are more complicated. In this respect, the research applied the experience prism proposed by Morgan (2007) and chose to include three categories of concepts to capture runners' experiences. The three concepts are: (a) administrative and operational elements; (b) design and programming elements, and (c) social support and interaction elements.

A predefined set of keywords/phrases for each concept was developed based on the author's experience of more than 10 years of running marathons. Relevant keywords/phrases were allowed to be added as the analysis went on. Implicit terms were also considered in interpreting the texts. Due to practical reasons, the study did not employ multiple coders. Working with a research team would reduce coding bias and answer to relevant issues of subjectivity and reflexivity (Mruck & Breuer, 2003). The researcher had tried to present a consistent analysis framework but doubtless some aspects of interpretations may be informed by the researcher's own experiences in traveling and running marathons. To limit the subjectivity and ensuing problems of validity and reliability, a research protocol was developed to help the researcher insure the texts are analyzed consistently throughout the process.

Table 2. Summary of concepts and keywords/phrases

	Concepts	**Keywords/phrases**
RQ1	World Heritage	heritage, cultural heritage, world cultural heritage, etc.
RQ2	(1) Administrative & operational elements	water, toilet, baggage check, traffic, parking, etc.
	(2) Design & programming elements	event, running shirt, finisher's medal, etc.
	(3) Social support & interaction elements	cheer, volunteer, spectators, etc.

Note: As the analysis was done in a Japanese language context, the table is not exhaustive and serves as illustrative purpose only.

Table 2 illustrates the concepts and keywords/phrases applied in the conceptual content analysis procedure. Texts were examined to establish existence and frequency of concepts in

the context of the Mt. Fuji Marathon and the Himeji Castle Marathon. Implications were then inferred based on the results.

Results and discussion

Figure 1 summarizes the basic information of the two marathons covered in this study. Probably the most recognizable symbol of Japan, the majestic Mt. Fuji is not only a source of artistic inspiration but also an object of religious worship. Mt. Fuji was designated as a World Cultural Heritage site by UNESCO in 2013, just a few months after the first annual Mt. Fuji Marathon was held in 2012. The 42.195km marathon course features Mt. Fuji and two lakes that are also included in the World Heritage list (Asahi Shimbun, 2013).

On the other hand, Himeji Castle was registered in 1993 as one of the first UNESCO World Heritage sites in Japan. The presence of Himeji Castle certainly has put Himeji under the spotlight, but at the same time, it outshines other tourism resources in the area. A typical visitor may stay in Himeji for just a few hours, only for visiting the castle, and then move on to his or her next destination. In an attempt to drive overnight stays by tourists, Himeji City has directed its attention to sports tourism, and staged the first edition of the World Heritage Himeji Castle Marathon in February, 2015 (The Nikkei, 2015).

Figure 1. Basic information of Mt. Fuji Marathon and Himeji Castle Marathon

Mt. Fuji Marathon
Location: At the foot of Mt. Fuji, Yamanashi Prefecture
Access: About 2 hours from Tokyo
Date: Nov 24, 2013 (Second edition, held annually)
Number of marathon runners: 13,267

World Heritage Himeji Castle Marathon
Location: Himeji City, Hyogo Prefecture
Access: About one hour from Osaka, or 3.5 hours from Tokyo
Date: Feb 22, 2015 (First edition, held annually)
Number of marathon runners: 6,034

The perceived image of World Heritage sites among marathon runners

Table 3 shows ways runners referred to "Mt. Fuji" in their comments and how often they did so. Since the word "Mt. Fuji" can refer to the mountain or the marathon race, a distinction was made to distinguish the two different contexts. With respect to concepts related to Mt. Fuji, the mountain was mentioned a total of 101 times. While the adjectives used by runners to describe the mountain were in accordance with the common image of Mt. Fuji, it came as a surprise that few runners referred to Mt. Fuji as a World Heritage site, even though Mt. Fuji was designated as a World Heritage site just a few months before the marathon took place. In contrast, Arima (2015) examined the image of Mt. Fuji presented in guidebooks and found that "heritage" was the second most frequently used word in the 2014 edition of the guidebook covered in the study. The finding implies that the inherent image (beautiful, magnificent, etc.) of Mt. Fuji outweighs the recently acquired status of a World Heritage site, even when the event organizer and guidebook publisher actively promoted Mt. Fuji's World Heritage designation.

Table 3. The usage and frequency of "Mt. Fuji", observed from runners' comments

Concepts related to Mt. Fuji		Concepts related to Mt. Fuji Marathon	
Beautiful	49	Featured in the course	56
Amazing	22	Race title	27
Magnificent	18	Location	10
World Heritage	7	Event mascots	4
Sacred	3	Medal	3
Varied	2	Travel information	1
Total	101	**Total**	101

Note: N=313

With respect to concepts related to the Mt. Fuji Marathon, "Mt. Fuji" was also mentioned a total of 101 times. More than half of commenters stated Mt. Fuji was featured in the marathon course. The finding is in accordance with the fact Mt. Fuji is the main feature of the marathon.

Table 4. The usage and frequency of "Himeji Castle", observed from runners' comments

Concepts related to Himeji Castle		Concepts related to Himeji Castle Marathon	
Beautiful	6	Featured in the course	28
World Heritage	5	Race title	23
Restoration work	5	Location	5
White exterior	1	Medal	3
Total	17	**Total**	59

Note: N=217

Table 4 shows ways runners mentioned "Himeji Castle" in their comments and how often they did so. The frequency in total was considerably lower than that observed in the Mt. Fuji Marathon; moreover, only a total of 17 mentions of Himeji Castle were related to the castle itself. Similar to the findings in the Mt. Fuji Marathon, few runners mentioned Himeji Castle as a World Heritage site. Though we cannot conclude that the designations of Mt. Fuji and Himeji Castle as World Heritage sites are not well recognized by the public, the findings show that the World Heritage status doesn't rank highly in the runners' order of perceived images.

Bundling heritage with marathon events: An investigation through runners' eyes

Runners' comments were analyzed to investigate how a value proposition that bundles heritage and marathon experiences was accepted by the runners. By summarizing runners' comments, tables 5 and 6 illustrate how runners evaluated their experiences participating in the Mt. Fuji Marathon and the Himeji Castle Marathon. The results were categorized by concepts and satisfaction level, which was measured by runners' numerical ratings of each marathon.

First, administrative and operational elements can be regarded as the infrastructure required for staging a marathon. A race organizer has to ensure a smooth process that includes among others, easy registration, convenient access, ample supply of water and food, and logistics such as baggage checking, changing space, and enough toilet facilities. To a certain level, these services are taken for granted by runners. Indeed, while no more than 20% of runners positively commented on any administrative and operational elements, 48.4% of the unsatisfied runners complained about the number of toilets available in the Mt. Fuji Marathon. The satisfaction level of the Mt. Fuji Marathon was hugely compromised by insufficient toilet facilities.

Table 5. Runners' comments on Mt. Fuji Marathon by satisfaction level

	Very satisfied (N=89)		Somewhat satisfied (N=131)		Not satisfied (N=93)	
Concepts/categories	Positive comment	Negative comment	Positive comment	Negative comment	Positive comment	Negative comment
Administrative and operational elements						
Transportation	13.5%	3.4%	12.2%	14.5%	7.5%	14.0%
Baggage	3.4%	5.6%	2.3%	15.3%	1.1%	17.2%
Toilet facilities	15.7%	6.7%	7.6%	27.5%	2.2%	48.4%
Drink stations	19.1%	-	3.8%	3.8%	4.3%	3.2%
Registration	1.1%	-	0.8%	0.8%	1.1%	-
Changing space	1.1%	3.4%	0.8%	13.0%	1.1%	10.8%
Design and programming elements						
Course (World Heritage)	47.2%	-	47.3%	-	41.9%	-
Course (other elements)	40.4%	2.2%	43.5%	5.3%	33.3%	6.5%
Medal & goodies	15.7%	4.5%	12.2%	3.8%	6.5%	4.3%
Pre-race elements	3.4%	1.1%	1.5%	0.8%	2.2%	2.2%
Post-race elements	3.4%	2.2%	1.5%	10.7%	-	15.1%
Food & beverages	25.8%	-	16.8%	0.8%	8.6%	2.2%
Social support and interaction elements						
Cheer from spectators	31.5%	1.1%	27.5%	-	17.2%	-
Support from volunteers	24.7%	-	15.3%	-	11.8%	-
Interaction with runners	3.4%	19.1%	0.8%	19.1%	-	9.7%

Note: Satisfaction level is measured by runners' numerical rating on the marathon. Very satisfied: 100~80 points; somewhat satisfied: 79~60 points; not satisfied: lower than 60 points.

Table 6. Runners' comments on Himeji Castle Marathon by satisfaction level

	Very satisfied (N=205)		Somewhat satisfied (N=10)		Not satisfied (N=2)	
Concepts/categories	Positive comment	Negative comment	Positive comment	Negative comment	Positive comment	Negative comment
Administrative and operational elements						
Transportation	1.0%	1.0%	-	-	-	-
Baggage	11.7%	1.0%	10.0%	10.0%	-	-
Toilet facilities	4.4%	4.4%	-	30.0%	-	-
Drink stations	10.2%	2.0%	10.0%	-	-	-
Registration	3.9%	3.4%	-	-	-	-
Changing space	20.0%	1.5%	10.0%	-	-	-
Design and programming elements						
Course (World Heritage)	15.6%	-	20.0%	-	-	-
Course (other elements)	21.5%	6.8%	40.0%	30.0%	-	50.0%
Medal & goodies	8.3%	1.0%	20.0%	10.0%	-	-
Pre-race elements	4.9%	1.0%	-	-	-	-
Post-race elements	7.8%	3.4%	10.0%	-	-	50.0%
Food & beverages	25.4%	0.5%	-	10.0%	-	-
Social support and interaction elements						
Cheer from spectators	86.8%	-	80.0%	-	-	-
Support from volunteers	30.7%	-	20.0%	-	-	-
Interaction with runners	1.0%	1.0%	-	10.0%	-	-

Note: Satisfaction level is measured by runners' numerical rating on the marathon. Very satisfied: 100~80 points; somewhat satisfied: 79~60 points; not satisfied: lower than 60 points.

Second, design and programming elements are regarded as the core of an event. The crossover between World Heritage sites and marathon running was well accepted by the runners. More than 40% of runners commented positively on Mt. Fuji, but only about 15% of

runners commented positively on Himeji Castle. Mt. Fuji seemed to have a stronger presence than Himeji Castle. Other elements featured in the running route were celebrity runners, beautiful scenery, and roadside festivals. Another common design was local specialty food, which can be naturally blended into the running experience because food and beverages are indispensable elements before, during, and after running. In the case of the Himeji Castle Marathon, food and beverages were the most praised element, surpassing even the World Heritage status. The somewhat surprising finding can be explained by the difference in their strategic focuses. While Mt. Fuji was leveraged to attract participants to the marathon, the crossover worked the other way round in Himeji. In the case of the Himeji Marathon, it was the marathon being leveraged with an aim of driving overnight stays by visitors. Therefore, the World Heritage status of Himeji Castle was just one of the factors in a coordinated effort to promote Himeji.

Third, social support and interaction cocreated with spectators, volunteers, and fellow runners, are expected to enhance runners' experiences through the four channels of social support proposed by Willis (1991). Spectators provide emotional support through cheering. Volunteers provide tangible and information support. Fellow runners provide companionship support. Runners were in general thankful of the spectators who cheered for them along the route. However, a huge difference was observed between the two marathons in the percentage of runners who made positive comments about spectators. Were the runners in Himeji simply more grateful or were the local residents in Himeji more passionate in cheering? It is true that Himeji City is more densely populated than the area around Mt. Fuji, but the difference in population does not seem to be the only reason explaining the disparity in runners' comments. The city authority of Himeji made great efforts in communicating the merits of staging a marathon. Moreover, local residents of Himeji may be more willing to participate as the city is known as a "city of festivals". An impressive spectator turnout was observed even in sparsely populated areas along the running route.

With respect to the interaction with other runners, the negative comments observed in the Mt. Fuji Marathon were mostly directed towards runners' misbehavior of littering and urinating in public. In contrast, few runners in Himeji expressed such concern. Could the behavior of runners in Mt. Fuji be so different from those in Himeji? The enquiry once again puts the problem of insufficient toilet facilities in the spotlight. In addition, runners of the Mt. Fuji Marathon appeared to be less tolerant of others' misbehavior in such a pleasant environment as Mt. Fuji. The finding highlights the importance of administrative and operational elements when staging a sports event in environmentally sensitive areas such as a heritage tourism destination.

Conclusions

Through a content analysis of the feedback left by runners who participated in marathons featuring, respectively, the World Heritage sites of Himeji Castle and Mt. Fuji in Japan, this study attempted to examine: (a) How runners perceive the image of a World Heritage site featured in a marathon; (b) How is a value proposition that bundles heritage and marathon experiences accepted by the runners.

Despite World Heritage status appearing to be a key element in the marathons, the status of World Heritage did not rank highly in the order of runners' perceived image. Moreover, a successful value proposition bundling heritage and marathon requires coordinated efforts of the administrative and operational elements, design and programming elements, and social

support and interaction elements. The implications of this study suggest that event organizers need to consider several issues when staging marathons in heritage tourism destinations. First, marathon organizers have to ensure administrative and operational elements such as toilets and changing spaces are sufficient relative to the number of participants. Second, heritage tourism resources can be incorporated into the marathon experiences as a differentiating factor. Third, marathon organizers are advised to better communicate the purposes and benefits of the marathon to local businesses and residents, with the aim of encouraging them to participate actively in the marathon, whether as runners, sponsors, or volunteers.

This study has made two primary contributions. First, the study is expected to contribute to a better understanding of the potential of leveraging a mass participation marathon to (re)vitalize a heritage tourism destination. Second, the study applied a content analysis approach to analyze data gathered in Japan. Both the research method and the research target are underrepresented in the literature. Thus the study is expected to expand methodological awareness in the field of sports tourism and deepen our understanding in the current situation of sports tourism in Japan.

A limitation of this study lies in the nature of runners' feedback. Most of them focused their narratives on what happened on the day of the running, so a complete picture of runners' behavior was not observed. Another limitation is the difficulty in segmenting the runners. Different segments of runners favor different kind of activities (Chalip & Mcguirty, 2004) and hence may exhibit different behavior patterns. The data available in this study were insufficient to identify these different patterns. In addition, this study has mainly investigated how marathon runners evaluated their experiences of participating in marathons held in heritage tourism destinations. Event sponsors, volunteers, and local residents as well are crucial stakeholders in a marathon, therefore an investigation into a larger set of stakeholders is warranted. Future research should integrate the analysis of relevant stakeholders to reveal the dynamics of their interactions and use these insights to reach sustainable solutions for staging mass participation marathons in heritage tourism destinations.

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Constructing a Trade Show Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale from a Stakeholder Perspective

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to construct and validate an Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale that accounts for the significant roles of three key stakeholders (i.e., trade show visitors, exhibitors, and organizers) in a trade show context through a pilot test, scale purification and validation. The final instrument consisted of 46-items representing 3 dimensions and 12 sub-dimensions of exhibitors' satisfaction. Reliability, unidimensionality, content validity, construct validity, discriminant validity, and predictive validity of the scale were tested and established using 930 responses from 4 trade shows in China. The resulting instrument was found to be superior to existing instruments in that it comprehensively measures exhibitors' performance at a trade show and explains a large portion of exhibitors' overall satisfaction. A major contribution of this study is that it introduces stakeholder theory as a guiding framework for measuring satisfaction in the trade show industry.

Keywords: trade shows; stakeholder theory; exhibitors; satisfaction.

Introduction

Researchers have conducted extensive studies with trade show exhibitors to identify key determinants of their satisfaction (Jung, 2005; Lee & Back, 2009). Results have been used to help exhibitors better manage their trade show experience (Dekimpe, François, Gopalakrishna, Lilien, & van den Bulte, 1997) and trade show organizers provide better service to exhibitors (Jin & Weber, 2013). However, these results have been derived from observational outcome indicators (e.g., booth traffic) or sales leads collected at the show that have not been clearly defined or shown to be reliable and valid (Gopalakrishna & Lilien, 1995; Kerin & Cron, 1987). They also have been found to be weakly related to exhibitor overall satisfaction and intention to return to the trade show (Hansen, 2004; Jin, Weber, & Bauer, 2012). As a result, the trade show performance literature lacks a comprehensive conceptual framework for the determinants of exhibitor satisfaction, as well as scales with adequate evidence of reliability and validity (Hansen, 2004).

An additional limitation of previous trade show studies is that most have focused on exhibitors, failing to acknowledge the roles of the other two key stakeholders—trade show organizers and visitors (e.g., Berne & García-Uceda, 2008; Bruhn & Hadwich, 2005; Jin & Weber, 2013; Reinhold, Reinhold, & Schmitz, 2010). Exceptions include studies by Herbig, O'Hara, and Palumbo (1997), Munuera and Ruiz (1999), and Jin et al. (2012), all of whom

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accounted for either organizers or visitors and their impacts on trade show exhibitor performance. However, there have been no studies on the intricate relationships between all three key stakeholders in the trade show industry.

Stakeholder theory, introduced by Freeman in 1984, recognizes that successful performance of a business is partly dependent on key stakeholders who are external to the organization. In a trade show setting key stakeholders or "actors" are visitors (i.e., professional buyers), exhibitors, and organizers. Face-to-face contact is a key feature of a trade show that distinguishes it from other types of business to business (B2B) marketing and is one of its most valuable features (Godar & O'Connor, 2001). Through face-to-face interactions, exhibitors and visitors share their common interests, discuss industry trends, build relationships in a cost-effective way, and adopt specific roles throughout the purchasing process, should it occur (Kang & Schrier, 2011; Rosson & Seringhaus, 1995). Face-to-face interactions also involve organizers whose customers are visitors and exhibitors (Jin et al., 2012; Jung, 2005). Thus, the eventual success of a trade show depends largely on its ability to meet the objectives of all three key stakeholders (Gopalakrishna, Roster, & Sridhar, 2010; Lin, 2011).

The trade show literature lacks a comprehensive conceptual framework, valid and reliable scales, and an understanding of the interactions between the three key stakeholders. This gap makes research on key determinants of satisfaction for exhibitors difficult. Thus, the specific objectives of this study are to: 1) construct an Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale (ESS) that accounts for all three key stakeholders in the trade show industry and 2) empirically examine the scale's reliability and validity. It is expected that trade show organizers will be able to use the proposed ESS in their post-show evaluation to identify what has the most influence on exhibitor overall satisfaction and positive behavioral intention. This study could also advance the development of a comprehensive conceptual framework on measuring satisfaction that accounts for key stakeholders in the events management field.

Satisfaction in trade shows

Most studies on satisfaction in the trade show context have focused on overall satisfaction (Lee & Back, 2009; Lee & Beeler, 2009; Oh, 1999). Overall satisfaction is conceptualized as "an overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience with a good or service over time" (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994, p. 54). The major problem with using overall satisfaction is that it does not address the specific dimensions of satisfaction and, as such, corresponding managerial implications are limited. For example, an exhibitor overall satisfaction with a trade show might be 1 out of 5, with 5 being "extremely satisfied." Without knowing the satisfaction levels associated with each specific dimension of the trade show, organizers have no idea how to fix problems or improve their service quality.

The main benefit organizations receive from satisfied customers is generally higher profitability (Kang & Schrier, 2011). Results of previous studies have indicated that satisfied customers show positive behavioral intentions, such as having a greater intention to return (Bowen & Chen, 2001; Jung, 2005; Servert, Wang, Chen, & Breiter, 2007) and a higher likelihood to share positive comments about their experience (Zhang, Qu, & Ma, 2010). Because trade show participation is a major cost for exhibitors, being satisfied with a trade show could lower their uncertainty, increase intention to return, and minimize their constraints to future participation. This contention lacks empirical evidence, particularly with

respect to trade show participation behavior and overall satisfaction levels (Pearlman & Mollere, 2009).

Previous literature on visitor and exhibitor overall satisfaction with trade shows has focused on one or two stakeholders and ignored the complex interactions between all three stakeholders (i.e., visitors, exhibitors, organizers). For example, most studies on exhibitors' satisfaction and positive behavioral intentions have focused on exhibitors' self-performance and/or the interactions between exhibitors and visitors (Jin et al., 2012). Few have included the role of key stakeholders such as organizers and visitors who may shape exhibitors' satisfaction and positive behavioral intention.

Stakeholder Theory and Key Stakeholders in Trade Shows

Freeman, who introduced stakeholder theory in 1984, suggested stakeholders with similar interests form a group and recognized that doing so is important for businesses who must account for their relationship with the external environment. He also argued that a company cannot be self-sufficient because it is dependent on the external environment, which is made up of key stakeholders. Central tenets of stakeholder theory are that businesses: (a) adopt strategies that integrate and maximize all stakeholders' interests (Freeman & McVea, 2001) and (b) actively serve the interests of a broad group of stakeholders to create more value over time (Harrison & Wicks, 2013). Stakeholder theory has been applied in a wide range of disciplines such as strategic management, health care, law, and public policy (e.g., Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, & de Colle, 2010; Harrison & Wicks, 2013) and most researchers have used a measure of stakeholder performance as the independent variable, with some measure of outcome performance as the dependent variable (Choi & Wang, 2009; Hillman & Keim, 2001).

According to Mainardes, Alves, and Raposo (2011), the goal of stakeholder theory is to help organizations realize, analyze, and examine the characteristics of individuals or groups influencing or being influenced by organizational behavior. These individuals or groups are referred to as stakeholders and they have clear expectations of their relational experience with the organization, evaluate the results obtained, and act in accordance with the results of the evaluation (Polonsky, 1996). Thus, the performance of one stakeholder is dependent on and impacts the performance of other key stakeholders.

In the trade show context there are three stakeholders: visitors, exhibitors, and organizers (Jin et al., 2012). Trade shows no longer function solely as a venue in which sales are made; instead, they have become a platform for information exchange and networking (Rosson & Seringhaus, 1995; Stoeck & Schaudy, 2005). The evolving function of trade shows has an important impact on trade show operation and behaviors as well as the relationships between visitors, exhibitors, and organizers (Jin et al., 2012).

A potentially viable research paradigm for studying the relationships between visitors, exhibitors, and organizers is the "network research approach" (Axelsson & Easton, 1992; Ford, 1990). Rather than focusing solely on dyadic buyer-seller relationships, the network research approach recognizes that buyer-seller relationships are only one part of the web of relationships. It extends the analysis beyond the buyer-seller dyad and explores the triad of relationships between visitors, exhibitors, and organizers, representing an important step in better understanding the way that trade shows work, and the factors contributing to the success of each stakeholder (Rosson & Seringhaus, 1995).

Understanding the three key stakeholders is important because a common objective of trade show organizers is maximization of the number of exhibitors and visitors. Jung (2005) found that visitors at trade shows were most concerned with the number of participating exhibitors, quality of products or services exhibited, and events organized at the trade show; all of which demonstrated strong interactions with exhibitors and organizers. Lee, Yeung, and Dewald (2010) found that trade show (Business-to-business exhibition) visitors are more motivated than public show (Business-to-consumer exhibition) visitors and expect more from the organizers and exhibitors. Similarly, exhibitors regard trade show participation as a major business investment and expect positive results from visitors and organizers (Hansen, 2004). Hence, the successes of visitors, exhibitors, and organizers are tied together. More recently, Lin, Jiang, and Kerstetter (2015) applied the stakeholder theory at a trade show in the United States and found that all three key stakeholders should be accounted for when evaluating trade show performance. However, their work was exploratory in nature and did not include specific items under each of the three dimensions.

Given that the successes of visitors, exhibitors, and organizers are dependent on each other, there needs to be a conceptual framework built on stakeholder theory that reflects the triad of their relationships. This study intends to do this through the evaluation of trade show exhibitors' performance. We propose that exhibitors' perception of trade show organizers and visitors, along with their perception of self-performance, will determine their overall perception of a trade show experience. The three dimensions of exhibitor satisfaction (i.e., satisfaction with self-performance, visitors, and organizers) are elaborated on in the following section.

Three dimensions of exhibitor satisfaction

Exhibitor's self-performance

Exhibitors' self-performance corresponds to their perception of their own performance at a trade show, which is the most common indicator of exhibitors' trade show performance and is usually measured against pre-set objectives (Hansen, 2004). Companies participate in trade shows with the expectation of benefits (Sashi & Perretty, 1992), which may include sales, qualified leads, networking, and reputation-building. Sales are often considered the ultimate objective of an exhibitor at a trade show and were the primary focus of research on trade shows in the 1990s (Dekimpe et al., 1997; Sarmento, Farhangmehr, & Simões, 2015).

Gopalakrishna and Lilien (1995) analyzed industrial trade show performance using a three-stage model reflecting the multi-activity nature of exhibiting. The three stages were attraction, contact, and conversion efficiency. The results showed that performance was enhanced by different factors for each of the stages and company-controlled activities in trade shows are crucial to exhibitors' overall performance. Dekimpe et al. (1997) extended Gopalakrishna and Lilien's work (1995) by using an attraction effectiveness index, which was computed as the number of attendees from the target audience who visited the booth to talk or obtain literature, divided by the size of the target audience. The key determinants of performance were found to be pre-show promotion spending, size of booth, number of personnel per square foot, and use of vertical trade shows. However, these authors' performance measures do not present a practical way of measuring trade show performance for exhibitors because the data required for the measures are not easily available without a sophisticated system for collecting data on visitors' interests and intentions (Hansen, 2004).

Researchers have recently argued that compared to selling activities, qualified leads and customer relationships are more important during the trade show and could be converted into sales through follow-up activities (Seringhaus & Rosson, 2004). Hansen (1999), who conducted one of the most well-organized and comprehensive studies on exhibitors' self-performance, argued that trade show performance has traditionally been evaluated using outcome-based measures, and the behavior-based measures are ignored. Hansen set up a preliminary trade show performance construct, which included one outcome-based dimension (sales-related activities) and four behavior-based dimensions (information-gathering activities, image-building activities, motivation activities, and relationship-building activities). These five dimensions are the essence of exhibitor performance and it is believed that high values associated with these dimensions lead to a satisfactory overall experience.

The exhibitor-visitor link

Exhibitors (i.e., sellers) and visitors (i.e., buyers) use trade shows to develop new business relationships and work on existing business relationships (Blythe, 2002). Visitors also attend trade shows to reduce their social and technological distance from exhibitors (Ford, 1980). Direct contact between seller and buyer is one of the key features that distinguish trade shows from advertising and promotion. Furthermore, trade shows differ from sales calls because the contact is initiated by the buyer rather than the seller (Munuera & Ruiz, 1999).

Early research on the exhibitor-visitor link focused primarily on selling activities (Bello, 1992; Cavanaugh, 1976; Gopalakrishna & Lilien, 1995; Williams, Gopalakrishna, & Cox, 1993). Tanner and Chonko (1995) found that the primary goal of exhibitors was to get sales. More recent studies (e.g., Sarmento, Farhangmehr, & Simões, 2015; Seringhaus & Rosson, 2004) found that getting sales was no longer the primary goal of exhibitors and visitors.

Godar and O'Connor (2001) found that visitors attend trade shows for reasons (e.g., reinforce contact and support industry) weakly related or unrelated to purchase intentions. Borghini, Golfetto, and Rinallo (2006) documented the increased importance of information search among trade show visitors and argued that it poses challenges to the way exhibitors traditionally manage their trade show participations or measure returns on trade show investments. Their finding also led to the conclusion that exhibitors need to take good care of potential buyers but also need to dedicate sufficient attention to visitors who are not interested in an immediate purchase. Furthermore, Bello (1992) pointed out that the characteristics of visitors influence the type of information exchange taking place at a trade show. Bello found that visitors holding higher ranking positions are more likely to engage in purchase decision-making and obtaining transaction information, while visitors in lower ranking positions are more likely to obtain technical information. Similarly, Bello and Lohtia (1993) found that the visitor's job level positively related to the final purchase decision while firm size negatively related to purchase decision. Thus, visitors' job level and job function play an important part in exhibitors' success at trade shows.

The exhibitor-organizer link

Exhibitors are more valuable than visitors at industrial trade shows because organizers collect most of their revenue from exhibitors. Hence, it is in the organizers' best interest to cater to the needs of and deliver satisfactory services to exhibitors. The conceptualization of trade shows as services is manifest for all key stakeholders of trade shows (Gottlieb, Brown, & Drennan, 2011). Previous research has demonstrated that trade show visitors (Konopacki,

1996; Munuera & Ruiz, 1999), exhibitors (O'Hara & Herbig, 1993), and organizers (Munuera & Ruiz, 1999) identify trade shows as having a substantial service component. Thus, the link between exhibitors and organizers corresponds to exhibitors' perception of service quality delivered by organizers.

Adopting Brady and Cronin's (2001) multi-level model of service quality, Gottlieb et al. (2011) established a model to examine trade show visitors' perceptions of trade show effectiveness. The model proposes that interaction quality, environment quality, and outcome quality are factors that influence perceptions of service quality and suggests that trade show effectiveness mediates the effect of perceived service quality on perceptions of overall service outcomes. The same approach could also apply to exhibitors' perception of service quality delivered by organizers. Jin et al. (2012) investigated the relationship quality between exhibitors and organizers in view of its potential to significantly affect the success of a particular trade show. The results indicated that relationship quality between exhibitors and organizers is critical for the successful and sustainable development of trade shows.

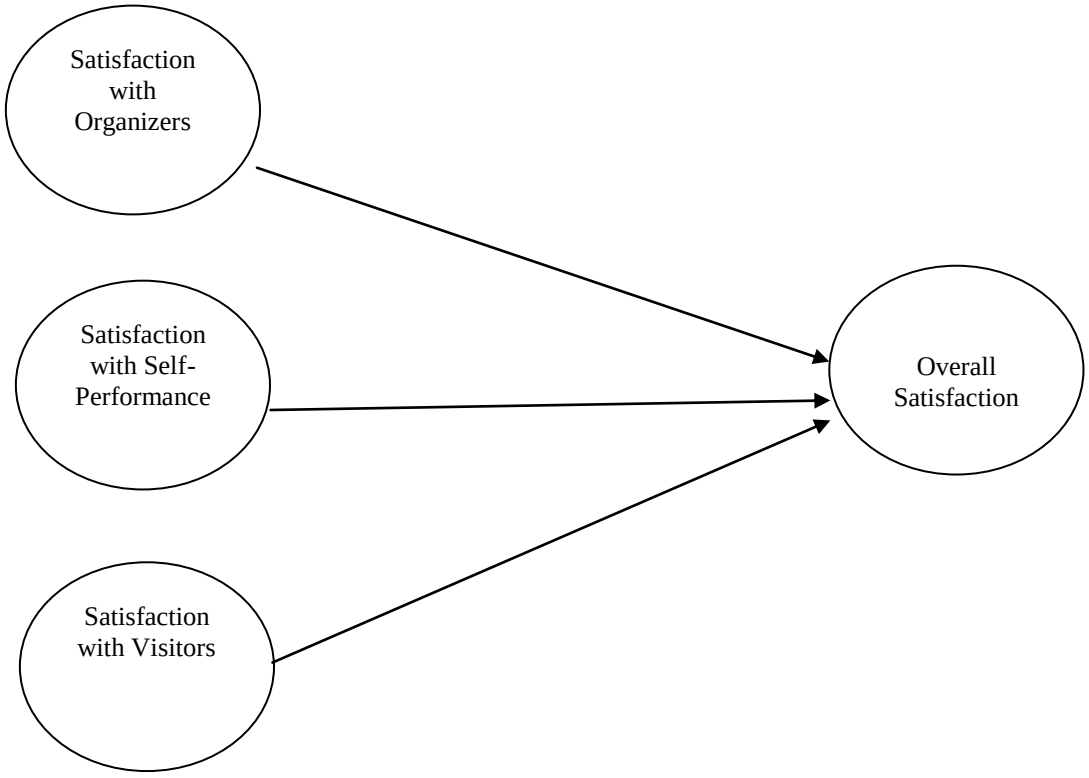

Figure 1. Dimensions of exhibitors' satisfaction

China's trade show industry has witnessed rapid development in recent years. Convention centers are being built all over the country and the government is extremely supportive of the

development of the trade show industry. China's indoor exhibition space grew to 4.8 million square meters in 2011, the second highest in the world after the United States (UFI, 2014). Exhibitors' satisfaction with respect to trade shows in China, however, has received relatively little attention. Thus, China is a viable context in which to conduct this study. Based on the literature reviewed so far, it is clear that visitors, exhibitors, and organizers are three key stakeholders of trade shows and their interactions with and perceptions of each other must be accounted for when studying exhibitor satisfaction. Thus, this study intends to construct and validate an Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale (ESS) that accounts for the significant roles of all three key stakeholders in a trade show context (Figure 1).

Scale development

Item generation and content validity

Three dimensions of exhibitor satisfaction were combined to create the Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale. To validate the three dimensions, exhibitors were asked to indicate their overall satisfaction with the trade show using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "extremely unsatisfied" (1) to "extremely satisfied" (7). A description of each dimension follows.

Exhibitor satisfaction with self-performance

Hansen's (1999) five-dimension conceptual framework was used to enable exhibitors to document their self-performance. Hansen's framework includes one outcome-based dimension (sales-related activities) and four behavior-based dimensions (information-gathering activities, image-building activities, motivation activities, and relationship-building activities), which were considered the essence of exhibitors' performance. Exhibitors were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with each statement using a 7-point, 18-item scale (1= extremely poor, 7= extremely excellent).

Exhibitor satisfaction with organizers

Based on their own qualitative research and Rust and Oliver's (1994) three-component service quality model, Brady and Cronin (2001) found that service quality is a third-order construct that consists of three primary dimensions: interaction quality, environment quality, and outcome quality. Each of the primary dimensions has three sub-dimensions. Interaction quality contains attitude, behavior, and expertise; environment quality contains ambient conditions, design, and social factors; and outcome quality contains waiting time, tangibles, and valence. While Brady and Cronin's measure has been used in the trade show context and has exhibited excellent reliability and validity (see Gottlieb et al., 2011), the sub-dimension, "waiting time," was dropped in this study because it does not apply to trade show exhibitors. The revised scale used in this study to measure exhibitor satisfaction with organizers included 21 items based on Brady and Cronin's (2001) multi-level model on service quality (Table 1). Exhibitors were asked to rate their level of agreement using a 7-point scale (1= strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree).

Exhibitor satisfaction with visitors

A 7-point, 12-item scale (1= extremely poor, 7= extremely excellent) drawn from Lin (2011) was used to assess exhibitors' level of satisfaction with visitors. The scale (see Table 1) included four sub-dimensions (i.e., visitors' job level, job function, purchasing authority, and interaction) that have been found to influence exhibitors' satisfaction with visitors (Bello,

1992; Bello & Lohtia, 1993; Rosson & Seringhaus, 1995) and the scale was applied previously at trade shows in China with satisfactory reliability and validity.

Content Validity

Four experts (three from the industry and one from academia) reviewed the three dimensions of the satisfaction scale to ensure content validity (Devellis 2003). The experts suggested eliminating one item (i.e., "motivate customers") and editing three items (i.e., "the trade show's ambience is what I'm looking for in a trade show," "the trade show organizers understand that the atmosphere at the show is important," and "the security provided by the organizers is excellent" in the Ambient Conditions dimension, see Table 1). A total of 50 items were retained to measure the 3 dimensions of the Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale.

Purification of the measurement scale

A pilot test of the 50-item satisfaction scale was undertaken using data collected from the 10th China Household Electrical Appliances Trade Fair, which was held from August 22 - 24, 2013 in Zhongshan, China. The Fair hosted 800 exhibitors and over 60,000 visitors (i.e., professional buyers). Three trade show staff were involved with the data collection process and approached every other exhibitor on the trade show floor during the last day of the trade show. A total of 400 exhibitors were approached and asked to participate in a survey. For every exhibiting company approached, the on-site personnel with the highest ranking were asked to fill out the questionnaire. The trade show staff were provided instructions regarding face-to-face interviewing before the Fair and were given a script and told to strictly follow it when surveying exhibitors. The survey instrument included the three-dimension satisfaction scale. Exhibitors were asked to use a 7-point Likert scale to indicate their level of agreement with each of the 50 statements (Table 1). In order to achieve anonymity and elicit honest feedback, particularly in China where individuals tend to be reserved, no demographic information was collected (Stanton, 1998).

Table 1. Pilot study exhibitor satisfaction scale items

Dimension	Sub-dimension	Statement
Self-performance	Sales	S1. Test new product concepts.
		S2. Develop new product/market segments.
		S3. Introduce and evaluate reactions to new products.
		S4. Actual sales at the trade show to customers.
	Information Gathering	IG1. Collect information about competitors' prices, products, and strategies.
		IG2. Collect information in general.
		IG3. Search for information about visitors.
	Relationship Building	RB1. Strengthen relationships with existing customers.
		RB2. Build relationships with new customers.
		RB3. Maintain contact with existing customers.
		RB4. Develop contact with new customers.

	Image Building	IB1. Demonstrate to customers that we are just as good as our competitors.
		IB2. Enhance customers' image of our company.
		IB3. Convince customers that we are a strong and solid company.
		IB4. Gain advantage over competitors who are not exhibiting.
	Motivation	M1. Train and develop our sales team.
		M2. Strengthen our sales people's motivation (e.g., traveling abroad, break in daily routines, meeting customers at the show and outside the show area).
Organizers	Interaction	A1. You can count on the trade show organizers being friendly.
		A2. The attitude of the trade show organizers demonstrates their willingness to help me.
		A3. The attitude of the trade show organizers shows me that they understand my needs.
		B1. I can count on the trade show organizers to address my needs.
		B2. The trade show organizers respond quickly to my needs.
		B3. The trade show organizers understand my needs.
		E1. The trade show organizers know their jobs.
		E2. The trade show organizers are able to answer my questions quickly.
		E3. The organizers understand that I rely on their knowledge to meet my needs.
	Environment	AC1. The trade show's ambience is what I'm looking for in a trade show.
		AC2. The trade show organizers understand that the atmosphere at the show is important.
		AC3. The security provided by the organizers is excellent.
		D1. This service provider's layout never fails to impress me.
		D2. The trade show's layout serves my purposes.
		SF1. The trade shows' other exhibitors consistently leave me with a good impression.
		SF2. The trade shows' visitors consistently leave me with a good impression.
	Outcome	T1. I am pleased with the quality of our booth.
		T2. I am pleased with the food provided by the organizers.
		V1. When I leave the trade show, I feel that I had a good experience.
		V2. The trade show organizers try to give me a good experience.
		V3. The trade show organizers know the type of experience exhibitors want.
Visitor	Job level	JL1. Overall job level of customers.
		JL2. Job level of existing customers.
		JL3. Job level of potential customers.
	Job function	JF1. Overall job function of customers.

	JF2. The fit of job function of customers to your specific needs.
	JF3. Job function of existing customers.
	JF4. Job function of potential customers.
Purchasing authority	PA1. Overall purchasing authority of customers.
	PA2. Purchasing authority of existing customers.
	PA3. Purchasing authority of potential customers.
Communication	C1. Amount of communication with customers.
	C2. Quality of communication with customers.

A total of 336 exhibitors provided valid feedback, yielding a response rate of 84.0%. To examine response bias, a comparison was conducted between early responders (i.e., first half of the 336 responses collected in the morning of the last day) and late responders (i.e., second half of the 336 responses collected in the afternoon of the last day). There were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of the mean scores on each of the three dimensions.

Analyses were conducted to examine the consistency of the items comprising the sub-dimensions of the satisfaction scale (Churchill, 1979). A corrected item-total correlation (CITC) of .30 was used to decide whether or not to delete an item from a sub-dimension (DeVellis, 2012). Cronbach's alpha was used to ensure the reliability of each sub-dimension.

An iterative sequence of calculating CITC and Cronbach's alpha was repeated multiple times. Five items had a CITC lower than the .30 cutoff value: D2—"The trade show's layout serves my purposes," SF2—"The trade shows' visitors consistently leave me with a good impression," T1—"I am pleased with the quality of our booth," T2—"I am pleased with the food provided by the organizers," and JL1—"Overall job level of customers." After sharing these findings with trade show experts, they indicated that: 1) visitors' job level is an important factor in determining exhibitors' satisfaction; 2) exhibitors generally do not associate layout or booth quality with their trade show experience; 3) there is limited food supply at trade shows in China; and 4) the item SF2 is similar to the items in the Satisfaction with Visitors dimension. Thus, the four items other than JL1—"Overall job level of customers" were removed.

The proposed Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale is a third-order construct with three dimensions (i.e., satisfaction with self-performance, satisfaction with organizers, and satisfaction with visitors) and twelve sub-dimensions. Table 2 highlights the descriptive statistics as well as the CITC and alpha coefficients for the 12 sub-dimensions. All but two of the alpha coefficients were higher than, or equal to .65. These coefficients are justifiable when there are fewer items in the sub-dimensions (Cortina, 1993). Indices were generated for each of the sub-dimensions.

Table 2. Pilot Study Results with Revised Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale Items

Dimension	Sub-dimension	Item	Mean (SD)	CITC	Alpha Coefficient
Self-performance	Sales	S1	3.967 (1.208)	.752	.811
		S2	4.464 (1.010)	.676	
		S3	3.771 (.970)	.664	
		S4	3.893 (.937)	.449	
	Information Gathering	IG1	4.015 (.865)	.627	.648
		IG2	4.390 (.877)	.372	
		IG3	3.699 (.915)	.395	
	Relationship Building	RB1	4.280 (.891)	.608	.804
		RB2	4.054 (.929)	.575	
		RB3	4.554 (.876)	.516	
		RB4	3.807 (.829)	.793	
	Image Building	IB1	4.351 (.947)	.717	.811
		IB2	4.482 (.998)	.695	
		IB3	4.789 (.930)	.636	
		IB4	4.199 (.787)	.418	
	Motivation	M1	4.488 (.989)	.513	.657
		M2	4.717 (.725)	.513	
Organizers	Interaction	A1	4.164 (.864)	.358	.826
		A2	4.074 (.926)	.576	
		A3	4.497 (.757)	.520	
		B1	4.116 (.548)	.549	
		B2	3.881 (.775)	.548	
		B3	4.048 (.816)	.684	
		E1	4.164 (.687)	.339	
		E2	4.247 (.758)	.665	
		E3	4.199 (.728)	.587	
	Environment	AC1	4.182 (.807)	.391	.679
		AC2	4.348 (.888)	.328	

		AC3	4.539 (.887)	.467	
		D1	4.345 (.857)	.518	
		SF1	4.491 (.927)	.466	
	Outcome	V1	3.902 (.881)	.506	.754
		V2	4.166 (.822)	.552	
		V3	4.149 (.758)	.708	
Visitors	Job Level	JL1	4.039 (.829)	.296	.503
		JL2	4.310 (.817)	.348	
		JL3	4.262 (.889)	.314	
	Job Function	JF1	4.313 (.665)	.522	.694
		JF2	4.214 (.819)	.564	
		JF3	4.548 (.863)	.408	
		JF4	4.396 (.898)	.447	
	Purchasing Authority	PA1	4.086 (.774)	.607	.755
		PA2	4.027 (.837)	.692	
		PA3	4.133 (.770)	.469	
	Communication	C1	4.348 (.781)	.413	.582
		C2	4.295 (.699)	.413	

Following the guidelines proposed by DeVellis (2012), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using the reflective model was applied to verify the unidimensionality of the three satisfaction dimensions. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), the Normed Fit Index (NFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the item regression coefficients were reviewed (Table 3). A good model fit requires the ratio of Chi Square and degrees of freedom to be lower than 5; NFI, TLI, and CFI to be higher than .90; and RMSEA to be lower than .10 (Bentler, 1990; Hu & Bentler, 1998; Steiger, 1990; Tucker & Lewis, 1973). The Organizers dimension had nine distinct sample moments and nine distinct parameters to be estimated, resulting in a saturated model. A saturated model would require further examination of path coefficients and squared multiple correlations to validate the model. The GOF statistics for the three dimensions were satisfactory and all path coefficients were significant and in the expected direction.

Table 3. Goodness-of-fit statistics of the three models

Model	χ^2	χ^2/df	NFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Satisfaction with self-performance	11.340	3.780	.982	.955	.986	.091
Satisfaction with organizers (saturated)	.000	NA	1.000	NA	1.000	NA
Satisfaction with visitors	3.262	1.631	.993	.992	.997	.043

Scale validation

Following the guidelines proposed by DeVellis (2012) and Churchill (1979), convergent validity, discriminant validity, predictive validity and composite reliability were used to examine the Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale. The results of the pilot test with exhibitors at the 10th China Household Electrical Appliances Trade Fair led to the deletion of four items, resulting in a modified 46-item (3 dimension) exhibitor satisfaction scale. The satisfaction scale was included in an expanded instrument that was used to address the following topics and test the scale's validity: exhibitor overall satisfaction, willingness to return, and word-of-mouth effect. Exhibitor overall satisfaction was used to examine convergent and discriminant validity, while willingness to return and word-of-mouth effect were used to examine predictive validity. To detect subtle differences on exhibitor satisfaction, a 10-point rather than a 7-point Likert scale was used with all questions.

The modified instrument was distributed to a new sample of 750 exhibitors at 3 trade shows, following the same guideline used in the pilot study (Table 4). The China International Game & Amusement Exhibition, supported by more than 50 international associations, magazines and professional websites from over 20 countries, is one of the leading trade shows in the amusement industry, where manufacturers display their products and visitors buy quality products or look for business partners. The China Household Electrical Appliances Trade Fair is one of the largest trade shows on household appliances in China, with an annual exhibitor attendance of over 1,500 and visitor attendance of over 160,000. Multiple trade show staff were involved with the data collection process and followed the same protocol used in the pilot study. Overall, 594 valid responses were obtained, yielding a 79.2% response rate.

Nearly two thirds (63.1%) of the respondents had a background in sales and 30.5% had a background in management. Most (84.2%) respondents were department managers or held higher level managerial positions. As for previous trade show experience, 18.5% of the respondents were first-time exhibitors at the trade show where they were interviewed, while 11.7% were first-time exhibitors at trade shows in general. Eight-two percent of the respondents were repeat customers of this particular trade show and forty-nine percent had attended six or more trade shows previously. Table 5 lists the correlation matrix of the variables used in the model. All correlation coefficients were significant and in the expected direction.

Table 4. Demographic profile of the trade shows assessed in this study

	2013 China Household Electrical Appliances Trade Fair (n=336)	2013 China International Games & Amusement Fair (n=91)	2014 China International Games & Amusement Exhibition (n=109)	2014 China Household Electrical Appliances Trade Fair (n=394)
Date	Aug. 22-24, 2013	Oct. 25-27, 2013	Mar. 1-3, 2014	Mar. 12-15, 2014
Location	Zhongshan, China	Zhongshan, China	Guangzhou, China	Zhongshan, China
Frequency	Biannually	Annually	Annually	Biannually
Edition	10^{th}	6^{th}	9^{th}	11^{th}
Exhibition Area (m^2)	41,000	44,000	80,000	45,000
Number of Exhibitors	800	260	350	850
Number of Visitors	65,000	20,000	20,000	80,000

Table 5. Correlation coefficients

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Sales												
2. Information Gathering	.605**											
3. Relationship Building	.742**	.666**										
4. Image Building	.593**	.678**	.634**									
5. Motivation	.396**	.600**	.543**	.816**								
6. Interaction	.660**	.691**	.668**	.723**	.645**							
7. Environment	.710**	.601**	.676**	.597**	.520**	.808**						
8. Outcome	.651**	.627**	.665**	.740**	.645**	.864**	.812**					
9. Job Level	.810**	.577**	.720**	.584**	.382**	.718**	.783**	.728**				
10. Job Function	.788**	.569**	.738**	.597**	.408**	.729**	.754**	.749**	.917**			
11. Purchase Authority	.743**	.651**	.716**	.660**	.527**	.754**	.775**	.806**	.795**	.831**		
12. Communication	.653**	.664**	.701**	.645**	.564**	.755**	.717**	.727**	.733**	.750**	.804**	
13. Overall Satisfaction	.406**	.633**	.441**	.668**	.644**	.655**	.581**	.696**	.464**	.441**	.642**	.581**

*Note: *p* < .05, **p < .01. N=594*

Convergent validity

Convergent validity was examined by looking at composite reliability, average variance extracted, squared multiple correlation (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and the significance of item loadings on the hypothesized dimensions (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

Since the reliability of each sub-dimension within the three satisfaction dimensions (i.e., satisfaction with self-performance, satisfaction with organizers, and satisfaction with visitors)

was established through the pilot study, an index was calculated for the 12 sub-dimensions. Then, a 12-item (i.e., indices for the 12 sub-dimensions), 3-dimensional (i.e., 3 satisfaction dimensions) confirmatory factor model was generated.

To establish convergent validity, the following conditions must be met: 1) all item loadings need to be statistically significant; 2) composite reliability needs to be higher than .70; 3) average variance extracted needs to be higher than .50; 4) and squared multiple correlation needs to be higher than .50 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The results indicated that all item loadings were statistically significant ($p < .001$) and the goodness-of-fit statistics for the model were satisfactory (χ^2 (58) = 301.589, p = .000, CFI = .968, TLI = .950, RMSEA = .086). Composite reliabilities for the three dimensions exceeded the cutoff value of .70. Average variance extracted and squared multiple correlation both exceeded the cutoff value of .50. The relevant statistics are presented in Table 6. Overall, the results established the convergent validity of the Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale.

Discriminant validity

To test the discriminant validity of the Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale, a series of one-factor and two-factor CFA models were conducted and change in chi-square between the one-factor and two-factor measurement models was assessed (Bagozzi, Yi, & Phillips, 1991). According to Hosany and Gilbert (2010), in order to establish discriminant validity, the two-factor model should be significantly better than the one-factor model and, as a result, the difference in the chi-square statistic of two-factor model relative to the one-factor model should also be significant. Results indicated that the two-factor model was better ($p < .001$) than the one-factor model for all pairs of sub-dimensions. For example, combining the Satisfaction with Visitors dimension and the Satisfaction with Organizers dimension into a single factor produced a significantly worse fit (χ^2 (32) = 441.012, $p < .001$, CFI= .914, TLI= .852, RMSEA = .150) than a two-factor model (χ^2 (28) = 178.220, $p < .001$, CFI= .968, TLI= .938, RMSEA = .097). The chi-square difference test also indicated that the two-factor model was superior to the one-factor model. Thus, these results established the discriminant validity of the Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale.

Predictive validity

Predictive validity is defined as the ability of the scale to estimate an outcome variable that is external to the measurement instrument itself (DeVellis, 2012; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Researchers have shown that customer satisfaction can lead to positive word-of-mouth (Zhang et al., 2010) and intention to return (Bowen & Chen, 2001; Jung, 2005). Thus, to establish the predictive validity of the scale, the endogenous latent variable—positive behavioral intention—and two observed variables—word-of-mouth and willingness to return—were added to the structural equation model with the three dimensions of exhibitor satisfaction and overall satisfaction. For willingness to return, exhibitors were asked whether or not they would return to the same trade show next year. For word-of-mouth effect, exhibitors were asked whether or not they would recommend the trade show to their colleagues and other companies. Word-of-mouth (mean = 7.757; SD = 1.931) and willingness to return (mean = 7.844; SD = 1.775) were both measured using a 10-point Likert scale (1 = least likely; 10 = most likely). A path from overall satisfaction to behavioral intention was drawn to test the predictive power of the proposed model.

Table 6. Confirmatory factor analysis results

Dimension Sub-dimension	Standardized Factor Loading	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted	Squared Multiple Correlation
Self-Performance		.922	.702	
Sales	.824			.679
Information Gathering	.828			.685
Relationship Building	.884			.782
Image Building	.831			.690
Motivation	.821			.673
Organizer		.911	.774	
Interaction	.835			.698
Environment	.869			.756
Outcome	.933			.870
Visitor		.938	.790	
Job Level	.843			.710
Job Function	.872			.761
Purchase Authority	.939			.881
Communication	.899			.809

Standardized path coefficients and squared multiple correlations were examined to establish the predictive validity of the scale. The goodness-of-fit of the model was satisfactory (χ^2 (83) = 452.126, p < .001, CFI= .960, TLI= .942, RMSEA = .088). All path coefficients were statistically significant (p <.01).In particular, the standardized path coefficient from overall satisfaction to behavioral intention was .844 and the squared multiple correlation for the positive behavioral intention was .741, which means that 74.1% of the variance in positive behavioral intention could be explained by the three satisfaction dimensions. Thus, the predictive validity of the Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale was established.

Discussion and implications

The purpose of this study was to construct a valid and reliable Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale (ESS) that accounts for the three stakeholders in the trade show industry. Following a review of the literature, a conceptual framework was proposed to account for the three key stakeholders in the trade show industry. Based on the framework and the scale development procedure recommended by DeVellis (2012) and Churchill (1979), the ESS was successfully constructed and validated. The final scale consisted of 46-items that represented 12 sub-dimensions and 3 dimensions of satisfaction. Reliability, unidimensionality, content validity, construct validity, discriminant validity, and predictive validity of the scale were tested and

established using 930 responses from 4 trade shows in China. The goodness-of-fit indices indicated a satisfactory fit for the proposed scale.

A major contribution of this study is that it introduces stakeholder theory as a guiding framework for measuring satisfaction in the trade show industry. Previous measures focused on one specific stakeholder and ignored the interactions taking place with other stakeholders (Godar & O'Connor, 2001; Jin et al., 2012). This approach was problematic because it failed to capture the significant impacts of all three key stakeholders. No matter how many sales leads exhibitors get during a trade show, if they do not feel appreciated by the organizers or their concerns are not addressed in a timely manner, they might not be satisfied with their overall experience and might choose to skip the trade show the next year. Our model indicated that all three dimensions (i.e., satisfaction with self-performance, and the other two stakeholders) contributed to exhibitors' overall satisfaction, and need to be accounted for. If researchers only focus on one or two dimensions, as has been done previously, a great deal of explanatory power is lost, and the recommendations for improving exhibitors' trade show experience are less comprehensive. Thus, this study contributes to the satisfaction literature by building upon stakeholder theory and introducing a valid and reliable satisfaction measurement scale that is readily available for use in trade show settings.

Further, we challenged the traditional approach to measuring satisfaction, which focuses solely on one stakeholder, and demonstrated that multiple stakeholders should be taken into consideration. The results of this study showed that all three dimensions of exhibitor satisfaction (i.e., self, visitor, and organizer) contributed significantly to overall satisfaction. Predictive validity statistics showed that all of the standardized path coefficients from the three dimensions to overall satisfaction were significant and that a sizeable percentage of variance in overall satisfaction (67.6%) and positive behavioral intention (i.e., willingness to return and word-of-mouth, 74.1%) was explained by the three-dimension model. These results indicated that overall satisfaction and positive behavioral intention are better explained when all three stakeholders are taken into account.

In line with previous research on trade show service quality (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Gottlieb et al., 2011), three sub-dimensions of satisfaction with organizers (i.e., interaction, environment, and outcome) contributed significantly to overall satisfaction with standardized loadings ranging from .836 to .934. However, it is not sufficient to only look at service quality when evaluating exhibitor overall satisfaction. Exhibitor satisfaction with self-performance contributed significantly to their overall satisfaction as well. The five sub-dimensions of self-performance (i.e., sales, information gathering, image building, relationship building, and motivation) turned out to be quite significant, with standardized loadings ranging from .821 to .884, further validating Hansen's (2004) five-dimension framework on trade show performance. The four sub-dimensions of satisfaction with visitors also were statistically significant, with standardized loadings ranging from .843 to .940. Consistent with previous research, visitors' job level, job function, purchase power, and communication all contributed significantly to exhibitor overall satisfaction (Bello, 1992; Rosson & Seringhaus, 1995). Visitors' job level was a significant item within exhibitor satisfaction with visitors, which was consistent with previous literature (Bello, 1992). Thus, maintaining it in the scale proved to be a good decision.

Managerial implications

With increased competition trade show organizers must further differentiate themselves by offering user-oriented services (Berne & García-Uceda, 2008). However, information about what makes an effective trade show and what contributes to exhibitors' satisfaction has been limited. With the scale presented in this study, the situation has changed. Trade show organizers can use the ESS to evaluate their trade shows. This is of immense value as a primary objective of trade show organizers is to create effective shows that result in positive outcomes for exhibitors.

Trade show organizers can use the ESS to detect the relative importance of each dimension, sub-dimension, and items within each sub-dimension. Once organizers know which dimensions/items carry the most weight in their particular trade show, they can allocate their limited resources to improve upon or address problems associated with the dimensions/items. In addition, trade show organizers could customize the ESS to fit their particular trade show. Since trade show exhibitors are mostly executives with limited time to spare, organizers could use a modified ESS consisting of the 12 sub-dimensions (e.g., satisfaction with relationship building) rather than the full model with 46 items. Analysis of data at different levels would allow the flexibility of general versus detailed evaluation. Trade show exhibitors could also utilize the ESS to benchmark their performance across different trade shows and evaluate which show to attend next year.

Limitations and future research

Visitors, exhibitors, and organizers are the three key stakeholders in the trade show industry. However, there are other stakeholders that might influence the satisfaction level of exhibitors and their positive behavioral intention. For example, the host city and members of the local community could impact exhibitor trade show participation experience (Oppermann & Chon, 1997). Zhang, Leung, and Qu (2007) pointed out that attractiveness (e.g., friendliness of local people, sightseeing opportunity) and accessibility (e.g., distance of the trip, availability of direct flight) of the convention destination are important in attracting exhibitors. Thus, future studies should integrate other stakeholders into the conceptual framework and develop a modified exhibitor satisfaction scale that accounts for four or more stakeholders in the trade show industry. It would also be interesting to investigate the dynamic impact of stakeholders on one another.

Second, this study only focused on exhibitors' satisfaction. It is expected that the conceptual framework (Figure 1) will be successful with visitors as well. Based on the framework, visitor's satisfaction consists of three dimensions: visitor's satisfaction with self-performance, exhibitors, and organizers. To further validate the framework, future studies should focus on visitor's satisfaction. Based on the results of this study, it is expected that the three dimensions would contribute significantly to visitor's overall satisfaction and positive behavioral intention.

Third, to further establish the predictive validity of the ESS, actual behavior, instead of positive behavioral intention, should be measured. Previous findings have shown that the strength of correlation between positive behavioral intention to actual behavior ranges between .41 and .53 (O'Keefe, 2002). Temporal stability of intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977) and the degree to which the behavior was planned (Sheeran, Orbell, & Trafimow, 1999) are known to influence the conversion rate from intention to behavior. Most trade

shows are held annually and these factors could well come into play during that one-year gap. Exhibitors could change their minds even if they indicated that they would be coming back next year. Furthermore, demographic information (e.g., respondent's gender, age group, location of their companies) and previous experience might also influence exhibitors' satisfaction. Thus, adopting a longitudinal design by collecting data on both positive behavioral intention and actual behavior, as well as non-intrusive demographic information, could strengthen the predictive validity of the measurement scale and provide additional insight into exhibitor satisfaction and decision-making.

Fourth, trade show practices tend to vary across different market environments (Dekimpe et al., 1997). In this study data were collected from trade shows for the household electronics industry and the game and amusement equipment industry, all of which were held in China. Future research should cross validate the conceptual framework and the ESS using trade shows from other industries (e.g., high-tech vs. agriculture industry) and other geographic locations (e.g., developed vs. developing countries).

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Impact of direct flights on tourist volume: Case of Turkish Airlines

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Abstract

Accessibility of a destination is an important factor affecting the volume of arrivals to a region. This paper discusses the role of direct flights in development of tourism in Turkey by analyzing Turkish Airlines (THY / TK). THY has transformed into a leading airline by number of international destinations served within the past decade. Parallel to THY, Turkey as a tourist destination also experienced a metronomic rise in international arrivals. Secondary data is used to assess the number of international arrivals to Turkey before and after her air connectivity with certain countries is established. Findings confirm that direct flights to/from generating regions have significant impact on number of arrivals to destinations. Considering availability of direct flights to/from a destination as an important determinant of momentum in tourism development, the cost-benefits analysis of new flight routes would be based on a more holistic approach rather than mere airline revenue and costs.

Keywords: THY, destination development, accessibility, flight routes, airlines

Introduction

The development of tourist destinations is a central theme in tourism literature and researchers approach the topic from various perspectives and disciplines. Temporal and spatial evolution of destinations, impacts of development (Sörensson & von Friedrichs, 2013), sustainability (Sinclair-Maragh, Gursoy & Vieregge, 2015), government policies, planning imperatives (Valente, Dredge & Lohmann, 2015), collaboration (Fyall, Garrod & Wang, 2012), marketing (Lugosi & Walls, 2013), competitive strategies (Wong & Teoh, 2015) and stakeholders (Zehrer & Hallmann, 2015) are amongst numerous topics studied (Henderson, 2006). Well-established transport networks can stimulate tourism activity between origin and destination (Lohmann & Duval, 2014). Hence destination development can also be seen as a factor of its accessibility (Lohmann, Albers, Koch, & Pavlovich, 2009). Transport systems playing a major role in destination development is also available in Lohmann and Pearce (2012).

Improvements in aviation as a major mode of transport and airline deregulation made tourism movements faster, safer and more convenient. On the supply side, the route network and geographical position of a destination within these networks can influence destinations' accessibility (Bieger & Wittmer, 2006). Airfare also constitutes an important part of financial

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cost of a vacation. Availability of cheaper flights (e.g. Low Cost Carriers) is also recognized as one of the factors for development of destinations (Iniguez, Plumed & Martinez, 2014). Particularly availability of direct nonstop flights is a major determinant in destination choices of tourists (Banno & Redondi, 2014). Flight frequency and service quality are also considered important. When a traveler has limited time (e.g. business traveler), flight times and duration may become more influential than the monetary cost of travel (Ishii et al., 2009).

Because the journey is a fundamental part of the vacation, development of tourism industry is closely linked to the progress in transport systems (Kozak & Rimmington, 1998; Borodako & Rudnicki, 2014). A well-organized connectivity by air transport is an important requirement for countries to become leading international destinations (Henderson, 2009). Lohmann et al. (2009) also emphasize development of transport networks that have allowed small, low populated regions to become major international tourism destinations. Despite their importance airlines as international organizations are not usually considered among the local stakeholders and overlooked in tourism and destination management literature (Barros, 2012). This is typically true as most large international commercial airlines would not be committed to local development issues unless a trade off is offered. However considering their role in accessibility, particularly flag carriers controlled partially or fully by national governments should be regarded as a fundamental element in destination management.

Flight networks and cost, improvements in air transport infra-structure, particularly the role of Low Cost Carriers (LCC) in attracting tourists received increasing attention in the literature (Iniguez, Plumed & Martinez, 2014). However opening up a new international route which is not served by any other airline is a large long-term investment. A new exclusive long-haul route also needs time to settle before it becomes profitable and involves various risks that a LCC as a *cost leader* would usually avoid. Flag carriers on the other hand are motivated by long-term requirements of countries (e.g. promoting national identity, improving trade and accessibility) rather than mere airline revenues. Superiority of flag carrier services, location of airports used (e.g. central rather than peripheral), branding and membership to major alliances also affect characteristics of tourists (e.g. spending power) arriving to a destination (Bieger & Wittmer, 2006). Moreover airfare makes up a significant part of travel expenditure and having a national airline serving incoming and outgoing tourists reduces the amount of leakage.

National legacy carriers have also been considered as major national symbols, sources of national pride and are important in the representation of the country at international level. Because of deregulation, competition and bureaucracy involved, these historically government controlled organizations usually make losses (Appiah-Adu, Fyall & Singh, 2000) and most of them have already been privatized (Jimenez, Claro, Sousa & 2012). Emirates, Singapore Airlines, Etihad and Turkish Airlines are few of the major examples that successfully survived. However, there is a lack of research on the role of FSC (Full Service Carriers) that are partially or fully operated by governments. Thus the study is also an initial attempt to demonstrate the contribution of FSCs to destination development by exploring THY as a case.

Literature review

The distance between tourist generating regions and receptive destinations and the cost of travel (expressed as monetary value and time required for the journey), have significant impact on the mode of the transport used (Prideaux, 2000). Developments in the air transportation, especially

progress in jet engine and wide body passenger jets contributed to development of tourism. Besides technical developments, deregulation and liberalization within the air transport industry in US and Europe in 80s (Bieger & Wittmer, 2006) open skies and freedom of cabotage agreements during 90s between North America, Europe and Asia also advanced development of international air traffic (Chang et al., 2011; Williams & Balaz, 2009). Since then air travel became major means of transportation for both leisure and business travelers (Kilinc et al., 2012). Increased volume is not the only outcome, developments in airline industry is also recognized as a key element particularly for geographic spread of tourism demand into new destinations.

Tourism demand is also considered price elastic (Cetin, 2014). The liberalization and competition in air transport made flight fares more affordable over the past few decades, and thus greatly stimulated growth of international tourism activities (Pearce, 1987). Extensions in flight range and connections are other factors that facilitated the progress of international tourism (Forsyhth, 2006) and accessibility of remote destinations (Khadaroo & Seetanah, 2007). Air transport has opened up new tourist markets and become the main travel mode for international travel (Barros, 2012) and for travelers staying more than four nights in a destination (Bieger & Wittmer, 2006). Thus more countries started off competing for the same demand, seeking to have a larger slice of the global aviation market.

Tourist volume, particularly international arrivals in many destinations has become increasingly dependent on air transportation. Hence non-aeronautical benefits of direct flights are recognized as larger than revenue generated just for airlines (Forsyhth, 2006) principally in the case of advantages associated with increased tourist volume (e.g. income, employment, investement). The industry stakeholders realizing direct flights as a key to destination development and competition also started to heavily lobby with governments on additional flight routes offered by national carriers. Yet, there is limited empirical evidence concerning how large these benefits might be and the influence of flag carriers' direct flights remained an unexplored research topic.

The introduction of a new flight route increasing the visitation from the origin country is common knowledge, but its actual affects has not been explored so far and the causal relationship still remains a *black box* (Williams & Balaz, 2009). The level of impact might be considered as an important criterion of success especially in introducing new destinations and increasing frequency of flights particularly for flag carriers owned or subsidized by their governments. The tourism industry in general would be in a better position to defend the role of accessibility, airline incentives, and new airports if the rate of impact can be justified (Laurino & Beria, 2014).

Although there is extensive research about transportation networks and economic development (e.g. Banno & Redondi, 2014), the impact of air connectivity on tourism destinations is less publicized. Despite their importance, airlines as large international organizations are not usually considered as one of the local stakeholders and overlooked in tourism and destination management literature (Barros, 2012) as well. On the other hand air transportation has also been affected by increased tourism volume, creating a vicious cycle. Therefore, collaborating on local destination development benefits airlines in the long term as well.

Literature is particularly scant on specific role of non-stop direct flights on arrivals during the initial stage of their introduction. In order to identify the causality relationship between direct flights and arrivals this paper compares statistics on international arrivals to Turkey with Turkish Airlines' new routes from tourist generating countries based on secondary data acquired from

TurkStat and Turkish Airlines' corporate reports. Through utilizing regression analysis and exploring rank differences it also measures the impact of individual direct routes and its significance on volume of incoming tourists.

The Turkish case

Turkey has been one of the destinations enjoying a rapid tourism growth particularly after 1980s and ranks currently as the 6th in terms of international arrivals (Ozturk & Niekerk, 2014). Despite political tensions in the region affected the volume of incoming tourism within the past two years, Turkey's strength concerning its tourism resources and promotional campaigns have frequently mentioned as reasons of success (Tosun, Okumus, & Fyall, 2008). Yet, Turkish Airlines' role in transforming Turkey into a major international destination has often been neglected. Particularly direct connectivity between the initiating and receiving countries is considered key in attracting travelers from generating countries (Castillo-Manzano, Lopez-Valpuesta, & Pedregal, 2012). By constantly adding new routes to its flight network and increasing the frequencies of existing flights THY, not only made the country more accessible globally, but it also diversified the tourist market in Turkey. According to TurkStat (2015) 73% of the international tourists (37 million) to Turkey arrived by air (27 million) in 2014.

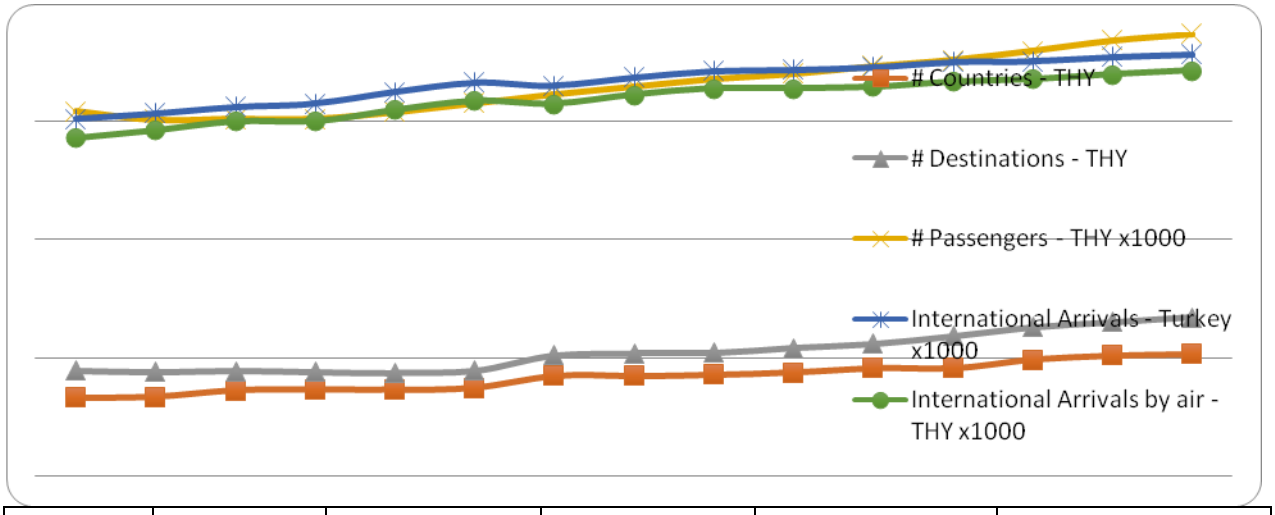
Investigating Turkish Airlines is important for several reasons. Firstly THY is the flag carrier of Turkey which is becoming a major international destination. Secondly THY has been challenging the global airline industry by widening its network constantly for the past decade and some of these flight routes do not yet have direct competition. Turkish Airlines is also considered to be a quality service airline, awarded with various international prizes (e.g. Europe's best by Skytrax between 2011-2015). Finally, THY can act as an excellent benchmark depicting transformation of a loss-making national FSC into a growing successful airline.

Compared to THYs 80 year history, particularly the last 15 years represents a large turnaround. Established in 1933 as a state-owned enterprise, the airline had a substandard performance. In fact until late 80s Turkish Airlines was a government monopoly, subsidized by central funds to cover its large losses, customer service was also suffering and delays were common (Kozlu, 2008). THY's shares were offered to public several times in 2003, 2004 and 2006 while the airline became a partially (49%) government owned enterprise. Since the initial public offering, THY has been changing its strategies (e.g. expanding international network, renewing fleet, vertical and horizontal integration, improving utilization), image (e.g. marketing, branding, sponsorship) and priorities (e.g. HR, service, on-time departures, safety). Within 10 years the service attitude of a typical bureaucratic government investment was transformed from the "**T**hey **H**ate **Y**ou" airlines into a top airline with the vision of talented CEOs (Dursun et al., 2014; Kozlu, 2008). Financial figures also improved; despite expansion and renewal of fleet (from 65 in 2003 to 261 aircraft in 2014) THY recorded net income since 2002 (THY, 2016).

Aircraft utilization increased from 10 hours (2003) to almost 13 hours (2014). In 2003 THY was carrying 1013 passengers per employee, labor efficiency measures improved this metric to 2084 passengers in 2013. The number of passengers grew (16%) almost twice as much as IATA average (8%) between 2003 and 2016 (10 million to 61 million). Load factors were also respectable at 79% (from 66% in 2003) creating 845 million USD profits in 2014 placing THY as 8th among her peers (THY, 2016). Although THY (TK) does not have the same structure as Low Cost Carriers, she can be considered as a cost leader among intercontinental FSCs. Dursun et al.

(2014) compared six major FSCs (TK, AF, BA, LH, CX, EK) and found THY rates as the lowest among randomly selected origin-destination pairs.

Figure 1. THY flights and international arrivals to Turkey between 2000-2014



Year	# Countries	# Destinations	# Passengers (x 1000)	International Arrivals (x 1000)	International Arrivals by air (x 1000)
2000	46	78	12.031	10.428.153	7.274.869
2014	108	219	54.675	36.837.900	26.794.191

Source : THY (2016), TurkStat (2015) (compiled by the authors).

THY inherits some macro environmental competitive advantages as well. Turkey as a transcontinental country is geographically located between three continents (Asia, Europe and Africa). More than 50 countries are accessible from Turkey with narrow body aircrafts (Dursun et al. 2014). Using this geographical advantage THY was able to convert Ataturk International Airport (IST) in Istanbul into a mega-hub that collect air traffic from intercontinental flights and redistributes its traffic from IST as the base transfer point (Nenem & Ozkan-Gunay, 2012). Advantages for destinations being served by hubs are well supported in the literature (e.g. Ismail & Baum, 2006). IST hosted 61 million passengers in 2015, an increase from 11 million in 2002. The city became the fastest growing destination in Europe (10% growth between 2009-15) and attracted around 12 million international visitors in 2014 from diverse source markets (50% from 33 different countries) (Hedrick-Wong & Choong, 2015).

Hence, THY clearly aims to increase its international presence through direct flights and become a global "super connector" (Dursun et al., 2014). Currently Turkey is tied to 111 countries and 277 destinations (counting) through direct flights of THY (THY, 2016). The airline is ranked first in the World by number of countries flown to and fourth concerning the number of destinations served. Including Star Alliance network THY passengers are able to reach 1330 destinations in 192 countries (Star Alliance, 2015) and more than 1000 CIP lounges worldwide (THY, 2015). As shown on figure 1, despite various crises (e.g. terrorist attacks, economic crises, epidemics and natural disasters) affecting the aviation industry in the last decade, THY increased number of its

passengers from 12 million in 2000 to 61 million in 2015 (TYH, 2016). Parallel to this growth number of international arrivals to Turkey have also increased from 10 million (2000) to 40 million (2015) (WTO, 2016). Table 1 displays the annual figures concerning THY flight network development and international arrivals to Turkey. There clearly seems to be a correlation yet it is imperative to show whether the changes are statistically significant and if so to what degree.

Table 1. THY flights and International Arrivals between 2000-2014

Years	# Countries	# Destinations	# Passengers (x 1000)	# International Arrivals (x 1000)	# International Arrivals by air (x 1000)
2000	46	78	12.031	10.428.153	7.274.869
2001	47	76	10.227	11.619.909	8.459.489
2002	53	77	10.382	13.248.176	9.983.741
2003	54	76	10.420	13.956.405	10.012.886
2004	54	75	11.991	17.548.384	12.574.463
2005	56	78	14.134	21.124.886	14.981.462
2006	71	105	16.947	19.819.833	14.084.734
2007	71	109	19.636	23.340.911	16.807.681
2008	72	111	22.597	26.336.677	18.838.735
2009	75	120	25.102	27.077.114	18.959.340
2010	82	132	29.119	28.632.204	19.555.705
2011	82	152	32.649	31.456.076	21.788.642
2012	96	182	39.045	31.782.832	22.920.640
2013	105	202	48.268	34.910.098	24.871.759
2014	108	219	54.675	36.837.900	26.794.191

Source : THY (2016), TurkStat (2015), DHMI (2016) (compiled by the authors).

Methodology

Relation between flight network and tourism volume is common knowledge. What is known about the particular impact of international direct flights and arrivals however is limited. This paper explores the influence of direct air connection on international arrivals to a destination through analyzing Turkey as a case study. Utilizing commercial direct flights as a means of measuring connectivity and arrivals has also been discussed as a valid metric in the literature (e.g. Zook & Brunn, 2005). We assume that introduction of a direct route typically reduces the travel time and transportation cost which in turn would increase international arrivals.

Turkish Airlines is a rapidly expanding international carrier and several of the routes introduced are not served by any other airline. Hence THY offers a unique data to measure the impact of

exclusive direct flights on incoming tourists to a destination. Thus the objective of this study is to identify the importance of national carriers in development of destinations by assessing international arrivals. In order to reach this aim contribution of direct flights to/from Turkey as a destination is explored by looking at recently connected destinations' of THY (2003-2011) and international arrival statistics (2000-2014). Moreover, the study compares statistics between origin-destination pairs concerning incoming tourists during six (three former and three post) years which direct flight routes were inaugurated by THY. Data included three years before and three years after the introduction of the exclusive route. The year the flight was established (t_0) was not included in the measurement to prevent any bias that might result from a late introduction or promotional inadequacy during the first year.

The paper adopted the following steps to assemble data and to analyze relationship of direct flights and international arrivals.

Step 1: Choosing an airline in order to measure the impact of direct flights on international tourist arrivals to a particular destination. Turkish Airlines has been selected because it has been successfully expanding in global airline industry, she is a flag carrier which is still controlled by government and information considering routes, dates and load factors were convenient to collect. Likewise, Turkey has also been experiencing a rapid growth in international arrivals and served extensively by THY.

Step 2: Obtaining worldwide THY flight data from Turkish Airlines annual reports and public announcements about new international routes (67 new destinations) opened between 2003-2011. Removing routes that are also served by other airlines, keeping origin-destination pairs offered first by THY which remained exclusive for three years. Direct flights to 29 countries were identified that fit in the criteria.

Step 3: Based on the list of exclusive routes, collecting incoming tourist data from TurkStat regarding the number of tourist arrivals from those generating countries between 2000 and 2014. Exploring the relationship between total number of international destinations served by THY and international arrivals (Table 2). Identify the level of impact of each additional direct route.

Step 4: Creating the dataset based on historical data on incoming tourists for destination-origin pairs for six years based on: year (t_0) direct flight was introduced. Produce the moving averages of arrivals generated in the three year intervals before (t_{0-1}, t_{0-2}, t_{0-3}) and after (t_{0+1}, t_{0+2}, t_{0+3}) the introduction of direct flight for each destination and nationality (Table 3).

Step 5: Run the analysis and test the hypothesis that introduction of a direct flight increases the number of international arrivals comparing the ranks of 3 year moving averages of pre- and post-flight data. Because the data was not normally distributed Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used instead of the parametric version of paired sample mean difference tests.

The data set used for this study was retrieved from two separate sources; Turkish Airlines' corporate reports and public announcements, and TurkStat's bulletins concerning annual number of arrivals by nationality. Destinations included in the sample were expected to satisfy some criteria, first they needed to have a direct route introduced between 2003 and 2011 with THY. Additionally no previous direct flights would be available before introduction year and no additional flights would be introduced to/from these destinations within three years after the introduction. We also allocated international tourist arrivals from all new THY routes and removed routes that are operating with competition either by another airline or another

destination in the same country, hence only exclusive international routes served just by THY and without direct rivalry was considered. That is to say before THY's direct flight was introduced the residents of the respective generating countries were used to make a stop-over in another country other than origin to fly to Turkey. These criteria are expected to enhance the homogeneity of the data and improve validity.

Existing routes even from different airports in a country was a reason of removal from the data set. Thus if there is an existing connection to for example Stockholm in Sweden, a new connection even to another airport (e.g. Gothenburg) was not considered. Hence just the first connections between the origin countries and Turkey were analyzed because of the difficulties associated with removing a possible impact of an earlier/later route to/from the same country. Yet there was an exception to this in the case of South Africa, THY introduced direct flights to both Johannesburg and Cape Town in 2011 and these two destinations stayed exclusive until 2015 when the third destination (Durban) to South Africa was introduced. Because these two destinations were inaugurated at the same year, and stayed exclusive until 2015 it was decided that South Africa should also be included in the data set.

Destinations served through block space and code share agreements with other airlines and any flight that include a stop-over was not included in the data set either. For example, THY was flying to Singapore since 1986 however via stop-over in Bangkok, in 2006 non-stop direct flights to Singapore were introduced. Because the preceding flight included a stopover, the non-stop Singapore flight introduced in 2006 was considered as the first non-stop direct flight. At the end of this screening process 67 new international destinations offered by THY between 2003 and 2011 was reduced to 29 exclusive non-stop destinations.

First the percentages of change on international tourist arrivals before and after the introduction of direct flight was calculated. Then defining international arrivals as the dependent variable, the impact of expansion of international destinations offered by THY (independent variable) was identified using regression analysis. Finally teaming up each exclusive new routes' arrival statistics with three years before and after the introduction, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was utilized regarding introduction of direct flight as the treatment in order to compare pre- and post-direct flight arrivals and check whether the differences were significant and positive.

Findings

The association between new international countries flown to and volume of international arrivals are evident on figure 1. In order to identify the significance of the relationship and direct flights' impact on international arrivals a regression analysis was conducted. The results of the analysis are depicted below on table 2. Based on the results the number of countries flown to (independent variable) is positively correlated ($r=0{,}957$, $p\leq 0{,}01$) with international arrivals (dependent variable). The findings also confirmed each new country flown to created around 410.000 (B) annual additional arrivals to Turkey and 91% of the variance in international arrivals can be accounted for increase in flight routes introduced to new countries.

Table 2. Results of regression explaining the impact of number of countries flown to by THY on international arrivals to Turkey.

Independent Variable	**B**	**SE**	**β**	**t**	**Sig.**
Constant	-6047776	2544003		-2,4	0.033*
# of countries flown to	409362	34335	0.96	11,9	0.00**

Note: B: Coefficient; SE: Standard Error; β: Standardized Coefficient; t: t-Value; Sig.: Significance, Dependent Variable: International Arrivals; R = 0.957; $R^2 = 0.916$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.91$; Standard Error = 2599925. *Significant at $p<0.05$ level. **Significant at $p<0.01$ level.

Table 3. Nonstop exclusive destinations of THY and average arrivals to Turkey before and after the introduction between 2000 and 2014.

Country	*Destination*	*Arrivals ($\overline{x}$) (t-1, t-2, t-3)*	*Flight Introduction Year (t)*	*Arrivals ($\overline{x}$) (t+1, t+2,t+3)*	*Arrivals(Δ) %*
Morocco	Casablanca	11.259	2005	35.318	214
Portugal	Lisbon	10.520	2005	19.892	89
Norway	Oslo	90.728	2005	184.533	103
Slovenia	Ljubljana	18.635	2006	30.165	62
UAE	Abu Dhabi	7.290	2006	17.493	140
Tajikistan	Dushanbe	4.195	2006	29.873	612
Yemen	Sana'a	1.932	2006	4.546	135
Serbia	Belgrade	54.842	2006	83.310	52
Finland	Helsinki	70.333	2006	98.062	39
Oman	Muscat	686	2006	3.530	415
Ireland	Dublin	67.368	2006	102.670	52
Latvia	Riga	21.026	2006	49.253	134
Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	5.019	2006	15.893	217
Sudan	Khartoum	2.182	2006	8.142	273
Belarus	Minsk	58.547	2006	130.136	122
Nigeria	Lagos	1.855	2006	7.199	288
Singapore	Singapore	8.783	2006	17.578	100
Kenya	Nairobi	2.308	2006	4.078	77
South Africa	Johannesburg	8.385	2007	18.891	125
Syria	Aleppo	21.524	2008	53.865	150
Senegal	Dakar	2.346	2009	5.273	125
Brazil	São Paulo	20.368	2009	59.207	191
Canada	Toronto	53.203	2009	80.847	52
Indonesia	Jakarta	10.439	2009	32.956	216
Ghana	Accra	15.893	2010	38.439	142
Tanzania	Dar es Salaam	15.893	2010	38.439	142
Uganda	Entebbe	15.893	2010	38.439	142
Montenegro	Podgorica	16.988	2010	75.451	344
Afghanistan	Kabul	13.857	2011	18.642	35

Source : THY (2015), TurkStat (2015) (compiled by the authors).

Descriptive percentages confirm an increase after the introduction of the direct flight. All countries qualified to have an exclusive nonstop direct flight introduced between 2003 and 2011 reported an increase based on three-year average arrivals after the introduction of the direct flight. The percentage increase differed between 35% (Afghanistan) and 612% (Tajikistan) ($\overline{x}$= 135%). Looking at the overall data particularly arrivals from countries in Africa and Asia recorded a higher increase than European destinations. Increase in Western arrivals to Turkey were lower

but still respectable. This might be attributed to the fact that flight network and alternative stop-over flights are limited to/from Africa and Asia while European destinations are already supported with a wide flight network by various airlines offering convenient stop-overs when the direct flight was not available.

Table 4. Results of Wilcoxon Signed Rank-Test demonstrating significance of moving average differences between pre- and post- flight introduction arrivals

Post – Pre Flight	Groups	*N*	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	*Z*	*p*
	Negative Ranks	0	0	0		
	Positive Ranks	29	15	435		
	Ties	0				
	Total	29			4,704	0.00**

**Significant at p<0.01 level.

After identifying the percentage increases we explored whether the differences between moving averages of pre- and post- flight arrival values were significant (Table 4). Because data was not distributed normally a non-parametric test based on ranks rather than means was needed. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was utilized among exclusive destination pairs and the analysis confirmed that the median of average post three (t_{0+1}+ t_{0+2} + t_{0+3}) / 3) year direct air connection arrivals are significantly higher than average three (t_{0-1}+ t_{0-2} + t_{0-3}) / 3) year pre-flight arrivals ($Z = -4{,}704$, $p \leq 0{,}00$). Therefore, number of international tourists from the originating destination has significantly increased in destinations that were connected by an exclusive direct route to Turkey between 2003 and 2011.

Conclusion and discussions

The study offers empirical data concerning impact of direct flights on tourism volume by exploring international arrivals to Turkey between 2000 – 2014 and THY's non-stop flights which are launched between 2003 – 2011. The analysis revealed that there is a significant positive relation between direct flights and international arrivals. Before direct flights were established tourists from these generating regions were either using other modes of transportation or connection flights with multiple stops. When a direct flight became available the average impact on demand was calculated as 410 thousand additional annual arrivals for each international exclusive direct flight introduced. Thus the expansion strategy of Turkish Airlines had a positive impact on the number of arrivals to Turkey. The study also compared international arrivals from respective countries during three-years pre- and post- direct flights' introduction year. It was also confirmed that average post- direct flight arrivals are significantly higher than average pre- direct flight arrivals.

The findings provide solid empirical evidence on impact of direct flight routes between origin and destination on tourist flows. Hence policies and legislation targeted to attracting direct flights could be better supported. Tourism industry and DMOs trying to increase tourist numbers to a particular destination should facilitate and lobby for introduction of new flight routes. Therefore, from the policy perspective despite developments of airline networks and alternative connections, direct flights are still vital. A direct flight not only contributes to airline revenue but increases international arrivals from the origin to the destination. Hence, increasing direct flights from generating regions with high potential is a viable strategy for tourist destinations (Graham, 2013).

Other investments including new airports, improvements in capacities, increasing frequencies and facilitating new airlines are among the policies that can be considered by destination planners.

There is also a need to integrate destination planning and marketing with developments in airline networks. In some cases airlines might also be involved in promotional initiatives. Because flag careers are usually controlled or influenced by policy makers at a national level, target markets and marketing campaigns might be better aligned with flight network development. THY, for example actively supports Turkey's official tourism promotion (e.g. Turkey Home Campaign) within its own marketing strategies and activities (e.g. Inflight entertainment, Euroleauge games). As long as it is managed efficiently having a national carrier is essential for countries' regional development and achieving a greater global interaction.

One major problem that is faced by Turkey is that the capacity of Ataturk (IST) airport (27,5 million annual passengers), during peak season the airport is operating with full capacity, and delays are common. THY operations are very centralized on Ataturk airport particularly for international flights, if this node fails the damage to the whole TK network would be extreme. However, another airport in Istanbul is under construction; with 150 million annual passenger capacity the new airport is planned to be the largest in the World in 2018 (IBB, 2015). GDP growth of Turkey also confirms possible expansion of routes to/from Istanbul since there is also a supporting relationship between economic activity and air travel (Laurino & Beria, 2014). Commerce volume in a destination parallels the scale of the airport. Turkey is expected to grow by 4% on the average until 2017, the fastest among OECD members (OECD, 2015). Developments in aircraft technology greater speeds, more capacity, fuel efficiency (O'Connor, 2003) and extended distances will strengthen Turkey's position in the air traffic.

Another contribution of the study is utilization of a paired sample difference test in tourism research. This hypothesis test is usually used in medical science to explore before- and after-effects of treatments. Yet, its implications and coverage in tourism research is limited. This is one of the rare studies in tourism that use Wilcoxon signed-rank test to compare two pairs of non-parametric data (pre- and post- flight arrivals) based on a treatment (introduction of direct flight) as a pair wise comparison. Hence the analysis and the data presented in the study might also be used as an example in methodology courses.

Destinations are obviously served through different regions by various airlines. Hence there are different parameters that might influence the impact on tourist numbers besides existence of a direct flight. The unobserved factors (e.g. exchange rates, political stability, general growth in tourism, attractiveness of the destinations, relations between respective countries) may also account for some of the impact other than existence of a new route. However, since the study used the introduction year and moving average of pre- and post three year arrivals, the impact of these variables might be considered random. Flight days, arrival and departure times, code share agreements, connection flights, distance to the destination, type of aircraft, airport capacity, frequency, load factors, charter flights operated by tour operators and availability of other means of transport might also affect arrivals. These variables can be considered in future empirical studies.

Another major concern is that flights normally serve an international clientele from wide catchment area. However particularly for exclusive destinations a direct flight is still an incentive to visit the destination considering alternative stop-over flight which usually takes longer and

costs more. Therefore, it can still be discussed that introduction of a new direct route, facilitates tourist flow between connected countries. The impact of non-stop direct flights on arrivals cannot be adequately measured until a) the nationality of passengers for certain flights are known b) their willingness to use an alternative mode of transportation or a connected flight is measured and c) the dependency relationship among these two variables are discerned. The best way to measure impact of direct flights is to collect primary data from travelers, whether they would travel without the existence of a direct flight. We leave this task to a future study.

Finally, it would be myopic to consider the influence of air traffic on tourism as unidirectional. Arrivals to a destination and air connections heavily depend on each other. Potential tourism volume stimulates air transport as well. Yet, the reliance among these two is not very clear. These variables have the potential to reinforce each other and create a virtuous cycle as happened in Las Vegas and Dubai. Increased tourism activity after an initial air linkage might attract additional air connections and carriers to the destination, which would in turn result in increased tourism and so on (Laurino & Beria, 2014). Thus, there is a need for additional empirical research in various sub topics under international tourism and air connectivity, particularly stressing the direction of causality between direct flights and arrivals. The geographic distance might also be utilized in as a mediating variable in order to identify the impact of distance on this relationship.

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Examining Entrepreneurship Characteristics of Hospitality and Tourism Management Students

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Abstract

Entrepreneurs are an important factor that contributes to the development and growth rate of countries. Considering the tourism as a driver of economy, it is important to train potential entrepreneurs who can establish and manage businesses. The purpose of this research is to measure the entrepreneur characteristics of students majoring in Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM). For this purpose, the scale developed by Koh (1996) was used. The scale originally contained 36 statements and was adopted to Turkish by Bozkurt (2005). The data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Out of 400 questionnaire distributed, a total of 280 were considered usable for further analysis. The results of this study show that there is no significant differences between the demographic variables and entrepreneurship characteristic of the HTM students. Moreover, findings indicate that students have moderate level of tolerance of ambiguity, need for achievement, propensity to take risk, locus of control, innovativeness and self-confidence.

Key Words: Entrepreneur, Entrepreneur Characteristics, HTM Students.

Introduction

Entrepreneurs have pivotal role in developing national economies through "raising productivity, creating employment, restructuring and diversifying the economy, reducing market inefficiencies by making the market place more dynamic and competitive; improving the social welfare of a country by previously overlooked talent, commercializing innovative products and services, and creating new markets (Ray, 1988: 1-2; Echtner, 1995: 123). However, low development, small private sector and inexperienced entrepreneurs are among the main problems facing development of national economies. Tourism and hospitality industry has an important role in the employment rates in the global industry and has significant economic profit opportunities to many related sectors (Pirnar, 2015: 76). Tourism education and entrepreneurial development are essential for setting up an indigenous tourism sector and to gain knowledge and skills needed for tourism sector (Jenkins, 1980: 239; Echtner, 1995: 123-124).

Entrepreneurship is a prominent factor in the transition from industrial society to information society. Recognizing the importance of entrepreneurship, it led to an increasing number of entrepreneurs that help a faster growth of countries' economy. Therefore, it is obvious that the educational institutions have an important impact on development of a country by providing students with teaching entrepreneurship-related knowledge and skills (Balaban & Ozdemir, 2008: 133; Yilmaz & Sunbul, 2009: 196; Solmaz, Aksoy, Sengul, & Sarıısık, 2014). According to Echtner (1995), either professional education or vocational education is related with creating human resources to "work for others". Yet, developing entrepreneurs would

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help countries to have skilled and knowledge-armed human resources to "work oneself". With the tourism education, the potential human resources which is necessary for national development can be used by supporting and encouraging local entrepreneurs (Echtner, 1995; Gurel, Altinay, & Daniele, 2010: 647).

Tourism is one of the most important and fast growing indusries in countries' economies. Entrepreneurs help economic development of countries by creating businesses and providing employment. Therefore, it is important to provide entrepreunership-related knowledge to HTM students to improve the potential entrepreneur's vision. It is therefore important to examine the entrepreneurial characteristics of the students majoring in HTM-related programs. In this paper, an attempt was made to understand characteristics of Turkey's tourism and hospitality future entrepreneurs.

Literature Review

According to Oxford English dictionary, entrepreneur is "a person who attempts to profit by risk and initiative (Morrison, Rimmington, & Williams, 20006: 28)." As stated by Zimmerer and Scarborough (2005: 3) entrepreneur is defined as (Ross & Lashley, 2009: 3): "one who creates a new business in the face of risk and uncertainty for the purpose of achieving profit and growth by identifying significant opportunities and assembling necessary resources to capitalize on them."

The concept of entrepreneurship differs from entrepreneur concept in one point, entrepreneurship is a process; entrepreneur is the leading role in this process (Yumuk, 2013: 100). Entrepreneurship can be defined as (Erdurur, 2012: 3): "Making opportunities by establishing a new business process with committed and courageous manner." According to Mueller and Thomas (2000), entrepreneurship is sensing opportunities and taking the opportunity for creating an organizational activity (Yilmaz & Sunbul, 2009: 196). Entrepreneurship can also be defined as "doing things that are not generally done in the ordinary course of business routine (Schumpeter, 1951: 255; Cromie, 2000: 8)." As can be noticed from abovementioned definitions, there are common agreement that entrepreneurship consists mainly in creating opportunities and initiating new businesses. The motivations that push someone to entrepreneurship also shows similarities. This common points with the motivations and entrepreneurship characteristics are the need for achievement, locus of control, propensity to take risk, tolerance of ambiguity, self-confidence and innovativeness (Çetinkaya Bozkurt & Alparslan, 2013: 9).

The first thing that comes to ones' mind when hearing the word entrepreneur is employer or company owner. However, the main characteristic of an entrepreneur is to make innovation. Nevertheless, an entrepreneur has to take risk and seek opportunities. Therefore, incorporation process is one of the subject of entrepreneurship (Foss & Klein, 2002: 52). One who establishes a company should take risk, take responsibility and have innovative personality. The person who does not have these characteristics can be an employer but not an entrepreneur (Bircek, 2008: 4). Thus, a great deal of innovative person's desire is to be an entrepreneur; however, he or she may not be successful because of the lack of the skills and ability to become an entrepreneur (Ray, 1988: 122).

The entrepreneurship process is in the heart of the economic development task and it consists of the motivations of people and their willing to reach their personal goals (Fass & Scothorne, 1990; Morrison, Rimmington, & Williams, 20006: 3). These motivations can be considered as the characteristics that every entrepreneur should have. With the expansion of entrerenuership education, the factors that direct individuals to entrepreneurs have become more important. These factors could be psychological and demographic characteristics of an individual (Koh, 1995; Yılmaz & Gunel, 2011: 2). As stated by Koh (1996) these psychological characteristics

are needed for achievement, locus of control, propensity to take risk, tolerance of ambiguity, self-confidence, innovativeness. On the other hand, for being successful entrepreneur not only these characteristics also one need to have to do mental efforts; in this regard, one should be self-starter; should set goals clearly; should be resilient when things go wrong; also should be confident, receptive to new ideas, eager to learn and comfort with power (Wickham, 2006: 97-99).

Literature related to entrepreneurship indicates a number of common characteristics that are necessary for entrepreneur. These characteristics are briefly explained as follows:

- Need for Achievement: As McClelland (1961) argued, the need for achievement is a theory that influences human actions. It is a psychological driven force of one's entrepreneurship. People with high need for achievement acts more like an entrepreneur and have more ambition to be successful (Koh, 1996: 14).
- Locus of control: is the perception of person's ability that can affect his/her attitudes toward specific events in ones' life. There are two types of locus of control. The first one is internal locus of control and the second one is external locus of control. People with internal locus of control believe that they can control their own life. On the other hand, individuals with external locus of control believe that the reason of incidents in their life are causes by external sources (Lee & Tsang, 2001: 586-587).
- Propensity to take risk: according to the classic economic theory, risk-takers are entrepreneurs. Due to their jobs, roles and their nature, entrepreneurs are less likely to avoid the risk. Rather than all risks, entrepreneurs are likely to take calculated risks (Kirby, 2004: 511).
- Tolerance of ambiguity: is defined as "the tendency to perceive ambiguous situations as neutral or even desirable, and intolerance of ambiguity as the tendency to perceive such situations as threatening (Budner, 1962; Wagener, Gorgievski, & Rijsdijk, 2010: 1516)."
- Self-confidence: is basically the individual perception of having skills to start a business and deal with the responsibility on their jobs (Bowman, 1999; Erdurur, 2012: 47).
- Innovativeness: As Schumpeter (1990) argued, all entrepreneurs are innovators. As it can be observed from the definitions of entrepreneurship, nearly all definitions refer that entrepreneurship as a process that entails innovativeness and creative processes (Gurel, Altinay, & Daniele, 2010: 651; Wagener, Gorgievski, & Rijsdijk, 2010: 1517).

When compared with other industries, tourism industry's entrepreneurship processes have more challenging processes. In the context of tourism industry; the employers should be well-educated, well-trained, skilled, enthusiastic and committed (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Pırnar & Bulut, 2012). Therefore tourism entrepreneurs should have some characteristic such as risk taking, innovativeness, strategic vision, customer orientation and financial independency tendency (Marchant & Mottiar, 2011; Pirnar, 2015: 80). In their study, Gurel, Altinay and Daniele (2010) found that there was a significant relationship between innovativeness, tendency to take risk, entrepreneurial family and entrepreneurial intention. A study on the effect of entrepreneurial characteristics on entrepreneurial tendency of undergraduate HTM students by Bozkurt and Erdurur (2013) found that there was strong and positive correlation between need for achievement, locus of control, propensity to take risk, tolerance of ambiguity. The study also indicated that there was positive and weak correlation between self-confidence and innovativeness. A significant correlation between entrepreneurial

tendency and entrepreneurial characteristics was also suggested. Solmaz et al. (2014) claimed that and bachelor's degree HTM students had a significant difference in entrepreneurial characteristic. They also found that there was a significant positive difference between students' gender and dimensions of determination and innovativeness. The study suggested that female students have more entrepreneurial characteristics than male students.

The results of the study conducted on the relationship between entrepreneurial tendincies and entrepreneurial characteristics by Uygun, Mete and Guner (2012) concluded that there was a significant relationship between young entrepreneur candidates' entrepreneurship tendencies and personality and resume factors. In their study, only self-confidence and propensity to take risk dimensions were correlated with entrepreneurial intentions. Kılıç, Keklik, and Çalış (2012) stated that there was a significant diffrence between gender and innovativeness dimension. Male students had more innovativeness then female students. A study conducted by Çetinkaya Bozkurt and Alparslan (2013) aimed to examine the characteristics of entrepreneurs and the education that should be given in university students. They found that self-confidence, honesty, propensity to take risk and innovativeness were the characteristics that an entrepreneur should have. A study conducted on entrepreneurship tendency of undergraduate students by Çatır, Şimşek and Ölekli (2015) showed that there was no significant relation between entrepreneurship tendencies with gender or education type but there was a significant relation between age and entrepreneurship tendency.

Research Methodology

The main objective of this study is to examine the entrepreneur characteristics of undergraduate HTM students. Convenience sampling method was used in collecting data. The data were collected from a sample of the students of Tourism Management department at Istanbul University. Tourism management students were selected as they differ from the other universities' students in tourism departments because the tourism department is currently a part of the faculty of economics and therefore students mainly follow economically-oriented courses during the first two years. Approximately 400 students are currently registered in this department. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to students in spring semester of the academic year 2015-2016. Only 285 were returned and 5 questionnaires were excluded for the massive missing data. A total of 280 questionnaires were usable and considered for further analysis (response rate of 70 percent).

In order to examine the entrepreneurial characteristics of HTM students a questionnaire was prepared in Turkish including 45 items. The questionnaire comprises two sections. The first section included demographical questions. The second section aimed to determine entrepreneurial characteristic of surveyed students, the scale included 36 items developed by Koh (1996). In the current research, the Turkish questionnaire adopted by Bozkurt was used. The statements were measured using a 5-Point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree (1), and "strongly agree" (5). The scale originally has six dimensions, namely; locus of control (seven items), propensity to take risk (six items), need for achievement (nine items), tolerance of ambiguity (six items), self-confidence (six items), and innovativeness (five items).

The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was calculated as 0,78. The results of the reliability test was highly reliable (Çoruhlu & Demirli, 2014: 100). The data were analysed using SPSS 21. In analysing data, a series of tests were used. "Pearson" Correlation analysis were used to designate relationship between variables. "ANOVA" and T-test were used to determine any significant difference between groups.

Findings

Table 1. Demographical Variables

Demographic	Category	Frequencies (n)	Percentages (%)
Age	18-20	105	37,5
	21-23	132	47,1
	24 and +	43	15,4
	Total	**280**	**100**
Gender	Female	147	52,5
	Male	133	47,5
	Total	**280**	**100**
Marital Status	Married	2	0,7
	Single	278	99,3
	Total	**280**	**100**
Year	First year	108	38,6
	Second year	47	16,8
	Third year	58	20,7
	Fourth year	67	23,9
	Total	**280**	**100**
Grade-point Average	1.00-1.50	1	0,4
	1.51-2.00	10	3,6
	2.01-2.50	41	14,6
	2.51-3.00	106	37,9
	3.00 +	122	43,6
	Total	**280**	**100**
In which sector would you like to work after graduation?	Public Sector	36	12,9
	Private Sector	182	65
	Family-run Business	7	2,5
	My Own Business	55	19,6
	Total	**280**	**100**
Would you like to establish a company after graduation?	Yes	223	79,6
	No	57	20,4
	Total	**280**	**100**
Did you do an internship?	Yes	114	40,7
	No	166	59,3
	Total	**280**	**100**
Did you work before?	Yes	226	80,7
	No	54	19,3
	Total	**280**	**100**

The profile of students is presented in Table 1. Unsurprisingly, the overwhelming majority (about 84 percent) the students were 23 years old or younger. Almost half of the students (%52,5) were female. Only 2 of the students were married and the rest of them were single.

Most of the students were at their first year with %38,6. Almost half of the students' (%43,6) grade-point average was 3.00 or above. 182 students (65 percent) stated that they are willing to work in the private sector. 55 students (about 19.5 percent) expressed their intention to start their own businesses. Most of the students stated that they are willing to establish a company. About 40.7 percent of the students stated to have been engaged in an internship. Most of the students were found to have had a work experience.

Table 2. Mean Rank of the Dimensions

Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation
Tolerance of Ambiguity	3,2889	,55269
Need for Achievement	3,3008	,56507
Propensity to Take Risk	3,2638	,73515
Locus of Control	3,3920	1,03789
Innovativeness	3,2500	,95467
Self-confidence	2,7804	,69559

The mean ranks of the dimensions are shown in the Table 2. The Locus of Control dimension appears to have the highest mean rank (3,3920 ± 1,037). Second dimension was Need for Achievement with 3,3008 ± 0,565 mean rank. Tolerance of Ambiguity was the third with mean rank of 3,2889 ± 0,552. The fourth dimension was Propensity to Take Risk with 3,2638 ± 0,735 mean rank. Innovativeness was the fifth with mean rank 3,2500 ± 0,954. Self-confidence scored the lowest mean rank with 2,7804 ± 0,695.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis

			1	2	3	4	5	6
1	**Tolerance of Ambiguity**	r	-					
		p						
2	**Need for Achievement**	r	,678**	-				
		p	,000					
3	**Propensity to Take Risk**	r	,539**	,535**	-			
		p	,000	,000				
4	**Locus of Control**	r	,361**	,421**	,320**	-		
		p	,000	,000	,000			
5	**Innovativeness**	r	,407**	,501**	,440**	,316**	-	
		p	,000	,000	,000	,000		
6	**Self-confidence**	r	,307**	,083	,152*	,034	,026	-
		p	,000	,164	,011	,571	,661	

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

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation of dimensions are illustrated in Table 3. A moderate linear relation was observed between Tolerance of Ambiguity, Need for Achievement (r=0,678** p<.01; p=0,000) and Propensity to Take Risk (r=0,539** p<.01; p=0,000). A weak linear relation was observed between Tolerance of Ambiguity, Locus of Control (r=0,361** p<.01; p=0,000), Innovativeness (r=0,407** p<.01; p=0,000) and Self-Confidence (r=0,307** p<.01; p=0,000). A moderate linear relation was observed between Need for Achievement, Propensity to Take Risk (r=0, 535**p<.01; p=0,000) and Innovativeness (r=0,501** p<.01;

p=0,000). A weak linear relation was observed between Propensity to Take Risk, Locus of Control (r=0,320** p<.01; p=0,000), Innovativeness (r=0,440** p<.01; p=0,000), and Self-Confidence (r=0,152* p<.01; p=0,000). Moreover, there was a weak linear relationship observed between Locus of Control and Innovativeness (r=0,316** p<.01; p=0,000).

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship has a great importance on countries' economic development. With new entrepreneurs, new employment opportunities can be provided in the tourism industry as well as other great economic contribution. Especially, labor-intens industries like tourism can help maximize the benefit of a country's national economy by providing knowledge to new entrepreneurs and determining the entrepreneurship characteristics of future's potential entrepreneurs. The purpose of this study was to examine the entrepreneur characteristics of the HTM students.

The results indicated that the students have moderate level of tolerance of ambiguity, need for achievement, propensity to take risk, locus of control, innovativeness and self-confidence. The results also showed that the age, marital status, gender, class groups, grade-point average do not play a significant role in entrepreneur characteristics. Most of the students are apparently willing to to create their own business. However, most of them want to work in private sector after their graduation. It can be suggested that students have an intention to create a company but before that, they wish to make carrier in private sector. These results corroborate similar findings by Solmaz et al (2014) study. As stated by Çetinkaya Bozkurt and Alparslan (2013) an entrepreneur should have self-confidence, propensity to take risks and innovativeness. In the current research, students' innovativeness, propensity to take risks, self-confidence mean ranks were found as moderate level. In this regard, the findings of Çetinkaya Bozkurt and Alparslan (2013) are supported. Findings of the current study contradicts Kılıç, Keklik, and Çalış (2012) study, specifically, analysis showed that there was no relationship between gender and propensity to take risk and innovativness. This study is also similar to Bozkurt and Erdurur (2013) in correlation between the need for achievement, locus of control, propensity to take risk, tolerance of ambiguity but differ from correlation of self-confidence and innovativeness. However, in the current study there was no relation between self-confidence and innovativeness.

For further research could be conducted to identify additional factors that influence the entrepreneurship characteristics. Further research could also be conducted larger sample. Also the research could ensure information about HTM students entrepreneurial characteristics. With this data the educational program of HTM students could be rearranged. This paper has a number of limitations. First of all, the data were collected using a convenience sampling method. The sample of included only tourism management students in Istanbul University. Therefore, the results of this study could not be generalized without conducting similar research on larger sample including various universities students. Another major limitation is related to the scale adopted. The scale measured only the six factors of entrepreneurial characteristics. There might be additional factors influencing the characteristics of an entrepreneur.

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