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Does Physical Apperance of Tourist Guides Affect Tourist' Satisfaction?*

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Abstract

In tourist guidance service; appearance is quite as effective as several characteristics such as communication, grammar and fluency, knowledge, and courtesy. Physical appearance becomes important from the point of tourist guidance because it is possible to make judgments about what kind of person they are and even to classify them according to how they look. In this study, it was aimed to determine how domestic tourists perceived the physical appearance of tourist guides with whom they engaged most closely during their tour program and whether it had an influence on their satisfaction. Data were gathered through the administration of an online questionnaire during December 2019, which was developed based on literature. At the end of the period, 116 questionnaires in total were collected based on the convenience sampling. In the analyses, one-sample t-test, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, and structural modeling were used in addition to descriptive statistics. The findings showed that domestic tourists thought tourist guides acted in a good manner, they looked professional, they were pretty good-looking, and they had nice clothing. Furthermore, it was also determined that the perception of physical appearance influenced their satisfaction, as well. Therefore, the study concludes that tourist guides need to be well-groomed even though they prefer comfortable clothes because of the nature of their job.

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INTRODUCTION

Appearance plays an important role in our daily lives. “Handsome” and “beautiful” are common terms that define appearance. Appearance affects people’s impressions during interpersonal interactions. Thus, physical appearance provides an advantage during interactions among people (Haas and Gregory, 2005).

Physical appearance transmits several messages in addition to giving a lot of information about individuals. Clothes that people choose comprise messages about several topics such as their social status, occupations, religious beliefs, marital status, etc. (Şahin, 2018: 66). For this reason, physical appearance provides some clues about how and in what way people are going to establish and develop communication with each other’s (Gürüz & Eğinli, 2008: 138). Therefore it contributes to mutual communication (Lui, Volvic & Gallois, 2011) in a positive or negative way. Hence, physical appearance is one of the most crucial factors of nonverbal communication (Peracchio & Luna, 2006), and it implies the degree of people’s perception of a person’s attractive and nice physical looks who provide service (Ahearne et al., 1999). People benefit from looks as a significant indicator to make predictions about others and to classify them (Lee et al., 2012). In service environments, guests usually draw on employees’ physical appearances to form impressions and opinions (Sundaram & Webster, 2000). Guests take various clues about service employees including appearance, sentiment and behavior into consideration, and utilize them to constitute a general attitude towards them (Soderlund & Julander, 2009). One of the service areas in which guests gain impressions by appearance is the guidance services that have been provided by tourist guides.

Tourist guides are important bridges between tourists and the environment. Tourist guides have several qualifications such as communication, grammar and fluency, knowledge and courtesy. The depth of their professional knowledge affects the quality of guided tours (Tsybulskaya & Camhi, 2009). Additionally, the responsibilities of enabling tourists’ satisfaction, increasing tour’s quality, specializing and structuring it according to tourists’ personal needs and preferences mostly belong to the tourist guide who is at a very crucial position (Geva & Goldman, 1991).

A variable that increases participants’ satisfaction from tourist guide’s service or raise the effect of tourist guide’s qualifications is physical appearance. At this point, tourist guides’ physical appearance has a significant influence on tourists (Albuz, 2018: 23). The guide dressed up properly - suitable to time, place and group - also creates an important effect on the first impression for the guide to be accepted as a leader by the

group (Çimrin, 1995: 45). Guide’s hair and beard style, wearing excessive amount of accessories, putting on too much make-up and exposing too much skin cream might not only lead to some judgments about them but they also cause distraction in tourists by attracting their attention to other points (Şahin, 2018: 66). In this way quality of communication and presentation drops down, that yield tourist dissatisfaction.

There are various studies on people’s perception of service workers’ physical appearance in tourism sector (Nickson et al., 2005; Soderlund & Julander, 2009; Jung & Yoon, 2011; Keh et al., 2013; Magnini et al., 2013). However, Tsai et al. (2016) focused on the physical appearance of tourist guides. In a study which was carried on guides, it was ascertained that when physical appearance and humor were combined, they had additional impacts on the action of interpretation (Tsai et al., 2016).

This study aims to determine the impact of perceived physical appearance of tourist guides on tourist satisfaction. As one of the essential elements of non-verbal communication, the physical appearance can increase the permanence and influence of the service which is presented by tourist guides. Thus, it can provide a substantial impact on the enhancement of perceived service quality, and also cause tourists’ satisfaction to rise in a positive direction. Besides practical importance, this study has a potential to develop the literature related to tourist guidance services.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESIS

Physical Appearance

Physical appearance, especially in Western culture, plays an important role in how people communicate with each other. There are various studies in the literature focusing on physical appearance (Chaiken, 1979; Diona, 1972; Patzer, 1983; Haas ve Gregory, 2005; Lemay et al., 2010).

Tourism industry is one of the fields in which looks and appeal are important. In fact, people pay attention to their physical appearance and make effort on it before realizing their holiday plans (Knežević et al., 2015: 12). This is the case for both people who go on holiday and for those who provide service to them.

It is stated that effect of physical appearance of those whose work in the service industry is critically important (Keh et al., 2013; TsaorLuoh, & Syue, 2015). It is claimed that people who are physically more attractive have a higher tendency to be in social

interactions (Dion, Berscheid & Walster, 1972). It is emphasized that charming looks create positive emotional reactions in other people, bring out positive reinforcing effects, lead people to approach the topic (Lemay, Clark, & Greenberg, 2010), and arouse their interest in it (Eastwick, Eagly, Finkel, & Johnson, 2011). Moreover, it is also stated that clothing and appearance can influence other people's way of thinking, feeling and behaving (Karl, Hall & Peluchette, 2013). Therefore, it can be expressed that physical appearance has a significant impact on guests' feeling close to their guides, having positive feelings about them, and being more interested and eager during the tours which they attend.

There are several studies on hotel personnel in the body of literature which were conducted to determine the perception of physical appearance. In one of the studies in which the correlation between employees' appearance and success at work was examined, 53% of the participants said that appearance was an "extremely important" issue while 40% stated it as "important" (Nickson et al., 2005). Thus, appearance of the personnel who are directly guest contacted is of great importance for at least 93% of the participants. From a reverse perspective, it is one of the curious findings that there was a statistically significant correlation between the physical appearance of guests and the quality of service which was provided by the hotel personnel to them (Knežević et al., 2015). Furthermore, again from a reverse point of view, it is ascertained that service personnel's way of addressing to guests and their verbal communication with them were directly influenced by guests' physical appearance and varied according their perception about it (Kök & Kibar, 2015: 24). On the one hand, in addition to indicating that employees' eye contact and courtesy are critical elements in forming guest-employee relationship and creating guest satisfaction, there are also findings surprisingly showing that appearance doesn't affect guest-employee rapport (Kim & Baker, 2019).

Tourists' Satisfaction at Tours

Satisfaction from tourist guidance service' expresses tourists' general appreciation of various services (information, exposition etc.) provided by guides at a destination. When it comes to tourist satisfaction in terms of 'tour services', it is about how tourists perceive a variety of service elements (route, transportation, hotel and meal organizations, accommodation facilities) provided by tour operators (Huang, Hsu, & Chan, 2010: 6). It was obtained that tourist guide's performance had a direct significant impact on the perceived service quality and satisfaction (Huang, Hsu, & Chan, 2010). At this moment, it is useful to discriminate between the satisfaction from the tourist guide and overall tour

satisfaction. A tourist's overall tour satisfaction may be low, but s/he may be satisfied with the tourist guide's performance.

Tourist guides have a great responsibility of enabling tourists' satisfaction via the services they provide (Chang, 2006). Tourist guides' service presentation is of enormous significance not only for the travel agents for which they work, but also for general perception of the destination image (Huang, Hsu, & Chan, 2010).

Studies on tourist guides and even satisfaction from the guides usually focus on tourist guides' performance (Geva & Goldman, 1991; Mossberg, 1995; Wong, 2001; Dong Droege & Johnson, 2002; Chan, 2004). In tourism activities, it is thought that tourists' level of satisfaction increases at a remarkable degree as long as tourist guides realize requirements of tour program (Chang, 2014: 223). In the opposite case, their holiday pleasure might turn totally into a disaster (Lopez, 1980). About this situation, Kotler (2003) states that tourists' degree of satisfaction increases when tourist guides' performance is as expected or even better. Hsu (2000) expresses that tourists' satisfaction is a strong determinant of the service provided by tourist guides. In a study, Chang (2004) focuses on the impact of tour service in package tours on tourists' satisfaction, and states that the service which is presented by a tourist guide affects the overall tour experience and tourists' satisfaction in a positive way.

The number of the studies in literature which examine the effect of tourist guides' physical appearance on tourists' satisfaction is very few. Tsai et al. (2016), searched whether tourists thought good-looking tourist guides to be more competent, whether guides with strong sense of humor were more accessible, and if experienced tourist guides looked more professional or not. Chang (2014) claims that tourist guides' performance have positive impact on the perceived trust, helpfulness and satisfaction by tourists. Kim and Baker (2019) put forward that both verbal and non-verbal communication are important in constructing rapport and pleasantness. On the one hand, Knežević et al. (2008) advocate from an opposite point of view that there is a connection between tourists' attractiveness and the quality of service.

Hypothesis

Physical appearance is a significant element in the daily communication between employees in tourism industry and service users (Knežević et al., 2015: 11). Physical appearance is an extremely important element also for tourist guides providing the most effective service especially for tourists to gather memories and return their countries/homes pleased about their

experiences which they gained. Positive physical appearance has an effect of increasing the sales upon goods and/or services, meaning that the more attractive looks of the sales persons, the more convincing they will be.. Basically, tour guides might wish to get tourists' attention with both the guidance service which they provide and their physical appearance because tourist guides have psychological expectations in their interactions with tourists in the tours, as well. Thus, there is an existential relationship between tourist guides' physical appearance, attentiveness and efficiency of interpretation. If tourist guides manage to attract tourists' attention and curiosity, they can help tourists to understand and show interest (Tsai, Wang & Tseng, 2016: 4). Kim and Baker express that both verbal and non-verbal communication are crucial in the construction of rapport and satisfaction. The fact that physical appearance is also assumed to be one of the non-verbal communication elements supports this claim. Tsai et al. (2016) state that tourists perceive tour guides with decent physical appearance as more proficient. Based on the statements, the following hypothesis was developed:

H1: Perceived physical appearance of the guide by tourists affects their satisfaction positively.

METHOD

Measurement

In this descriptive research, the data was gathered via a questionnaire which was developed based on literature. While determining the perception of physical appearance, the seven-item scale which was developed by Ahearne et al. (1999), Verugo, Garcia, Roldan and Veerpermal (2008) was used. The four-item scale which was prepared by Castellanos-Verdugo, Oviedo-Garcia and Roldan (2008) was used in order to ascertain tourist satisfaction about hotel personnel after its adaptation to tourist guidance context. Response categories of the scales were subjected to five-point Likert ranking. During the translation process of the items into Turkish, a procedure of translate-retranslate was followed in addition to conducting a pre-test on a limited number of domestic tourists. The data collection process in this study was carried out between December 2019, and the Council of Higher Education Committee criteria were announced on January 1, 2020.

Sampling and Data Collection

Research population consists of domestic tourists who attended a guided inland and/or foreign tour in 2019. The response categories of the tourist guide satisfaction scale, which is the dependent variable, were made according to the 5-point Likert rating. In

order to calculate the sample size, it is preferred to estimate the standard deviation at α : 0.01 significance level. This estimation was made by dividing the range $[R=(\text{Max.}-\text{Min})/6=(5-1)/6=0.67]$ by 6 (Yolal, 2016: 68) and the estimated standard deviation was calculated as 0.67. It has been decided that the mean to be obtained from the sample deviates from the parameter by e : 0.10. Via the infinite population sampling formula and at the 5% significance level, the sample size was determined as 172¹ persons (Ural and Kılıç, 2013: 45).

As it was impossible to get the list of domestic tourists, convenience sampling method was compulsorily used. 116 people answered the online questionnaire which was administered during December, 2019. There were 11 items on the two scales. A rationalization was possible utilizing the knowledge provided by Nakip (2003: 407). From the factor analysis point of view, the minimum sample size is 50, and it has been assumed that the 5 times of variable number was ideal. In our case (116/11), the ratio is two times more than the ideal situation.

The data of 116 questionnaires were analyzed via one sample t-test, exploratory (EFA) and confirmatory factor analyses (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM) in addition to descriptive statistics. Ethical committee approval was received from

FINDINGS

Participant Profile

The participants of the research consisted of 45 males (38.8%) and 71 females (61.2 %). About one quarter of them (24.1%) were between the ages of 18 – 34. Approximately 40% were between the ages of 35 – 49. Majority (55 people, 47.4%) of them had an undergraduate degree. The rate of those who had a graduate degree is 40.5%.

Among 116 participants of the research, 46 people (39.7%) attended inland tours while 20 people (17.2%) took part in guided foreign tours. In addition, 43.1% of the participants joined a guided tour both inland and abroad. 103 (88.8%) out of 116 participants of the research characterized the tour in which they took part as a culture tour. 47 people (40.5%) defined it as a nature tour (Table 1).

¹ $n = \sigma^2 \cdot Z^2 \alpha / e^2 = 1.96^2 * 0.67^2 / 0.10^2 = 1.72449424 / 0.01 = 172$. [n: Sample size; Z: Theoretical value (Z value is 1,96 for α : 0,05), σ : Standard deviation, H: Standard error]

Table 1. Participant Profile (n:116)

Feature	F	%	Feature	F	%
Age group			Gender		
18-34	28	24.1	Male	45	38.8
35-49	47	40.5	Female	71	61.2
50-69	41	35.3	Type of the tour*		
Level of education			Culture	103	88.8
High school	5	4.3	Nature	47	40.5
Associate & bachelor	64	55.2	Sea sand sun	26	22.4
Graduate	47	40.5	Religion	11	9.5
			Adventure	7	6.0

*More than one option was chosen.

Perception of Tourist Guide's Physical Appearance

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics about the scale of physical appearance perceived by domestic tourists. Accordingly, domestic tourists considered that the guides who accompanied them adopted a nice attitude (\bar{x} : 3.90; $p < 0.0001$), had a professional appearance (\bar{x} : 3.66; $p < 0.0001$), were quite good-looking (\bar{x} : 3.41; $p < 0.0001$), and were very well-dressed (\bar{x} : 3.29; $p < 0.009$). Nevertheless, in some cases, it was also detected that participants didn't find their guides physically attractive, or even beautiful/handsome. In an overall view, it is seen that they thought the physical appearance of their guide to be decent (\bar{x} : 3.33; $p < 0.0001$).

Satisfaction about Tourist Guide

In Table 3, there are the descriptive statistics regarding the research participants' satisfaction about tourist guides. The mean (\bar{x} : 3.88) of all satisfaction items is pretty close to the response category of "I agree", and furthermore, it is statistically different from "neither agree nor disagree" ($p < 0.0001$). Therefore, it is possible to say that they were pleased about their tourist guides.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Physical Appearance Scale (n:116)

Items	\bar{x}	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value (two-tailed)
1. My guide had a professional appearance	3.66	1.202	5.870	$p < 0.0001$
2. My guide was very well-dressed.	3.29	1.194	2.643	0.009
3. My guide adopted a nice attitude towards us.	3.90	1.137	8.490	$p < 0.0001$
4. My guide was quite good-looking.	3.41	1.201	3.633	$p < 0.0001$
5. My guide had an attractive appearance.	2.84	1.184	-1.412	0.161
6. My guide didn't have an attractive appearance.	3.28	1.276	2.329	0.022
7. My guide was beautiful/handsome.	2.91	1.154	-0.805	0.423
Physical Appearance	3.33	0.966	3.733	$p < 0.0001$

Test value: 3 (neither agree nor disagree)
Response categories: 1: Strongly disagree..... 5: Strongly agree.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Satisfaction from Tourist Guide Scale (n:116)

	\bar{x}	Std. Dev.	t-value	p-value (two-tailed)
1. I think guide was very helpful.	3.91	1.187	8.215	p<0.0001
2. I was pleased about tour guide.	3.91	1.184	8.314	p<0.0001
3. Tour guide provided a satisfactory service.	3.86	1.222	7.597	p<0.0001
4. In general, I was contended about tour guide's service.	3.83	1.182	7.544	p<0.0001
Satisfaction	3.88	1.578	8.159	p<0.0001
<i>Test value: 3 (neither agree nor disagree)</i>				
<i>Reaction Categories: 1: Strongly disagree, ..., 5: Strongly agree</i>				

ASSESSMENT OF PSYCHOMETRIC PROPERTIES OF MEASURES

Reliability

Reliability analysis was firstly applied onto the seven-item scale of physical appearance. The fact that the corrected item-total correlation value of an item (My guide didn't have an attractive appearance) which required reverse coding was observed to be at a limit value of 0.251 (Alpar, 2011: 821). As it was determined that the general reliability statistic would rise from 0.868 to 0.902 when this item was removed from the scale, this item was decided to be deleted from the scale. So, the item-total correlation varied between 0.627-0.863 whereas squared multiple correlation coefficients varied between 0.639-0.809. There are no items to raise alpha coefficient when erased, and moreover, the internal consistency coefficient was found as Alpha 0.902.

In tourists' satisfaction scale, item-total correlations were between 0.918-0.959 while squared multiple correlation coefficients were between 0.847-0.930. General reliability coefficient is 0.979. In the confirmatory factor analysis, the composite reliability (CR) related to the perception of guides' physical

appearances was 0.951 while composite reliability about satisfaction was 0.979. So, it is possible to say that both scales are highly reliable (Alpar, 2011: 815).

Validity

In the research, in order to collect correct data, participants were initially asked if they had joined any guided tours before. Answers to the questionnaire of those who never attended a guided tour before were not admitted. Besides, 103 out of 116 participants stated that they attended a culture tour. When the fact that culture tours are not possible to be managed without a guide, it can be said that the data gathered from the participants of culture tours who constitute a high percentage (88.8%) are valid.

Construct Validity: For the construct validity of the scales, both EFA and CFA were applied. After one-item deletion, EFA applied to 6-items of physical appearance scale displays one-dimensional structure and explains 67.424% of the total variance (KMO: %79.9; Bartlett χ^2 :517.052; df.:15; p<0.001). However, the satisfaction scale explains 94.112% of the total variance (KMO: %87.5; Bartlett χ^2 :739.414; s.d.:6; p<0.001).

Table 4. Reliability Statistics of the Scales

Coefficients	Scales	
	Physical appearance	Satisfaction
Sample size	116	116
Number of items	6	4
Alpha coefficient	0.902	0.979
Min. & max. corrected item-total correlations	0.646-0.863	0.918-0.959
Negative sign on corrected item-total correlations	None	None
Min. & max. squared multiple correlation (multiple R ²)	0.639-0.809	0.847-0.930
Min. & max. Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	0.864-0.900	0.969-0.980
Mean	3.33	3.88
Standard deviation	0.966	1.158
Response categories	1: Strongly disagree, ..., 5: Strongly agree	

At the first step measurement model was tested. The value which is achieved by the division of chi-square to the degree of freedom is required to be below 5, which is referred quite frequently for model validity (χ^2 :171.07; df:34; X^2 /df: 5.03). Since it was seen that this value was quite close to the acceptance level, it was decided to check the modification indices, resulting to delete two items had caused a significant decrease on chi-square. These items were "My guide adopted a nice attitude towards us" and "My guide didn't have an attractive appearance". After deletion two items, the measurement model was tested again and the test yielded more acceptable fit statistics. Then structural equation model was tested and fit statistics were compared. It was seen that there were no changes on the fit statistics. Results of the CFA and structural equation model test are shown in Table 4. Although, the calculated RMSEA and SRMR values indicate slightly weak consistency, the fact that χ^2 /df: 2.25; CFI: 0.98; GFI: 0.91;IFI: 0.98; RFI: 0.95; NFI: 0.97; NNFI: 0.97 values are at the acceptable levels, and moreover, the condition of 'Model CAIC < Saturated CAIC' is fulfilled point out the acceptability of the model (Meydan & Şeşen, 2015).

of tourist satisfaction. Both values are bigger than the suggested value of 0.50. Model fit statistics, items with significant loadings (standard values), and AVE values bigger than 0.50 support the fact that convergent validity is achieved (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Discriminant Validity: The correlation between the physical appearance scale and tourists' satisfaction is r : 0.563. The maximum shared variance (MSV¹) between the two variables is 0.32. Square root of physical appearance scale's AVE value is 0.84 and 0.96 for the satisfaction scale. The fact that the AVE value is bigger than the correlation of 0.563 level between two variables, and bigger than the MSV value can be evaluated as the evidences for discriminant validity (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Furthermore, it is also determined that composite reliability (CR) which was calculated for each scale is also higher than their AVE values.

TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

After the CFA, SEM was applied. As a result of the SEM, it was determined that perceptions of tourist

Table 5. Results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	S.Values	Error	t-values
Guide's Physical Appearance; AVE: 0,70; CR: 0,90; MSV:0,32			
1. My guide had a professional appearance	0.81	0.34	10.37
2. My guide was very well-dressed.	0.93	0.14	12.81
4. My guide was quite good-looking.	0.92	0.15	12.68
5. My guide had an attractive appearance.	0.66	0.57	7.73
Tourists' Satisfaction AVE: 0,93; CR: 0,98; MSV: 0,32			
1. I think guide was very helpful.	0.97	0.07	Constant
2. I was pleased about the tour guide.	0.98	0.04	30.38
3. Tour guide provided a satisfactory service.	0.97	0.06	28.71
4. In general, I was contented about tour guide's service.	0.93	0.14	21.63
χ^2 :42.75; df:19; χ^2 /df: 2.25; RMSEA: 0.104; CFI: 0.98; GFI: 0.91; AGFI: 0.84 IFI: 0.98; RFI: 0.95; NFI: 0.97; NNFI: 0.97 RMR: 0.093; SRMR: 0.065; Model CAIC < Saturated CAIC: 140.56 < 207.13			

Convergent Validity: T-values of all the items (<1.96; $p < 0.05$) is statistically significant. The average variance extracted (AVE) value in the scale of guide's physical appearance is 0.70 while it is 0.93 in the scale

¹ Since there were only two variables, one MSV which was equal to ASV, was calculated.

guides' physical appearance influenced tourists' satisfaction in a positive way. β coefficient is 0,60 with its related t-value of 6.80. Correlation coefficient is $R^2:0,36$. So, it is possible to say that the hypothesis is supported by the present data.

research that tourist guides adopted a nice attitude and had a professional appearance, which is an indicator of the fact that they made a positive impression on tourists. Attitude and appearance are complementary elements. In guidance service, having a professional

Table 6. Path Estimates of Structural Model

#	Relationship	β	t-value	R^2	Result
H ₁	Physical appearance → Satisfaction	0.60	6.80	0.36	Supported

$\chi^2:42.75$; $df:19$; $\chi^2/df: 2.25$; RMSEA: 0.104; CFI: 0.98; GFI: 0.91; AGFI: 0.84; IFI: 0.98; RFI: 0.95; NFI: 0.97; NNFI: 0.97 RMR: 0.093; SRMR: 0.065; Model CAIC < Saturated CAIC: 140.56 < 207.13

RESULTS

In the study, perceptions of domestic tourists on physical appearance of tourist guides were found out. In the research, 116 domestic tourists stated that their tourist guides from whom they got service during the tour programs which they attended “adopted a nice attitude” and “had a professional appearance”. Moreover, it seemed that tourist guides were “quite good-looking” and “very well-dressed”.

Theoretical Implications

Although it is a significant element, it is also known that physical appearance alone cannot be sufficient by itself. In the study, it was found that perception of tourist guides' physical appearance affected ($\beta:0.60$; $t:6.80$; $R^2:0.36$) tour satisfaction. This finding is quite consistent with the discussions made in literature about physical appearance. Tsai et al., (2016) claim in their study saying that physical appearance has become a trend and is effective on other people's decisions. Moreover, they state that their sense of humor has a positive impact on their physical appearance and interpretation skills. So, tourist guides should be knowledgeable, equipped, and able to interact effectively, and have the ability to speak fluently, which are the primary expectations. When these expectations are supported with physical appearance and sense of humor, a better service presentation occurs with tourists' expectations being met. In other words, they can perceive the service which is provided as of good quality. In their researches, Söderlund and Julander (2009) and Knezevic et al. (2015) express that there is a positive correlation between guests' physical appearance and their satisfaction from the quality of the service which they receive.

In the context of tourism industry, while choosing their tour guides (when they are allowed to), a lot of tourists tend to choose the tour guides whom they normally find physically attractive, and believe that their interpretation process will be beneficial for them (Tsai, Wang & Tseng, 2016: 833). It was specified in the

appearance can be thought as a sign of guides' respect, love and motivation for both their work and their guests. In addition to the stated reasons about why tourist guides are very good-looking, it is possible to think that their good dressing styles are effective, as well. A good dressing style is a sign of guide's respect and care towards his/her profession and guests after all.

In fact, an important perspective about what “beautiffulness and handsomeness” notions should define emerges when domestic tourists' do not label tourist guides as beautiful or handsome. Whereas beautiffulness and handsomeness vary from person to person, what really matters is the professional appearance which might also be expressed as a nice attitude and care for the profession. In other words, a nice attitude and professional appearance are the actual elements. Thus, it ensures that whether their guides are beautiful or handsome is not important for domestic tourists. From a different point of view, this situation can be associated to the fact that most of the participants are culture tourists. It is known that educational and cultural levels of the tourists who participate in culture tours are high (Richards, 2001; Öter & Özdoğan, 2005:134). Naturally, their expectations from the tours might vary. In general, domestic tourists define their guides' physical appearance as good.

Practical Implications

It is clear that, physical appearance can be thought as a satisfying and supporting element for service quality in tourism guidance service. The moment tourist guides meet tourists for the first time, they leave an impression on them mostly by their physical appearance. The first impression on a tourist or a group of tourists can be made when guide appears as elaborate, well-groomed and nice. Whether guide leaves a good or bad impression on tourists with the first impression also depends on himself or herself. As it was already stated before, the first step of a tourist guide's respect for his/her job, which is the care s/he

has for him/herself, starts with “appearance”. No matter if tourists are contented with other services which tour operators provide in tour programs in which they take part; the service which is provided by guide can greatly affect the “satisfaction”. Guide’s communicative skills, knowledge and fluency in language shape the quality of service s/he provides. In other saying, tourists might still be very pleased about the guide and the service s/he provides even if they are not totally happy about the hotel where they stay, the meals presented to them or the equipment of transportation vehicles. This can enable them to complete the tour happily.

Most of the tour operators/travel agencies demand tourists to fill in a “tour evaluation form” at the end of tour. This application is accepted as an effective way in both increasing service quality and managing the complaints. In these forms, tourists express their impressions about every activity in the tour program and the tourist guide. Evaluation steps, especially about tourist guides, are stated as “appearance, knowledge, language use”. In this case, “tourist guide’s appearance” is assumed to be an element which helps and supports tourists’ satisfaction. The study shows that, besides the basic characteristics which tourist guides and tourist guide candidates should own, it is important to remind them that they can display their physical appearance through their behaviors and professionalism. This should be thought as a sign of the respect for the job.

Limitations

It is possible to mention several limitations of the study. 116 domestic tourists participated in it, just before Covid-19 pandemics in Turkey. So, it can be said that the sample size is relatively small. However, it is claimed that, in SEM studies, around 100-150 samples might be enough when the number of variables is below 5, when each has minimum three or more items, and when communalities are bigger than 0,600 (Hair et al. 2010). Furthermore, it is thought that the limitations caused by the study group (sample) could be compensated because a sample size exceeding 10 observations per item was achieved when the 11 items in two scales in total are considered (Nakip, 2003). Still, in the following studies, it is better if the sample size is increased. In addition, researches upon tourists who are from different cultures which care / don’t care about visual image can be conducted. Apart from those who participate in cultural tours, obtaining the data from participants in different guided tours, and analyzing it might also serve to improve the existing literature.

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