



Shopping Behaviors of Tourists in Istanbul: A Qualitative Research on the Shopkeepers in Beyazıt

İstanbul'daki Turistlerin Alışveriş Davranışları: Beyazıt Esnafı Üzerine Nitel Bir Araştırma

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Citation: Dinçer, M. Z., İstanbullu-Dinçer, F., Öğretmenoğlu, M. and Gümüş, E. (2021). Shopping behaviors of tourists in Istanbul: A qualitative research on the shopkeepers in Beyazıt. *Journal of Humanities and Tourism Research*, 11 (4): 785-795.

Submitted: 17.08.2021

Accepted: 24.11.2021

Abstract

Istanbul is an important destination in terms of cultural attractiveness, historical sites, developed infrastructure, and shopping malls. There are various places where tourists can shop. In this context, this study aims to analyze the shopping behaviors of the tourists visiting Beyazıt Istanbul, from the local shopkeepers' perspective. In line with the purpose of this study, an interview technique was used. Semi-structured interview forms were created, and the data was collected from Beyazıt's shopkeepers. The obtained data were analyzed by using MAXQDA software. Based on the analysis, the shopping behavior of tourists has been examined under three categories. These were: (1) tourists' bargaining behaviors, (2) tourists' spending behaviors, and (3) tourists' product choice. It was determined that tourists generally tend to bargain during shopping. It was found that the tourists from the US and Arabian countries spend the most among the tourists that visit Beyazıt. Cheap souvenirs and imitation clothing products were selected as shopping products. In addition, three sub-themes are determined as shopping barriers for tourists. These were: (1) sales pressure (tourist harassment), (2) safety concerns, and (3) tour guide's influence and time limitation.

Keywords: Shopping, shopping behaviors, tourists' spending behaviors, Istanbul

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı, İstanbul'u ziyaret eden turistlerin alışveriş davranışlarını yerel esnaf gözüyle incelemektir. Çalışmada nitel bir yaklaşımı benimsenerek veriler, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formları ile Beyazıt esnafından toplanmıştır. Elde edilen veriler MAXQDA kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Yapılan içerik analizi sonucunda, turistlerin alışveriş davranışları üç başlık altında toplanmıştır. Bunlar; (1) turistlerin pazarlık davranışları, (2) turistlerin harcama davranışları ve (3) turistlerin ürün seçimidir. Turistlerin genellikle alışveriş sırasında pazarlık yapma eğiliminde oldukları belirlenmiştir. Beyazıt'ı ziyaret eden turistler arasında en çok ABD ve Arap ülkelerinden gelen turistlerin harcama yaptığı tespit edilmiştir. Alışveriş ürünleri olarak ucuz hediyelik eşya ve imitasyon giyim ürünlerinin turistler tarafından tercih edildiği belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca turistler için alışveriş engelleri olarak üç alt tema belirlenmiştir. Bunlar; (1) satış baskısı (turist tacizi), (2) güvenlik endişeleri ve (3) tur rehberi etkisi ve zaman sınırlamasıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Alışveriş, alışveriş davranışları, turistlerin harcama davranışları, İstanbul

1. INTRODUCTION

Shopping is a tourism activity that contributes to national economies (Yüksel, 2004; Guo et al., 2009) and it accounts for a significant portion of tourists' spending for many destinations (Lehto et al., 2004). Moreover, shopping is the second most important spending after accommodation (Turner & Reisinger, 2001) and it is claimed that this spending contains "approximately the one-third of total tourism spending" (Snepenger et al., 2003; Yüksel A & Yüksel E, 2007). In this context, it is clear that shopping has a large share of tourism expenditure. For this reason, it has been a topic that attracts the attention of tourism researchers for many years and shopping has been studied from several perspectives in the tourism literature. Some studies have explored "the shopping satisfaction of the tourists" (e.g. Heung & Cheng, 2000; Turner & Reisinger, 2001; Reisinger & Turner, 2002; Wong & Law, 2003; Tosun et al, 2007; Liu, Choi & Lee, 2008; Barutcu et al., 2011; Chang, 2014; Parasakul, 2019), while others have studied "tourist harassment on shopping" (Albuquerque & McElroy, 2001; McElroy, Tarlow, & Carlisle, 2007; Kozak, 2007), and others have examined "shopping and behavioral intention" (e.g. Albayrak, Caber, & Çömen, 2016). In this study, tourists' shopping behaviors and shopping barriers will be examined from the shopkeeper's perspective in general. In this direction, we posed one research question (RQ);

RQ1) *According to the observations of the local shopkeepers, how are the shopping behaviors of the tourists?*

Many things prevent the shopping of tourists. One of them is that "tourists feel risk during shopping". For example according to Yüksel A & Yüksel E (2007), if tourists think that purchasing products in stores is risky, they can stop both shopping and other tourist activity. Furthermore, Meng & Zhang (2016) summarized the type of shopping barriers that tourists have faced as below; "shopping cost", "language problem," "limited shopping time," "mandatory shopping stops," "limited payment methods," and "inconvenience in transportation." In addition, according to Çetin & Kızılırmak (2014) tourists were exposed to negative and disturbing behaviors by the Grand Bazaar Shopkeeper during shopping. This situation prevents their shopping. Although there are various researches on shopping barriers, local shopkeepers are often ignored. Local shopkeepers are constantly in contact with tourists. Naturally, they are the eyes that look at their problems from the outside. That is why it is important to identify tourist' shopping barriers from the perspective of local shopkeepers. In this direction, we posed one research question;

RQ2) *What are the shopping barriers of tourists based on the observations of local Shopkeepers?*

Istanbul is one of the most visited destinations with a high amount of shopping among tourists. Istanbul is an important destination with cultural attractions, historical places, developed infrastructure, and shopping malls. In 2019, 14.906.663 of the tourists that arrived in Turkey (total 45.058.286 visitors) visited Istanbul (Istanbul Culture and Tourism Provincial Directorate, Tourism Statistics Report, 2019). Additionally, Istanbul has numerous places for shopping. One of the top places is the Beyazıt. In this context, it is important to explore the shopping behaviors of the tourists and the shopping barriers that visit this place.

As a result of this study, which aims to examine the shopping behaviors of tourists visiting Istanbul, it is thought that the current study will make a theoretical contribution to the literature of shopping tourism and a practical contribution to Istanbul tourism. We have organized the rest of the present study as follows. First, we reviewed the literature about shopping tourism to establish the theoretical background of the study. Then, the methodology of our study is explained. After that, the results of data analysis, discussion and conclusion are presented.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism plays a major role in closing the balance of payments deficit with the foreign exchange income it provides (İstanbullu Dinçer & Kanay, 2017). Therefore, tourism businesses, destinations, and countries compete fiercely to get a larger share from tourism (Çiftçi & Öğretmenoğlu, 2018; Akova & Öğretmenoğlu, 2020). Tourists' shopping plays an important role in increasing tourism revenues (Choi et al., 2017). It is also known that shopping expenditures are ahead of other touristic expenditures. Shopping tourism contributes to the growth of the tourism industry (Saayman M & Saayman A, 2012). In this context, it is possible to come across various studies dealing with shopping tourism in the literature (Agarwal & Yochum, 1999; Tang & Turco, 2001; Fowler et al., 2012; Garg, 2015; Kozak, 2015; Zhang et al., 2017; Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Wijesundara & Gnanapala, 2019). Agarwal & Yochum (1999) examined the shopping expenditures of tourists coming to Virginia Beach with the survey method. It has been concluded that racial differences among tourists do not affect shopping expenditures. In another study examining the shopping expenditures of tourists, it was concluded that the tourists who visited the destination for the first time spent more than the tourists who visited that destination before (Tang & Turco, 2001). Fowler et al. (2012) aimed to evaluate the security perceptions of tourists during shopping. As a result, it has emerged that tourists have security concerns in shopping centres in destinations. In the study conducted by Garg (2015), it was found that tourists prefer places that are close in terms of transportation and are culturally familiar when choosing the destination to shop. As a result, he stated that the global crises (eg. Earthquakes, terror, and pandemics) affecting the whole world constitute a significant obstacle for tourists to participate in shopping activities. Kozak (2015), in his study, examined the shopping behaviors of British tourists visiting Turkey with a survey method. He concluded that British tourists are willing to bargain. In addition, it has been determined that tourists have a higher tendency to bargain in the country where they are as tourists compared to their own country. Zhang et al. (2017), in a similar study, examined the bargaining behavior of tourists; it was found that tourists who get information from their friends about the country are more insistent on bargaining. Alrawadieh et al. (2019), examined the effect of selling pressure on tourist behavior. They found that harassing tourists to get more sales harms the level of tourists' spending. In another study dealing with the issue of tourist harassment (sales pressure) conducted by Wijesundara & Gnanapala (2019), they stated that tourist harassment causes permanent damage in destinations.

Istanbul is an important city in Turkey in terms of congress, fair, business, shopping, and health tourism (Bahar İstanbullu & Dinçer, 2019). Thus, there are various studies in the literature examining shopping tourism in Istanbul (Çetin & Kızılırmak, 2014; Egresi 2015; İstanbullu Dinçer & Kanay, 2017). Çetin & Kızılırmak (2014) found that tourists are subjected to negative and disturbing behavior of the Grand Bazaar shopkeepers during shopping. Similarly, another study by Egresi (2015) analyzed the travel comment of the tourists on TripAdvisor with content analysis and attempted to determine the shopping satisfaction of the tourists visiting the Grand Bazaar. As a result of the content analysis, it was determined that tourists are uncomfortable with the close personal interest of the shopkeepers. Additionally, tourists expressed being uncomfortable with sales pressure from shopkeepers. However, it came out that some tourists are satisfied with this interest. Lastly, İstanbullu Dinçer & Kanay (2017) examined Grand Bazaar in terms of shopping tourism and investigated the current state of the shopping in the Grand Bazaar. They also examined the advantages and disadvantages of the Grand Bazaar in terms of tourist shopping.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This section of the study has information about the research model, participants and sample, data collection tools, and data analysis.

3.1. Research Model

The study that aims to combine the local shopkeepers' views on tourists' shopping behaviors and tourists' shopping barriers were designed based on a phenomenological model among qualitative research methods (Brinkmann, Jacobsen & Kristiansen, 2014) which is one of the most common methods in tourism research. In this study, local shopkeepers' perspectives on tourists' shopping behaviors and tourists' shopping barriers were defined as phenomena. Later, data was collected with an in-depth interview (Creswell, 2013).

3.2. Participants and Sample

The data were collected from Beyazıt (Istanbul) shopkeepers (December 2019). Beyazıt (see Figure 1) is one of the 57 neighbourhoods of the Fatih district on the European side of Istanbul and contains many historical buildings belonging to the Ottoman and Byzantine Empires. Therefore, it is one of the neighbourhoods where the most tourists visit in Istanbul. In addition, the world-famous Grand Bazaar, which is frequently visited by tourists for shopping, is also located in this region (Fatih Municipality, 2021). Beyazıt is formed by thousands of shops. Since it is challenging to reach all these shopkeepers in terms of time and cost, a purposeful sampling method that is commonly used in qualitative studies was adopted in this study (Palinkas et al., 2015). Accordingly, the study group consisted of 30 voluntary participants working as shopkeepers in the Beyazıt.

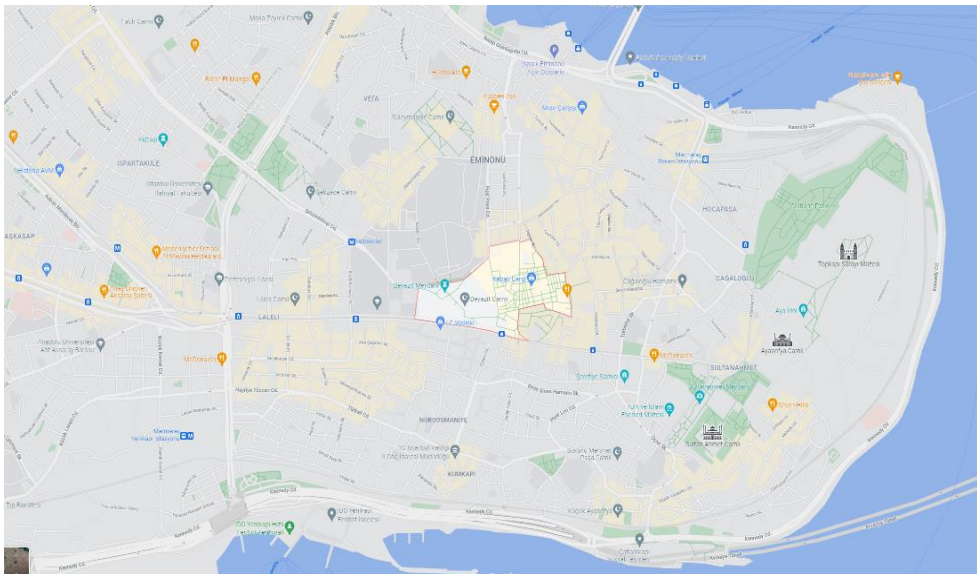


Figure 1. Location of Beyazıt in Istanbul (Source: Google Maps, 2021)

The sufficient sample size in qualitative research can be understood by the research saturation point. The saturation point starts when the same answers are collected and repeated in the interviews (Jennings, 2012). In this context, the interviews were completed when similar answers were obtained.

3.3. Data Collection Tools

To reveal the shopkeepers' views on tourist shopping behaviors and shopping barriers, researchers developed an interview form (McGehee, 2012). The semi-structured form was analyzed by three instructors in the tourism management field. To test the clarity of the questions, a pilot study was conducted with shopkeepers who were not included in the study. In this process, it was

seen that the questions on the form were in general clear and understandable. As a result of the pilot test, it was seen that interview form questions were suitable for the main study. During the interviews, participants were informed about the study, and consent was taken. Shopkeepers that did not desire to participate in the interviews were excluded from the study (Uygur et al., 2019).

3.4. Data Analysis

The data obtained from the interviews were subjected to phenomenological analysis. The shopkeepers' views were read multiple times and divided into units. Later, these units were coded under phenomenological analysis. During coding, concepts expressed by shopkeepers were used. When the statements of shopkeepers were insufficient for coding, the codes that best match the phenomenon was used by the researchers. Similar and close codes were assessed under the same category. In the next stage, these categories were compared and related themes were found. The analysis was conducted at different times by the researchers, cases with consensus, differences were determined, and necessary interviews were conducted. For the research reliability, direct quotes from shopkeepers' views were added. In terms of research ethics, the real names of the participants were not used (Uygur et al., 2019). Participants were coded as Participant 1 and Participant 2.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the study group.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

VARIABLES	N	%
<i>Gender</i>	Female	0
	Male	30
<i>Education</i>	Elementary School	16
	High School	11
	Two-year degree	1
	Undergraduate	2
<i>Nationality</i>	Afghan	1
	Armenian	1
	Turkish	28
<i>Occupation</i>	Gift shop owner	10
	Carpet shop owner	10
	Bag shop owner	3
	Antique dealer	1
	Leather shop owner	5
	Silver shop owner	1
<i>Age</i>	20-30	6
	31-45	8
	46-55	10
	56-65	4
	65 years or above	2
<i>Experience in Beyazıt</i>	5-10 years	7
	11-15	2
	16-25	7
	26-35	8
	40 years or above	6

When the gender of the participants was analyzed, it was seen that all participants were male. In terms of age, the majority of the participants were 46-55 years old. In terms of education status,

the majority of the participants were elementary school and high school graduates. 10 participants were gift shop owners, 10 were carpet shop owners, 3 were bag shop owners, 5 were leather shop owners, and only one was an antique dealer and silver shop owner. In terms of participant nationality, 28 were Turkish, 1 was Armenian and 1 was Afghan. The experience of the participants in the Beyazit was 27 years on average.

4.2. Results Related to Shopping Behaviors of Tourists

Tourists' shopping behaviors were analyzed under three titles (tourists' bargaining behaviors, tourists' spending behaviors, and tourists' product choices).

Tourists' bargaining behaviors: In various societies, bargaining is regarded as a part of shopping. In this study, the interviews with the shopkeepers revealed that tourists tend to bargain at a high level ($f=28$). Additionally, the tour guides had a significant contribution to tourists' bargaining tendencies. For example, participants mentioned: "...their tour guide leads them to bargain as soon as they set out of the plane ..." (Participant 1). "Tourists that spend at very low level come. Tourists bargain a lot. They say, "I will pay 1000 lira for a 2000 lira product". They say, "Take it if you like it." They say, "go sell someone else if you don't like it" ..." (Participant 20).

Tourists' spending behaviors: The studies show that the average spending of tourists from the US is high (Kızıldemir & Saruşık, 2018). Additionally, it is known that Arab tourists make high spending (Tekin & Demirel, 2018). This study supports the findings in this field. According to the interviews with the participants, it was found that the tourists from the wealthy Arabian countries such as Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia ($f=13$) and the tourists from the US ($f=22$) had the most spending in Beyazit. Additionally, it was found that Spanish tourists ($f=6$) spend the most among the European countries. For example, participants mentioned: "... Tourists from the US spend the most. Spanish tourists also spend high. But recently, their numbers are decreasing..." (Participant 2). "...The number of Arabs increased especially after 2017-2018. Tourists from Saudi Arabia and Qatar spend a lot of money. After them, the US people spend the most money..." (Participant 3) "... People from the US spend a lot of money. There is a general perception that Arabs spend a lot. But this is not true. If Arabs with a lot of money come, they spend a good amount of money..." (Participant 4) "...Tourists from Kuwait, Bahrein, Qatar, and the US spend a lot... For example, I would say Americans spend easily..." (Participant 16).

Tourists' Product Choices: Souvenirs play an important role in touristic spending (Çetin et al., 2019). According to the studies, souvenirs rank third among the spending of tourists visiting Turkey (Çeliker & Dulupçu, 2017). Souvenirs are important to reflect the geographical signs of the region and to have local and unique properties (Yanar & Özkan Tağı, 2014). Thus, these products can attract more attention. According to the interviews with the participants, it was found that tourists mostly choose to buy cheap souvenirs that represent Turkey ($f=14$) from Beyazit. Additionally, it was found that they choose imitation clothing products ($f=13$). It was explored that Arab tourists choose products such as Turkish delight and spice ($f=7$) due to cultural closeness. For example, participants mentioned: "...the tourists mostly buy cheap souvenirs..." (Participant 12). "...Imitation products are very fashionable these days; tourists mostly prefer imitation clothing products..." (Participant 23).

4.3. Results Related to Tourists' Shopping Barriers

According to interviews, tourists' shopping barriers were determined under three sub-themes. These were time limitation/tour guide guidance, sales pressure from shopkeepers (harassment), and safety concerns.

Sales Pressure (Tourist harassment): Sellers' pressure is perceived as harassment by tourists (Albuquerque & McElroy, 2001; Kozak, 2007). According to the interviews, it was found that shopkeepers' sales pressure limited the shopping for tourists. Tourists who get bored with sales

pressure are bored from shopping early. For example, participants mentioned: "..., they (shopkeepers) show a carpet after they continue to harass the tourist even though the tourist says s/he will not buy. Then, they apply pressure on them to buy. We are showing just buy. Just buy one..." (Participant 9) "... Tourists are tired of sales pressure. All shopkeepers say "Hi, how are you, where do you come from?" in front of every shop. Think about it, there are thousands of shops here. If you pass 1000 of them, you get tired of hearing the same thing. The shopkeepers have a serious lack of information. This is significantly damaging our image..." (Participant 7).

Safety Concern: As it is known, tourists care for the safety factor when choosing their destination. Tourists hesitate to visit destinations with low safety levels (Seçilmiş & Ünlüönen, 2009). Additionally, a bad image affects the tourists' ideas about a destination. In addition, tourists that do not feel safe are more uneasy. Tourists are afraid of walking in crowded places due to previous terrorist attacks. This leads to an unwillingness to spend a lot of time in crowded places for shopping. For example, participants mentioned: "... A while ago, tourists were afraid of bombs and terror. This made them nervous. Thank God, this fear decreased in the last two years. They are more comfortable..." (Participant 11).

Tour guide influence and time limitation: The findings of this study show that tour guide's influenced tourist's shopping. It was found that limited shopping time during the tour prevented tourists from the comfortable shop. For example, participants mentioned: "... If the tourists come with tour guides, they visit the museums first. They arrive here at around 17:00. The tour guide gives them 1-2 hours. The tourists are limited. However, the individual tourists visit in the morning. They walk around until afternoon. There is nothing to prevent them..." (Participant 12). "... They come with tours. Tour guides give tourists 45 minutes. There are thousands of shops. How can they visit them all?" (Participant 7).

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

In this study, local shopkeepers' perceptions of tourists' shopping behaviors and shopping barriers were examined. First, the tourists' shopping behaviors were analyzed under 3 sub-themes. These were; (1) tourists' bargaining behaviors, (2) tourists' spending behaviors, and (3) tourists' product choices.

As a result of the interviews, it was determined that the tourists tend to bargain at a high level during the shopping. Again, the participants state that the tour guides play a significant role in tourists' bargaining behaviors. When the "tourists' spending behaviors" sub-theme was investigated, local shopkeepers expressed that tourists from countries such as the US, Qatar, and Kuwait tend to spend more. The shopkeepers stated that not all the Arab countries were the same and tourists from other Arabian countries did not spend much. These results are similar to the Doka Report (2014). For example, according to Doka Report (2014), tourists from the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia that visit Turkey on average spend 4 times more than tourists from other countries. While the average foreign spending in Turkey in 2013 was \$749, the average spending of a tourist from Gulf countries was around \$3000 (Tekin & Demirel, 2018). When the "Tourists' Product Choice" sub-theme was investigated, local shopkeepers stated that tourists mostly buy imitation products and cheap souvenirs. The price factor plays an important role in the tourists' imitation product selection. Additionally, successful imitation products that are sold here might be another reason for tourists to choose these imitation products. For example, Sabah-Kıyan (2013) investigated "luxurious product imitations" and found that products are successfully imitated in the Grand Bazaar, therefore; participants choose these products as revealed by the interviews.

Second, tourists' shopping barriers were examined under three sub-themes. These were; (1) time limitation/tour guide influence, (2) sales pressure from shopkeepers (harassment), and (3) safety concerns. According to participants, these factors prevent comfortable shopping for tourists.

When the “tour guide influence and time limitation” sub-theme was investigated, tourists’ visiting with tours lead to completing the shopping within the time designated by the tour guide. This prevents the tourists from comfortably visiting the Beyazit. Since the Grand Bazaar is closed at 7 pm, this poses a limitation for shopping for tourists. When the safety concern sub-theme was investigated, it can be seen that tourists do not want to spend a lot of time in the Grand Bazaar due to safety concerns. The tourists are worried about terrorist attacks in crowded places. According to Güvenek & Alptekin (2015), terrorism is one of the most important factors that negatively affect the tourism sector all over the world. Since attacks towards tourists are covered in the global media, this news damages the country's image and might lead to negative prejudices for the tourists. When shopkeepers’ sales pressure (tourist harassment) sub-theme was investigated, it was found that tourists are tired of shopkeepers’ sales pressure and therefore, leave the Grand Bazaar sooner. This result is in line with the findings of Çetin & Kızılırmak (2014). According to their study, tourists expressed that they are subjected to uncomfortable behavior from the shopkeepers in the Grand Bazaar.

Regarding the theoretical contribution, the current study makes several contributions to the literature in the following ways. First, although some research has been done on shopping tourism and the shopping behaviors of tourists, the data in these studies have generally been obtained from the tourists themselves by questionnaires or interviews. However, the observations of the touristic local shopkeepers who are in direct contact with the tourists are ignored. In this study, the shopping behaviors of tourists are examined from the point of view of local shopkeepers, giving a different perspective to the literature. Second, in this study, besides the shopping behaviors of tourists, the factors that restrict their shopping as a result of interviews were determined. These findings can contribute to the growing literature on shopping tourism. Regarding the practical contributions, this study also makes several contributions to the tourism industry. In addition, the factors that prevent tourists’ from doing more shopping were determined. These were time limitation/tour guide guidance, sales pressure from shopkeepers (harassment), and safety concerns. Tourist activity planners can increase the activities of tourists in the Beyazit region. By doing so, tourists can be made to shop more. To avoid selling pressure, local shopkeepers in tourist areas can be trained on this subject. In addition, more conscious salespeople can be employed in this regard. To avoid the security concerns of tourists, advertisements and promotions that will change the perceptions of tourists can be carried out.

There are some limitations in current research. First, time is an important limitation. Due to time limitations, some occupation branches such as jewellers were not included in the study. Including the jewellers in the sample in future studies is important for the generalization of different results. Second, in this study, data were collected only from the Beyazit region of Istanbul. Therefore, it only reflects the perspectives of the Shopkeepers in Beyazit. Thus, similar and comparative studies might be conducted for other touristic historical places. Third, the data in this study was collected with interview techniques. Future studies can collect the data with different techniques such as observation and survey. Fourth, the current study was carried out before the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, different results may be obtained in future studies.

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Shopping Behaviors of Tourists in Istanbul: A Qualitative Research on the Shopkeepers in Beyazıt

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