

# DESTINATION ATTRIBUTES IN THE EYE OF THE LOCAL PEOPLE<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The aim of the study is to determine the attributes of a destination that is believed to pull tourists by the local people. Attributes that attract tourists to a destination in literature are obtained from tourists' view. In this study, the pull attributes are obtained from local people's view. In this sense 295 local people were asked about the attributes that is thought to attract tourist to the destination. 18 attributes and four dimensions are derived which are facilities and atmosphere, locality, historical-religious-natural places and, image. The most important attributes are historical places, religious places, the villages, the climate and the entertaining facilities.

**Key Words:** Destination attributes, local people, pull factors, destination.

**JEL Code:** Z33

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Destination attributes are defined as the attributes that satisfies the tourist and creates a revisit intention. Dann (1977) has defined these attributes as pull factors. However, the literature on pull factors of a destination (Chacko and Fenich, 2000; Klenosky, 2002; Kim et al., 2003; Dwyer et al., 2004; Çakıcı and Harman, 2007; Battour et al., 2011; Eusebio and Vieira, 2011; Albayrak and Caber, 2013; Kim, 2014) are from tourist's perspective. In other words, pull factors are measured by asking tourists. However, for current study this methodology considered as a one-sided perspective. Yet, the awareness of local people of the attributes which the destination they live have may empower the attractiveness of the attributes and is believed to be holistic. Thus, the aim of the study is to find out the attributes that are believed to be attractive by tourists in the local people perspective.

## 2. LITERATURE

### 2.1. Destination Pull Factors

Dann (1977)'s push-pull framework explains the motivations of tourists visiting a destination. In his framework, push factors refer to the forces that leads the tourist visit a destination. These are considered as the needs and wants of the tourist such as escape, relaxation etc. The pull factors are considered as the destination features which attract the tourist to a destination such as beach, sport facilities (Klenosky, 2002). While the pull factors are exogenous and factors, the push factors are endogenous and psychological factors (Albayrak and Caber, 2013; Lam and Hsu, 2006; cited from Çakıcı and Harman, 2007).

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Destination attributes of the pull factors are important for some reasons as tourists compare the possible destinations they can visit and make their decisions according to the attributes a destination have. Besides, destination attributes effect the image of a destination (Kim, 2014). For a destination to be competitive, it should provide a unique attraction to tourists (Dwyer et al., 2004), and this attraction will increase the tourists' satisfaction and the intention to recommend (Eusebio and Vieria, 2011). However, in todays' competitive environment, when a destination tries and succeeds in a practice, the others copy it immediately (Albayrak and Caber, 2013).

There are plenty of studies considering pull and push factors of tourist motivations (Chacko and Fenich, 2000; Klenosky, 2002; Kim et al., 2003; Dwyer et al., 2004; Çakıcı and Harman, 2007; Mohammad and Som, 2010; Zabkar et al., 2010; Battour et al., 2011; Eusebio and Vieira, 2011; Albayrak and Caber, 2013; Kim, 2014). These are either on only pull, push or both pull and push motivations together as Klenosky (2002) stated that they should not be viewed as independent factors that affect the tourists' destination choice.

Chacko and Fenich (2000) have determined the destination attributes in convention, exposition and meeting industry. They have compared seven cities of USA using 12 city attributes which are hotel room availability and room rates, meeting space availability, cost of food and beverage, cost and availability of air service, convenience of local transportation, promotional appeal of city, destination services, safety of attendees, friendliness of local people and helpfulness of service people. According to Klenosky (2002), a pull factor may be different for visitors. While a beach may serve as a tool for socializing, it may also mean a tool to look good (have a tan) or as a tool to enjoy the nature. In his study, Klenosky (2002) used the means-end approach to explain the push-pull factors of visitors. For this aim he listed the pull attributes in six dimensions, namely, scenic/natural resources, historic/cultural attractions, warm climate, skiing, party atmosphere and new/unique location.

Kim et al. (2003) have studied the push pull factors and their effects on tourists, and found 12 pull items are grouped in three dimensions, which are key tourist resources, information and convenience of facilities, and accessibility and transportation. They compared the push and pull factors to the tourists' demographic characteristics. The pull factors differed according to the visitors' age, occupation and, gender. Although Dwyer et al. (2004) have studied the destination competitiveness, in their study Crouch and Ritchie (1999)'s destination competitiveness is classified in eight headings in which core resources is one of them. This core resource is regarded as the destination attribute which attracts tourists. Regarding this, Dwyer et al. (2004) have grouped the competitiveness indicators in 12 dimensions. Although they studied the competitiveness indicators, most of the factors can be treated as the destination attributes.

Çakıcı and Harman (2007) examined the destination attributes for birdwatchers using the Buhalis (2000)'s 6A's to examine the factors. Thus, in their study they had the six dimensions, (attractions, accessibility, amenities, available packages, activities and, ancillary services) suitable for birdwatching. Mohammad and Som (2010) have investigated the tourists' motivation to visit Jordan as an overseas destination for their sampling group. They used 26 pull factors in eight dimensions. These are events and activities, easy access and affordable, history and culture, variety seeking, adventure, natural resources, heritage sites and sightseeing. They stated that the most important pull tool is the Petra, one of the new seven wonders of the world and is listed in World Heritage Sites in UNESCO. Zabkar et al. (2010) have assessed the perceived quality of

a destination through destination attributes. They used six attributes in one dimension that some of them are, ease of reaching, cleanliness, diversity of attractions, accommodation, friendliness of local people which are similar to the Buhalis (2000)'s 6A framework.

Considering the religious tourism, Battour et al. (2011) have examined the destination attributes for Muslim tourists, as religion is one of the important factor that effects the decision-making process. In their focus group discussions, they found that there are tangible and intangible aspects of the attributes in which, prayer facilities and halal food are tangible aspects, and Islamic entertainment, Islamic dress codes, general Islamic morality and Islamic call for prayers are the intangible aspects. Eusebio and Vieira (2011) have sought the destination attributes' evaluation, satisfaction and behavioral intentions using nine items and three dimensions, which are basic services, accessibility and, attractions. The basic services were about the accommodation and food and beverage; accessibility was about the transportation, infrastructure, signs and traffic congestion; and, attractions were about the cultural and natural attractions. Albayrak and Caber (2013) have studied the symmetric and asymmetric influences of destination attributes on visitor satisfaction. This means, an improvement in performance would not result in an increase in overall tourist satisfaction. They classified the product attributes in three subgroups which are basic, performance and excitement factors. They listed 21 destination attributes grouped into five dimensions. These are information, shopping, local transportation, health and hygiene and accommodation. According to their study, information and accommodation were two most important features of the destination affecting the visitor satisfaction. Kim (2014) has related the destination attributes to memorable tourism experiences and grouped 43 destination items in ten dimensions, such as infrastructure, accessibility, local culture/history, physiography, activities & events.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1. Sample**

The sample of this study was comprised of 295 local people living in Kuşadası, where it is the first destination which tourism is developed as a resort destination in Turkey ([www.geka.gov.tr](http://www.geka.gov.tr)). Kuşadası has a cultural and historical character as it is located near to Ephesus and local villages like Şirince and has a religious character as The House of Virgin Mary, St. John's Basilica and İsa Bey Mosque are in a close distance.

Data were collected during March and April 2017 from local people living in Kuşadası. The population of Kuşadası is 103.849 ([www.yerelnet.org.tr](http://www.yerelnet.org.tr)), however there are three municipalities in Kuşadası. The research is only limited to the people reside in Kuşadası municipality area. A survey was distributed to local people in Kuşadası. The participation to the survey was voluntary. As the resident accepted to participate, the survey was given to him/her to fill. 295 of the 380 questionnaires provided usable data (77.6%). 63.7% of the respondents were male. The residents being surveyed were living in Kuşadası for 1 to 5 years (32.2) and 38.6% of the respondents are not earning their income from tourism.

## 2.2. Measures

The pull factors of the survey had 27 destination attributes. These attributes are obtained from the literature (Chacko and Fenich, 2000; Klenosky, 2002; Kim et al., 2003; Dwyer et al., 2004; Çakıcı and Harman, 2007; Mohammad and Som, 2010; Zabkar et al., 2010; Battour et al., 2011; Eusebio and Vieira, 2011; Albayrak and Caber, 2013; Kim, 2014). The attributes were asked to the local people whether they are important as a pull factor or not.

As listed in means and standard deviations presented in Table 1 the most important pull factors of the destination for tourists according to the locals are the historical places (Ephesus, Hierapolis etc.), religious places (The House of Mother Mary, St. John's Basilica etc.), the villages (Şirince, Caferli etc.), the climate and the entertaining facilities (aqua parks, safari etc.). According to the local people, the least important attributes for the tourists to visit Kuşadası are the scientific facilities (conference, symposium etc.), high quality restaurants and the security of the destination.

**Table 1:** Destination Pull Attributes for Tourists According to the Local People

<b>Destination Attributes</b>	<b><i>M</i></b>	<b><i>SD</i></b>	<b><i>n</i></b>
Historical places (Ephesus, Hierapolis etc.)	3,96	1,18021	295
Religious places (The House of Mother Mary, St. John's Basilica etc.),	3,87	1,20530	295
Villages (Şirince, Kirazlı etc.)	3,80	1,05817	295
Climate	3,78	1,20187	295
Entertainment (Aqua park, safari etc.)	3,70	1,20338	295
Ease of transportation	3,61	1,14013	295
Natural beauty (Güzelçamlı National Park, Pamukkale)	3,53	1,20311	295
Night life (bar, club etc.)	3,48	1,21729	295
Located near the sea	3,41	1,25246	295
Scenery	3,37	1,33374	295
Atmosphere	3,32	1,13342	295
Local market	3,32	1,15530	295
Local food	3,25	1,25076	295
Popularity	3,24	1,24598	295
Peaceful and silent city	3,24	1,35450	295
No visa required	3,23	1,37378	295
The price in the restaurants	3,20	1,22862	295
Cultural facilities (Turkish bath, Turkish night etc.)	3,18	1,20300	295
Foreign language speaking citizens	3,16	1,18210	295
The value of the money	3,16	1,18604	295
High quality hotels	3,14	1,13176	295
Shopping	3,14	1,26171	295
Aqua sports (diving, sailing)	3,13	1,24316	295
Cleanliness	3,09	1,34332	295
Security of the destination	3,06	1,35388	295
High quality restaurants	3,01	1,15023	295
Scientific facilities (conference, symposium etc.)	2,66	1,32534	295

### 2.3. Factor Analysis

Factor analysis which is used to explore the dimensions in which a concept is explained (Sipahi et al., 2008) is a multivariate analysis technique that provide to reduce many variables to fewer variables based on the relations between the variables (İslamoğlu, 2011). In this study, factor analysis was made to determine the destination factors. Six factors were found as destination themes but two of them and of 27 attributes, 9 attributes were removed from the analysis as they have a low reliability coefficient. Thus, the remaining 18 attributes are grouped into four factors which are (1) facilities and atmosphere, (2) locality, (3) historical-religious-natural places and, (4) image. The factor analysis and the Cronbach alpha coefficients are listed in Table 2.

**Table 2: Destination Pull Factors**

Item	$\alpha$	M	Factor Loadings			
			1	2	3	4
<b>Factor 1: Facilities &amp; Atmosphere</b>	,836	3,31				
Night life (Club, bar etc.)			,762			
High quality hotels			,696			
Local food			,677			
Entertainment (Aqua parks, safari etc.)			,624			
Cultural facilities			,592			
Atmosphere			,508			
Aqua sports			,470			
<b>Factor 2: Locality</b>	,814	3,42				
Ease of transportation				,850		
Local markets				,759		
The value of money				,715		
Peaceful and silent city				,680		
Villages (Şirince, Caferli etc.)				,653		
<b>Factor 3: Historical, Religious and Natural Places</b>	,781	3,78				
Historical places (Ephesus, Hierapolis)					,798	
Religious places (The House of Mother Mary, St. John's Basilica)					,749	
Natural beauty (Güzelçamlı National Park, Pamukkale)					,434	
<b>Factor 4: Image</b>	,679	3,13				
Image of the city						,777
Security						,557
Cleanliness						,543

**Note:** N=295, Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy: ,818; p=000

The first factor is the “**facilities and atmosphere**” factor and have seven attributes. These are the vibrant night life in the destination, high quality hotels, and the variety of local food, entertainment facilities such as aqua parks and safari, cultural facilities, atmosphere of the destination and aqua sports such as diving and sailing. The factor had a mean of 3.31 (S.D. = 0,85048) which is the third among the four themes. The factor accounted for 14.2% of the total variance. The second factor is named as “**locality**”. The theme has a mean 3.42 (S.D. = 0,89826) which is the second among others. It has five attributes which are the ease of transportation within the destination, local markets (bazaar), high value of money, the peace of the destination and closeness to the villages that attract tourists such as Şirince and Caferli etc. The factor accounted for 11.6% of the total variance.

The third factor is the “**historical and religious and natural places**” of the destination. The mean of the theme is 3,78 (S.D. = 0,99728) and the highest among all. The destination has a national park in a 30-km distance, it has religious places in a 15-20 km distance such as The House of Mother Mary and St. John’s Basilica, and it has historical places such as Ephesus and Hierapolis. Although Hierapolis is in a 200-km distance, the cruise ships visiting the destination aim also the visits to Hierapolis and Pamukkale. The factor accounted for 9.8% of the total variance. The fourth and the last factor is the “**image**” of the destination. This theme has the lowest mean, 3,13 (S.D. = 1,02659). This factor has three attributes which are image of the city, security and the cleanliness of the destination. The factor accounted for 8.2% of the total variance.

### 3. DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to reveal the attributes and factors which the local people think tourists are visiting Kuşadası. 18 attributes are observed and they were grouped in four dimensions which mean that the tourists distinguish the attributes and do not consider these attributes in a holistic way (Dwyer et al., 2004).

Kuşadası is a destination where tourists are visiting the destination by cruises. Thus, cruise tourism is an important source of income in Kuşadası as it is considered as one of the most important ports in Turkey ([www.geka.gov.tr](http://www.geka.gov.tr)). However, due to the terror and political crisis with other countries, the number of cruise ships and tourist arrivals are in a significant decline ([www.aydindenge.com.tr](http://www.aydindenge.com.tr)). Determining the reasons of tourists visiting a destination is crucial. These reasons are known as push and pull factors identified by Dann (1977). While push factors are related to the tourists himself, the pull factors are related to the destinations’ itself (Albayrak and Caber, 2013; Lam and Hsu, 2006; cf. Çakıcı and Harman, 2007).

#### 3.1. Theoretical Implications

In this study, pull attributes and factors are obtained. Although similar attributes and factors are also in the literature (Chacko and Fenich, 2000; Klenosky, 2002; Kim et al., 2003; Dwyer et al., 2004; Çakıcı and Harman, 2007; Mohammad and Som, 2010; Zabkar et al., 2010; Battour et al., 2011; Eusebio and Vieira, 2011; Albayrak and Caber, 2013; Kim, 2014; Kim, 2014), the factors are found out by asking tourists. But in this study, the factors are achieved by asking local people. Thus, it is aimed to determine the thoughts of local people about the pull factors that make the tourists visit Kuşadası. This determination is important not only to explain the meaning of the reasons of visiting a destination but also to understand the awareness of the local people about the city they are living in. Residents who are aware of the place they are living, are also provide the sustainability and protection of the tourist attracting factors. This may also contribute to both environmental and cultural sustainability of a destination.

In the study, the attributes that pull tourist to the destination are determined and grouped under four dimensions. Being close to the historical and religious places and to the local villages, the climate and the entertainment facilities are the first five pull attributes. The main reason for the cruise ships coming Kuşadası is to visit Ephesus ancient city. Although Ephesus had 1.6 million visitors in 2015, due to political tension within the country and with its neighbors, the number has dropped to 820.000 in 2016 ([www.hurriyet.com.tr](http://www.hurriyet.com.tr)). Besides in an approximately 70 km distance, Priene-Miletus-

Didyma ancient cities and in a 200-km distance Hierapolis ancient city can also be visited. In terms of religion, The House of Mother Mary is considered as important not only for the tourists but also for the local people. St. John's Basilica is also very close. In 2015 more than 700.000 visitors have visited The House of Mother Mary ([www.haberturk.com](http://www.haberturk.com)). The third attribute is the local villages near Kuşadası. Şirince which is an old Greek village is one of the villages where it has an old church inside. But more importantly, the village is an important wine-producing region. The fourth attribute that is considered as important for tourists is the climate of the destination. Kuşadası where sea-sand-sun tourism is an important attribute with its hot days more than cold days ([www.mgm.gov.tr](http://www.mgm.gov.tr)), can be attractive for tourists from a cold climate. Besides as the destination hosts third age tourists, the weather is also suitable for them with not being extremely hot or cold. The fifth attribute is the entertainment facilities in the destination. Kuşadası has the biggest aqua park in Europe and off-road safari and horse-safari are also provided within the destination.

The study has revealed that historical-religious-natural places factor is the most important factor that is thought to attract tourist. Locality, facilities and atmosphere and image are the other three factors, respectively. The historical and religious places close to the destination are important for the tourists as stated earlier. The locality of a destination is the second most important factor. This attraction is regarded as both having local markets and being close to local villages. It can be said that being local enhance the authenticity of a place. The facilities and atmosphere is the third factor. The nightlife, high qualified hotels, local food and the atmosphere are believed to attract tourists. However, considering nightlife, within the same region, Bodrum is more popular than Kuşadası. In terms of local food, Kuşadası is not a destination known with its cuisine such as Gaziantep, Hatay or Kayseri. Instead of having a local cuisine, the destination has the character of Aegean cuisine. Aqua sports are also believed to be important for tourists. Especially, to improve diving in Kuşadası, Kuşadası Municipality has sunk an airplane ([www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com)). Besides, in terms of sailing, there are races organized in the destination ([www.kusadasiyatkulubu.com](http://www.kusadasiyatkulubu.com)). Although they are organized once in a year, local people think it as a pull factor.

The last factor is the image. It is believed that the image of the city, security of the destination and the cleanliness of Kuşadası is to attract tourists. The local people of Kuşadası think that the destination is still a secure place when the terror in the region and the country is considered. Yet, security is an important factor for tourists. Moreover, the cleanliness is also thought to attract tourists.

### **3.2. Practical Implications**

In this research it is suggested that, pull factors of a destination according to the local people are also worth examining. Although the local people are living in the destination, their thoughts about the tourist on why they are visiting the destination is important. Thus, regardless of the income the local people earn, it is important to understand why tourists are visiting the destination. Because this may increase the intention to protect the environmental and cultural/religious assets the destination have. Besides, this tendency to protect, may also affect the support to tourism. Moreover, this understanding may help to own the destination more. This situation will be more crucial for the people who earns their incomes from tourism sector. This will make the local people see the destination from a different perspective as they understand the tourist and

their psychology to visit a destination which may increase their awareness towards the destination. Yet, it is expected from the local people to be more sensitive to the environment that will provide the regional sustainability.

According to the results obtained from the study, it is believed that tourists are visiting the destination due to its historical, religious places, climate and the entertainment facilities it has. It is expected from the local people to protect not only the ones in Ephesus but also the ones within Kuşadası. As for religious places, although they are not located inside the destination, they are supposed to have a protective attitude for the ones in close distances. Hence, it is suggested that the local people should cooperate with the local government considering governance, they need to motive the authorities. However, it should be noted that, these destination attributes are considered as important by local people. Thus, it should be avoided from an extremely protective attitude.

The study has some limitations. The first is that the study is cross-sectional and this causes the disregarding of the tourist profile that is changing due to the political and economic reasons by the local people. The second limitation is the ignoring the differentiation of the tourists according to their countries and cultures. This is also thought that it may affect the perception of attributes. The third limitation is that, the local people data gathered may have not enough idea on the attributes of the destination. They may not have sufficient knowledge about Kuşadası, where they live and its surroundings and, that may affect their perceptions.

For further studies, not only pull but also push factors and other related subjects of the tourist according to the local people may be investigated. This is important because as the local people understand the reasons why tourists are visiting a destination, they may help the tourism planning and development of a destination.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The studies to date on pull factors of a destination are determined in tourists' view. Thus, tourists have stated the attributes that attracted them to a destination. In contrast, in this study the pull factors of a destination are obtained by the point of local people. In other words, local people were asked for the attributes that are thought to be attractive for tourists. The results of the study give an insight not only to the attributes that a destination have but also suggest a reverse sight for studying destination attributes for further studies.



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