

Experiential Aspects of Balloon Tourism within the Context of Destination Marketing: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

In today's competitive tourism markets, offering the memorable and unique destination experiences became an important advantage. Considering the concept of the social and psychological needs, and motivations, it is clear that balloon tours are important in positioning and differentiation strategies of destinations. The aim of the study is to determine the dimensions of the balloon tour experience in the context of the adventure tourism. A qualitative research methodology is embraced and the reviews on Tripadvisor were analyzed with content analysis. The findings have revealed that the balloon experience has been classified in four dimensions (educational, esthetic, entertainment, escapist). The findings conform to the 4E experience framework developed by Pine & Gilmore (1999). The esthetic and entertainment dimensions are leading realms of balloon experience.

Keywords: Destination Marketing, Tourism Experience, Balloon Tour Experience, Adventure Tourism.

Destinasyon Pazarlaması Bağlamında Balon Turizminin Deneysel Yönleri: Nitel Bir Araştırma

Öz

Günümüzün rekabetçi pazar koşullarında, bölgeyi ziyaret eden turistlere hatırlanabilir ve eşsiz destinasyon deneyimleri yaşatmak, turizmde önemli bir avantaj haline gelmiştir. Sosyal ve psikolojik ihtiyaçlar ile turist motivasyonları değerlendirildiğinde balon turlarının konumlandırma ve farklılaşma stratejilerinde destinasyonlar açısından önemli olduğu ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu bağlamda çalışmanın amacı, turist değerlendirmelerine odaklanılarak macera turizmi kapsamında balon turu deneyiminin boyutlarını ortaya çıkarmaktır. Nitel araştırma yöntemini benimseyen çalışma kapsamında balon deneyimi yaşayan turistlere ait Tripadvisor'da yer alan yorumlar içerik analizine tabi tutulmuştur. Bulgular, balon deneyiminin eğitsel, estetik, eğlence ve kaçış olmak üzere dört boyuttan meydana geldiğini ortaya koymuştur. Boyutlar, Pine & Gilmore (1999) tarafından geliştirilen 4E deneyim modeline uyum gösterirken, 'estetik ve eğlence' boyutları balon deneyiminin öne çıkan boyutları olmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Destinasyon Pazarlaması, Turizm Deneyimi, Balon Turu Deneyimi, Macera Turizmi.

1. Introduction

The countries in all stages of economic development has recognized the ecological, cultural, and economic value of the adventure tourism within the market growth as it is the fastest growing categories in tourism sector (UNWTO, 2014: 9-10). Meanwhile, Greenwood and Yeoman (2017: 13) state that "the increasing personal disposable income and the focus on healthy living" are the drivers for the growing the activity holiday market and the traditional model of "the beach" or "the pool" holiday is out of the trend as a wide range of attractions and experiences are provided by the tourism product developers. The post-modern tourists have different expectations anyway, and want to have experiences with outdoor activities containing emotions such as excitement (Buckley, 2006). Moreover, today's tourists are adventure enthusiasts for activities, while exploring destinations. In this context it is crucial to understand the dimensions of the tourism experience as all the adventure tourism activities contains unique characteristics. According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), standardized products and services are no longer enough to make a difference and to provide economic growth. For

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this reason, the unique and unforgettable experiences have to be designed for creating customer value and customer loyalty. According to Lin et al. (2009), in many studies, experiential design, leading to loyalty is considered a successful marketing strategy. The underlying reasons why customers show intense interest in experiences is undoubtedly the memories of the experiences. The experiences allow the person to do extraordinary and special things, to acquire new knowledge or to have fun, and this creates memory (Sundbo and Darmer, 2008). Pine and Gillmore (1999) state that experiences are not material, but existing goods and services are differentiated by experience. In this context, the tourism sector is at the forefront of the sectors where customers' feelings can be provoked; memorable experiences can be designed and customer's behaviors can be driven (Prayag et al. 2017; Prayag et al. 2013; Williams, 2006; Oh et al., 2007; Otto and Ritchie, 1996). People visit touristic destinations to satisfy their specific needs (social, emotional, psychological, etc.), and touristic experiences formed by these visits are occurrences outside of the usual environment/timeline (Volo, 2010; Chhetri et al., 2004). Haahti and Komppula (2006) indicate that people's leisure time is now more valuable and that leisure time events responding to escape/entertainment need have been leading new forms with experiences. As Weber (2001) noted the current conceptualization of adventure tourism contains only one aspect of adventure (specific recreation activities), but the phenomenon of adventure tourism should be set in the context of the tourism system in order to highlight the contribution of the tourism aspect. Therefore, the findings of this study are thought to lead to better understanding of the experiential dimensions of the adventure experience in context of balloon tourism. While offering a better understanding of tourist experiences, the results are presumed to help the discovery of best destination strategy that will be advantageous to meet tourist expectations.

2. Adventure Tourism and Hot Air Balloons

As the adventure and tourism have grown closer, the package of adventure holidays has increased as tourism product (Beedie, 2011). According to Greenwood and Yeoman (2017:19) consumers interest in activity products is increasing and the proportion of the people who want to take part in the adventure tourism will arise in the future. So, it is assumed that this type of tourism emerging in the literature in the 1990s is going to be one of the fastest growing niche markets in the world. Buckley (2006) states that adventure tourism has received little attention in the academic literature, as most of the studies focus on accidents or injuries. Gardiner and Kwek (2017) use the adventure tourism term in order to describe the travel behavior engaging in activities which contains risk, excitement, emotional arousal, and personal challenge. Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) defines adventure tourism as "the trip that includes at least two of the following three elements: physical activity, natural environment and cultural immersion" (UNWTO, 2014: 10). For example, a trip to Cappadocia involving balloon experience (physical activity) over the fairy chimneys (natural environment) and interaction with locals (cultural immersion). Buckley (2006), identified the adventure tourism as tending to be more about "doing" rather than "seeing" (Buckley 2006). Adventure tourists are identified as "passionate, risk-taking and willing to pay for exciting and authentic experiences" by UNWTO (2014: 10) and often seek new travel destinations and activities. Moreover, trying new things (novelty) and learning is the core of the adventure tourism experience (Gardiner and Kwek, 2017). But Weber (2001) highlights that in the literature that previous understanding of adventure experiences was characterized by the interplay of competence and risk, but now the quest for insight and knowledge has replaced with these compo-

nents. It has been revealed in a study on adventure tourism has been held by ATTA and The George Washington University on international travelers at three regions: Europe, North America, and South America that 42% of the travelers reported that an adventure activity as the main activity of their last trip. This study also provides the demographics, psychographics, and behaviors. According to the results, adventure travelers read publications which cover traditional adventure and recreation topics; adventure travelers use professional services such as guides, tour operators etc. Moreover, they plan their trips by researching online and they recommend on social media sites, mostly on Facebook (Adventure Tourism Market Report, 2013).

Buckley (2006) identifies that the boundaries of adventure tourism are not well defined, but activities such climbing, abseiling, sea kayaking, white water kayaking, skiing, snowboarding, caving, ballooning, skydiving, parapenting, mountain biking, diving, snorkeling, surfing, sail boarding, snowmobiling, off-road driving, heliskiing are the forms of adventure tourism. In Adventure Tourism Development Index Report (ATDI, 2016) it is stated that adventure travel includes any of the following 34 activities: “joining an archeological expedition; attending local festival/fairs; backpacking; bird watching; camping, caving; climbing; taking a cruise; participating in cultural, educational or environmentally sustainable activities; fishing/fly-fishing; getting to know the locals; hiking; horseback riding; hunting, kayaking; whitewater rafting; learning a new language; orienteering; joining a research expedition or safari; sailing, scuba diving; snorkeling; skiing and snowboarding; surfing; trekking; walking; visiting friends and family; visiting a historical site; and participating in a volunteer tourism program” (ATDI, 2016). Bu it is added in this study that balloon tourism should be included in this classification as it contains at least two of the elements in adventure tourism definition. Moreover, Buckley (2006) uses the term of adventure tourism to mean “the guided commercial tours where the principal attraction is an outdoor activity that relies on features of the natural terrain, generally requires specialized sporting or similar equipment, and is exciting for the tour clients”. This definition gives some clues that adventure activities are varied adapted to local resources and entrepreneurship in the destinations and some equipment are needed such as balloon, bike, parachute etc.

Hot-air balloon³ flights provide a much quieter option, but are only feasible in sites with adequate take-off and landing areas, and relatively calm and nonturbulent wind conditions. Balloon flights are now available at sites ranging from wilderness wildlife reserves in Africa to tourist beach towns in Australia (Buckley, 2006:383). Wanderlust Travel Magazine has declared the 10 places for the unforgettable hot air balloon ride in 2015 as they stated that it is possible to “*escape the crowds and experience the thrill of seeing the world from above by taking to the skies in a hot air balloon*” (www.vilnius-tourism.lt, 15.08.2017). The destinations that balloon tours are among main activities are listed as Jaipur/India, Canterbury Plains/New Zealand, Cappadocia/Turkey, Namib Desert/Namibia, Albuquerque/US, Masai Mara/Kenya, Vilnius/Lithuania, Bagan, Burma/Myanmar, Red Centre/Australia, Nile River/Egypt.

³Balloons are highly controllable up and down but, fly in the direction of the wind, to inflate and launch a large passenger-rides balloon; a suitable grass area is needed. The most popular passenger-carrying balloons fly 10-12 in one basket. The size that will work best for operation depends on several factors: the local countryside, weather conditions, and population size or tourism numbers. To fly any hot-air balloon the pilot must have a private pilot's licence (www.cameronballoons.co.uk, 15.08.2017).

3. Tourism Experience and 4E Experience Model

While the service economy offers customized services to its customers, the experience economy offers personal experiences to consumers as going beyond the service design. So the businesses should direct to the marketing activities through the customer's feelings and emotions (Guzel and Papatya, 2012). The concept of experience marketing was first used by Toffler (1970) in his work "Future Shock" and he anticipated that future experiences would take the place of classical products and services. However, after the mid-90s the approach of experience marketing has gained popularity with Pine and Gilmore (1999), Schmitt (1999), Smith and Wheeler (2002), Shaw (2005), Lasella and Britton (2003) who are guiding to the experience marketing and this approach has become a strategic competitive tool for businesses in the 21st century in which the traditional marketing has lost its effectiveness. Pine and Gilmore (1999) have accepted the experience economy as being the forth economic offering coming after goods, products and services. In the forthcoming years the customer experience has been accepted as a concept creating value for both customers and businesses (Prayag et al. 2017; Prayag et al. 2013; Shaw, 2005; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Smith and Wheeler, 2002; Schmitt, 1999). Experiences are obtained by the participation in imaginary or virtual events/places, enriches the inner world of customers and their life experiences, takes place in the customers memory, meets the internal needs of customers, occurs with interactions existing between businesses and customers, leads the customers taking an active role, arises by the exchange of information, emotions and sensory stimulus, are designed by the theme and the story, appeals to the heart, mind and senses, leads some major changes on customers (Guzel and Papatya, 2012). Experiences, has taken the place of functional values by directing to emotional values, and today experiences the power to influence people's emotions and psychology (Prayag et al. 2017; Prayag et al. 2013; Amasaka and Nagasawa, 2000; Schmitt, 1999). Experiences are only subjective events that can be felt by those who live the experience, and there is a link between past memories and the future with these experience (Sanders, 2005), and today's people are ready to pay more for unforgettable and unique experiences (Pine and Gilmore, 2012).

4E model of Pine and Gilmore has four 'realms' of consumer experiences which are differentiated at two levels: i) the degree of customer involvement (passive vs. active participation); and ii) the desire with which the customer connects or engages with the event/performance (absorption vs. immersion). The four types of experiences are entertainment (passive/absorption); educational (active/absorption); escapist (active/immersion); and esthetic (passive/immersion) (Hosany and Witham, 2010). Pine and Gillmore (1999) draw attention to four main areas of experience: 'entertainment, education, escape and esthetic'. In this context, it can be said that tourism experiences should be designed to offer entertainment, education, escape and esthetic together. Entertainment is the oldest and most widely used form of experience, and the dimension mostly offered to consumers by businesses.

Experiences perceived as entertainment are often activities that are passively absorbed by the individual's sensory. People use five sensory organs to assimilate experiences they experience while listening to music, watching a stage show, a theatrical play, or a visual show (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Williams, 2006, Oh, Fiore and Jeoung, 2007) and customers have positive feelings and emotions (Prayag et al. 2017; Guzel, 2014). In the education dimension, people want to learn newly things/skills (Guzel, 2014). Educationalexperiences engage the person mentally or physically, focusing on improving the individual's knowledge and skills. In

other words, the way to increase the level of knowledge about a subject or the development of skills is through mentally or physically active participation in educational activities (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). In the escapism dimensions that has the most effective bond between the people and the experience, tourist want to escape from the daily routine and have a different character (Guzel, 2014) and people are completely actively involved in the experience. Casinos, theme parks, internet chat rooms, playgrounds in the forests are among the environments that allow the escape experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Williams, 2006). Kotler (1984) notes that, people traveled from one place to another and spend time if there is something valueable in the escape experience. In esthetic dimension, customers find themselves in different places formed by sensory contents and physical surroundings (Guzel, 2014) Esthetic experiences are expressed addressing a product to the human five sensory organs (Schmitt 1999; Lindstrom, 2006, Townsend, 1997). Pine and Gilmore (1999) state that on the esthetic experience although people are fully involved in the environment, almost no influence of people occurs to the atmosphere or the event. The person enjoys the place within the context of the esthetic experience dimension, and is influenced by the nature of the environment. For this reason, design, architectural items and physical elements are of great importance for the individual.

Touristic experiences produced for psychological needs are built around hundreds of factors such as feelings, emotions, smells, colors, sounds, human relationships, symbolic values, decorations, physical contents, differentiated spaces; time, marketing activities, and the experiences built around these factors bring out the inner feelings, desires and curiosity of people towards the individualization, differentiation and specialization (Guzel and Papatya, 2014). Tourism is a sector in which multiple activities, benefits and interactions are included due to its structure. In the occurrence of tourism experience, tourists, service providers and other people benefiting from the same service actively interact with the physical and natural environment. Smith (1994) emphasizes the importance of the tourist services such as information, transportation, accommodation and sightseeing in creating experience, while underlining how destination-based inputs can turn into experiential output for tourists. Because people now consume the meaning of the product rather than the product itself, and the usage of stimuli such as atmosphere, décor arrangement is effective to create experiences (Yuan and Wu, 2008; Baudrillard, 1998). As for further validation of measurement of experience dimensions, in other tourism experiences and contexts (balloon experience, agro tourism experience etc.) should be researched (Allan, 2016; Guzel, 2014). Moreover, in the literature review, it is seen that the relevant literature has various adventure experience-based studies which are focused on mostly on diving, whitewater rafting, river, scuba divers, sea kayakers, canoeing (Beckman et. al, 2017; Cheng and Tsaur, 2012; Varley, 2011; Dimmock, 2009; Schreyer and Roggenbuck, 1978). It is found out that the current literature lacked study focused on balloon experience. Thereby it is assumed that the findings of this study will provide important clues for balloon experience dimensions and experience-based tourism product design.

4. Methodology

Embracing the qualitative research method, the paper sifts through positive reviews on Tripadvisor shared by satisfied tourists who experienced hot-air balloon tour in Cappadocia/Turkey. The separate review texts are united and turned into a document. The document which is formed by online data borrowed from the website is analyzed elaborately and the

content is coded into themes. Based on Pine & Gilmore's (1999) experiential components and extensive literature review, a practical coding list was formed and revised in order to facilitate discovery of sub-themes associated with balloon flight experience up in the Cappadocia sky. For this purpose, a comprehensive content analysis is performed on 100% of the holistic e-reviews (n:172) that are focused solely on satisfactory balloon experience and shared between August 2008- July 2017. Moreover, it is recognized that Tripadvisor hosts online evaluations of the tourists who had purchased a balloon trip from a ballooning company or travel agency. As distinct from the balloon experience, the second type e-reviews are listed under company name and include customer evaluations mostly focused on the service quality standards such as company's approach to tourists, variety of pre-flight breakfast, comfort of transfer van, attitude of the pilot towards customers and his/her proficiency in good navigation or safe landing of the hot-air balloon. However, it is found out that some tourists assessed the balloon tour experience in their service quality-focused e-review texts. Therefore, *'the balloon experience-focused'* statements were carefully picked out and coded under sub-themes. In this process, the authors coded the relevant sentence, paragraph, phrase or a word with an elaborate, selective and comprehensive research approach. The counting system of the coders is based on frequency.

4.1. Data Analysis

Data analysis for coding, categorization, figures, graphics were performed benefitting from NVIVO 10 Software. Finally, a total of 275 online review texts were exposed to content analysis and 899 items are categorized under 4 main themes inclusive of 20 child-nodes. Furthermore after raking through final sentences, 513 coding references are found out to put forward a practical and understandable qualitative-data based model. The aforementioned reference sentences that have the possibility to turn into a NVIVO *'parent node'* are also construed by coders and 4 main dimensions are found out to emerge as a result of balloon experience. Ultimately, it can be said that a total of 1412 coding references tied to 8 main themes are discovered and exposed to an exhaustive content analysis.

4.2. Reliability

It is a well-known fact that reliability in qualitative studies is a crucial concept and the necessity to put forward clearly with supportive evidences. The extent of agreement among raters, data collectors or coders is mostly called, *"interrater reliability"*. "In a popular and traditional way, the researchers mostly calculate as percent agreement. The number of agreement scores is divided by total number (McHugh, 2012). Although there are various and practical statistics that have been used to measure interrater reliability, in many qualitative social science studies it is tested with the help of the Kappa statistic introduced by Cohen (1960). He states that Kappa scores between 0.81-1.00 indicate perfect agreement. On the other hand, obtaining Kappa scores ranging from 0.61 to 0.80 are evaluated as substantial, adequate or problematic. However, there are two similar alternatives to test reliability suggested by Holsti (1969) and Neuendorf (2002). It is remarked that agreement can be calculated by applying practical formulas ($PA_o = A/n$). In these reliability calculation methods including Cohen's Kappa the complete agreement is represented as 1, whereas disagreement is represented as 0. Examining satisfaction-focused Tripadvisor reviews on hot-air balloon tour experience, the authors calculated reliability based on Cohen (1960) and Holsti (1969) methods. The results indicate that high percent agreement (%90) and satisfactory Kappa score (0.85) are achieved. These results are evaluated as an indicator of good interrater reliability.

5. Findings

As shown in Table 1, the study reveals that balloon tour experience of tourists conforms to the theoretical framework and sub-themes are seen to fit in with modern approach developed by Pine & Gilmore (1999) who point out that experiences have an intrinsic character and they have physical, cognitive and spiritual level in the involved individual. It is put forward that 19 child nodes are grouped under '4E' dimensions: 'educational, esthetic, entertainment, escapist' which are named as 'four realms of experience' by Pine & Gilmore (1999). The findings indicate that 'Esthetic' (35%) and 'Entertainment' (34.3%) are leading and dominant realms of 'Balloon Experience.' According to the reviewers, Cappadocia balloon experience offers the opportunity to watch the sunrise at dawn, and to enjoy spectacular landscape and awesome views (14.7%) together with harmony of the other hot-air balloons flying around (7.2%). The balloon tourists express their esthetic experiences as follows:

'...the landscape is like no other place on earth and with balloons close enough to touch the sky is equally beautiful.'; '...the perfect ride over the valleys, dipping close to the rocks so we could get a close encounter and then soaring high for a bird's eye view.'; '...You will find yourself flying with a hundred other balloons dotting the morning Cappadocia sky.' '...Imagine the great view of being able to see close to 80 or 90 hot air balloons up in the air on that day and we flew as high as 750 meters.'; '...mountain and suddenly you see hundreds of balloons scattered like colorful butterflies in the clear blue sky'; '...We were gliding across to fairy chimneys, up and down over the Rose Valley and Love Valley. I did not want to end!'; 'We flew over a valley of large rocks shaped like mushrooms, a landscape paralleled to none. These images were hollowed out of volcanic a rock formation hundreds of years ago and stands like a large garden undisturbed.'; '...From the basket I watched the sunrise over the hills and bathe the valley in a rose gold light.'; '...Watching the mesmerizing sunrise, while trying to catch the sun and also trying to capture the moment on camera.'

Almost quarter of the statements (23%) underline that flying in hot-air balloon is an amazing, fantastic and best experience of life. It is understood from the expressions of tourists that Cappadocia balloon trip is a kind of enjoyable activity which offers opportunity to spend nice time and gliding in heights is a stunning, breathtaking and fascinating experience:

'At age 52 this is by far one of the most enjoyable things i have ever done.'; 'The pilot joke and story-telling throughout the flight, will make you forget how quick time flies'; 'Super enjoyable!!'; Flying with the balloon is fantastic experience.'; 'Fabulous! Way beyond my imagination!'; 'Ballooning in Cappadocia was a wonderful experience.'; 'From the moment when the balloons were being inflated, our excitement and anticipation increased every minute.'; 'It's absolutely breathtaking and stunning.'; 'Forget about the early wake-up, this experience will let you breathless, to the point.'

It is seen that numerical distribution in sub-themes of 'Escapist' realm is balanced and focused on safeness and uniqueness of the balloon experience:

'The whole flight, I felt so safe there was no hiccup or shaky flight. It was so smooth and stable you forgot you were up in the sky. It was nothing like an airplane flight where you could sometime feel shakes and upward/downward momentum. I felt so safe really.'; 'We had a great ride with plenty of safety measures taken into consideration throughout the ride and during the take-off and landing.'; 'A true lifetime experience!'; 'Hot air ballooning makes it

most people's bucket list for a **once in a lifetime experience** '...as something you may never have the chance of doing again!'

The confessions of the tourists indicate that magic and attractiveness of the balloon experience play a key role in creating '*magnetic influence*' even on acrophobic people:

'First, I would note, I am a chicken and never thought I would want to get in hot air balloon. But, the notion of seeing Cappadocia from the air was too much to resist.'; **'I am afraid of heights** but nevertheless was committed to going on a balloon ride in Cappadocia...'; *'...Although I was scared, it was a great way to see the area. Having toured the area, the previous day, as we glided over the areas, it was a different perspective that was really fabulous.'*; *'What first I thought it would be knee-buckling frightening, and was too proud to tell my wife, turned out to be one of the best holiday experiences of my life.'*

Findings revealed that educational component took (%8) a backseat. According to Table 1 and Graphic 1, coding references count of sub-themes associated with education is not very high and very few reviewers stated that balloon tour is kind of leisure activity which provides improvement of knowledge about Cappadocia region, volcanic formations, pre-flight preparation, navigation and landing system in hot-air ballooning.

The words, expressions and sentence patterns used in e-review texts show that the visitors who are influenced by the destination's extraordinary and unique geography, feel themselves in a fairy tale, magical land, fantasy, fantasy film, heaven, on another planet or on moon surface, leading to a surreal experience:

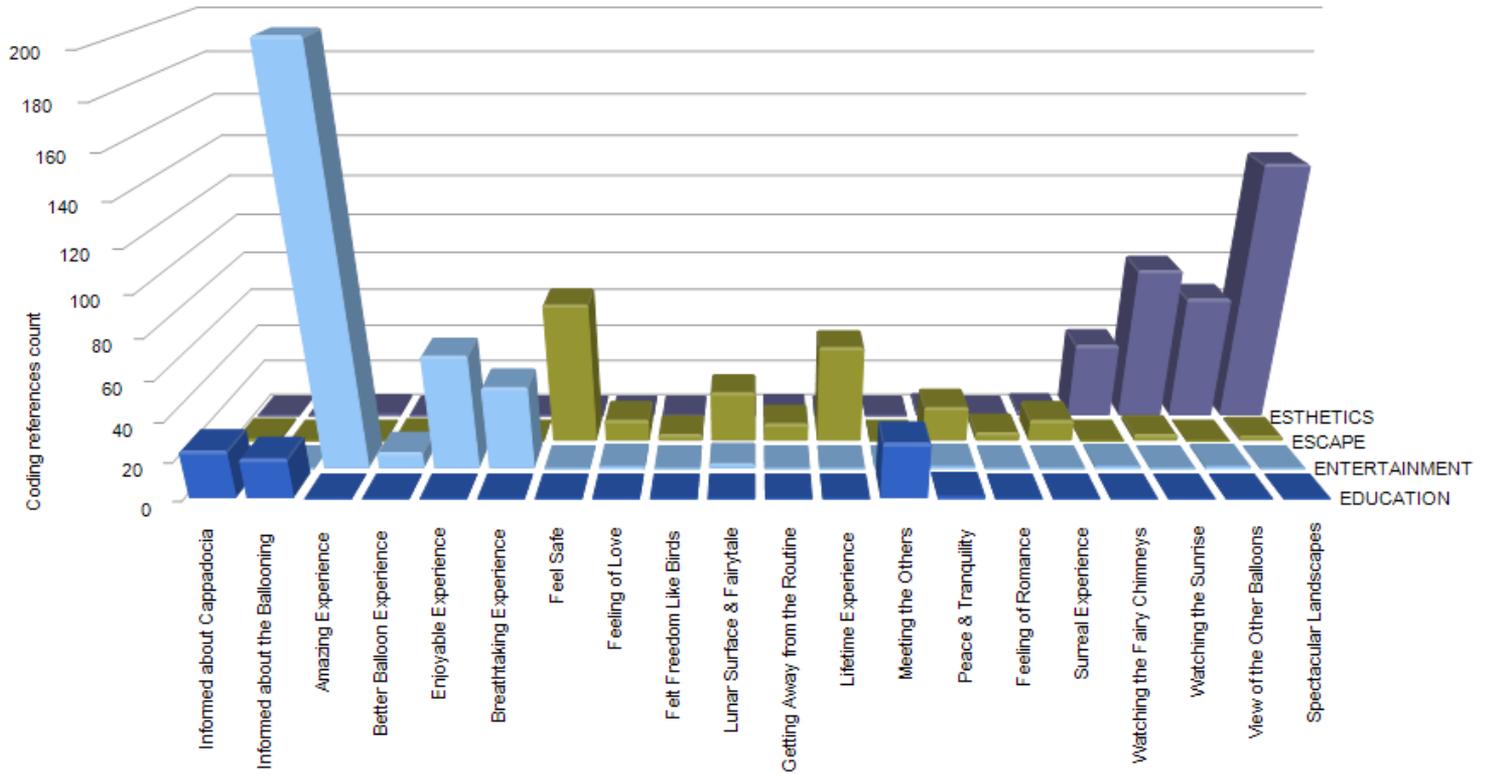
'...whole experience was like a fairytale'; *'It was a magical experience, like flying in your dream'*; *'I feel that I was in the another planet it looks like I'm in the Star Wars movies.'*; *'Lava formations seemed like fairytale castles'*; *'Floating over a fairyland'*; *'...something dreamed up for a futuristic fantasy film.'*; *'For an hour, we were in heaven!'*; *'a very special experience with a lunar landscape below.'*; *'No words can describe the beauty, the magic of this experience. You expect to see some little magical creature come out of the Troglodytic houses in the rocks below.'*; *'rising above and drifting around the 'fairy chimneys' of Cappadocia is a surreal experien*

Table 1: Experiential Components of Cappadocia Balloon Experience

ESTHETIC (315)	f	%
<i>Spectacular Landscape & Awesome Views</i>	132	15.0
<i>Opportunity to Watch the Sunrise in Cappadocia</i>	79	9.0
<i>Perfect View & Harmony of the Surrounding Balloons</i>	64	7.0
<i>Watching and Photographing the Fairy Chimneys & Rock Formations</i>	39	0.5
EDUCATIONAL (72)		
<i>Informed about the Cappadocia region and volcanic formations</i>	24	3.0
<i>Informed about preparation, navigation and landing system of the balloon</i>	20	2.5
<i>Opportunity to meet balloon pilot & staff & other tourists</i>	28	3.5
ENTERTAINMENT (308)		
<i>Amazing & Fantastic & Best Experience</i>	200	23.0
<i>Enjoyable & Cheerful Experience</i>	58	6.5
<i>Exciting-Breathtaking Experience</i>	42	5.0
<i>Better than the past balloon experiences</i>	8	1.0
ESCAPIST (204)		
<i>Feel Safe</i>	72	8.0
<i>Lifetime Experience</i>	50	5.6
<i>Felt like in Lunar Surface & Fairytale & Dream & Heaven</i>	27	3.0

<i>Peace & Tranquility</i>	18	2.0
<i>Feeling of Love & Passion</i>	11	1.5
<i>Surreal Experience</i>	11	1.5
<i>Getting away from the routine</i>	9	1.5
<i>Feeling of Romance</i>	4	0,5
<i>Felt Freedom Like Birds</i>	3	0,4
Total	899	% 100

By utilizing Nvivo 10 Software, word frequency analysis is performed and results are shown in Figure 1. The Table 2 contains the count and the list of most frequent words used in online review texts while the figure presents analysis results pictorially to underline and shed light on highlights of '*Balloon Experience.*' It is found out that '*experience, Cappadocia, balloons, pilot, flight, must, trip and best*' are among the most frequent words. Moreover, the following words: '*morning, early, view, landing, sunrise, Turkey, champagne and landscape*' are used at least 50 times by balloon tour experiencers. The findings indicate that tourists also use positive adjectives such as '*good, fantastic, beautiful, amazing, great, breathtaking, unforgettable, memorable, magical, best, inspiring*' related with balloon tour experience.



Graphic 1: Four Realms and Sub-Components of Hot-Air Balloon Experience

As indicated in previous word frequency analysis, the tourists who have joined balloon tour in Cappadocia define their trip as *'unforgettable experience that must be tried once in lifetime.'* It is found out that 60 reviewers mentioned about 'memorability' of their balloon experience. It means that 21.8% of the satisfied tourists identify the balloon tour experience as memorable. They think that ballooning is a kind of unforgettable unique adventure experience that worth waking up at an early time in the morning before the sunrise and %8 of the tourists also form sentences or used expressions that can be an indicator of future re-experience intention:

'..it is one of those memories that will never get out of my mind.'; 'unforgettable memory that I will remember for the rest of my life!'; 'A total memorable experience, a once in a lifetime memory that I will cherish!'; 'Unforgettable adventure'; 'Will come back even only for repeating this experience!', 'I would definitely do it again & again.'; 'Looking forward to have another one in the near future.'

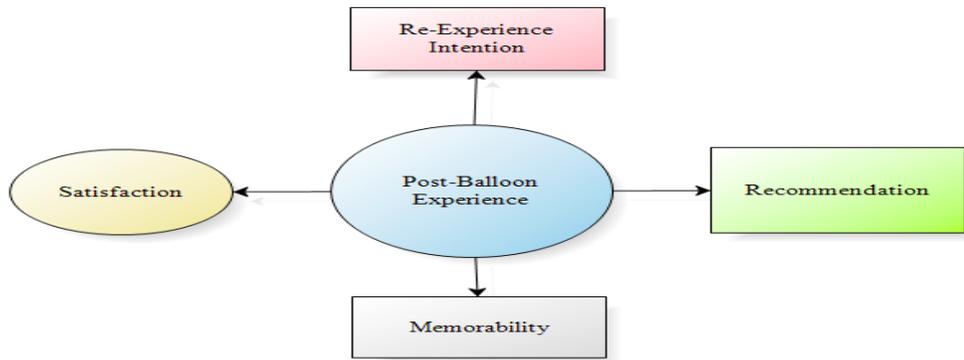


Figure 2: Hypothetical Model Based on Qualitative Data

Table 3:Qualitative Variables

Satisfaction	275
Recommendation	156
Memorability	60
Re-Experience Intention	22

The Figure 2 shows the hypothetical model formed by Nvivo Software based on the qualitative data and theoretical framework. It is thought that the well-designed and perfectly-staged balloon experience can lead to high satisfaction and positive word of mouth. It is clearly understood that during the balloon trip, the tourists who spent good time in the basket by experiencing the blue sky, gliding over the picturesque landscape, meeting the others and taking nice pictures accompanied by positive emotional arousal, are in the tendency to gather unforgettable memories positioned in deeper part of the mind. It can be deduced from the hypothetical model that the people have the possibility to come back to destination triggered by them re-experience desire although the low rate is obtained as a result of content analysis.

8. Conclusion and Discussion

The adventure tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism sector, attracting high value customers, supporting local economies, and encouraging sustainable practices. Thus, the continued growth of this sector creates positive impacts not only for tourism, but also for destination economies, their people, and their environment (UNWTO, 2014: 16). Thus, it is important to understand the all types of alternative tourism experiences to take the attention of the postmodern tourist who are looking for the unique and adventures experiences. As the aim of this study was revealing the balloon experience dimensions, the findings have shown that balloon experience consists of 4 experience dimensions, fitting in with the theoretical framework Pine & Gilmore (1999), pointing out that experiences physical, cognitive, emotional and spiritual level. '4E' dimensions of balloon experience consist in 'educational, esthetic, entertainment, escape' dimensions. Results of this study indicate that balloon experiences can be represented in terms of four experience dimensions. The findings establish generalizability of Hosany and Witham's (2010) cruisers' experience research and Guzel's (2014) tour experience research. 'Esthetic' and 'Entertainment' are the leading realms of *Balloon Experience*. Findings of this study show that esthetic is as an important component of the balloon experience as there are some studies in the literature having the similar findings (Guzel, 2014; Hosany and Witham, 2010). As stated in the literature review, the balloon experience should be operated over the magnificent sites, *spectacular landscape, views, harmony of the surrounding containing the fairy chimneys & rock formations have been come up* in the esthetic dimension as important factors directing to the sensory organs, especially to the visual organs. Within this dimensions, it is clear that tourists are influenced by the nature of the environment as it was highlighted in the literature. Similarly, Oh et al. (2007) mentioned that nature trips, nature walks, nature landscapes with beautiful scenery, artistic value spaces are evaluated within the scope of esthetic experience dimension. Being an important behavior driver of the experiential value perception in the tourism sector, destinations/businesses could have a positive image with this value perception. So destinations have to market themselves as unique and appealing to those travelers looking for incomparable experiences. So, if the esthetic dimensions being the leading dimensions taken into the considerations, destinations organizations and the travel agencies should focus on the architectural items and physical elements for the promotions. Moreover, this dimensions being important for experience marketing has been highlighted by the academics in the literature (Holbrook, 1994; Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Schmitt, 1999; Baker, 1986).

Entertainment dimension has followed the esthetic dimension in this study as being mostly commented and highlighted with the expressions of "amazing, fantastic, enjoyable, cheerful, exciting and breathtaking". Schreyer and Roggenbuck (1978) founded also the excitement as a dimension of the river experience. People always participate in tourism activities for joy and entertainment. In this context, it is possible to mention that the entertainment experience with sensory characteristics has a lot of importance in the tourism sector. Especially in touristic destinations recreational and animation activities have been presented for the purpose of enjoying and entertainment. In Guzel's (2014) research it has been founded out that customers have positive feelings and emotions through the entertainment dimension. Different forms and view of the Cappadocia maybe make the tourists feel joyful and positive feelings make the experience entertaining and tourists are spending their time out of the hotel on the tour environment like Cappadocia that couldn't be seen any other country to entertain

and verify their holiday time. So, within these findings the entertainment items have to be presented on the tour catalogs and promotional videos by related authorized ones. If tourists believe that they will entertain and have funny experience, they will be volunteers in taking places in the adventures activities.

After the esthetic and entertainment dimension, the escape dimension has come in order, especially with the items of feeling safe, feel like in dream, peace, feeling of love and passion, feeling of romance etc. these items have shown that people tend to experience the extraordinary activities, in order to leave daily life routine and getting in a magical world. The studies on touristic experience have revealed that emotional reactions effect the post-experience behaviors positively (Prayag et al. 2017; Prayag et al. 2013; Hosany and Witham, 2010; Turley and Milliman, 2000). Williams (2006) highlights the importance of the escapism change in tourism with the activities such as bungee jumping, water sports and so on. The educational dimension has got the lowest experience comments as Hosany and Witham (2010) state that opportunities for tourists to increase their knowledge and skills (e.g. onboard lectures, cooking lessons), such experiences were of little importance in predicting satisfaction and intention to recommend. Moreover, in Guzel's (2014) study the entertainment, esthetic and escape dimensions are much more important predictor rather than education dimension in creating emotional arousal. But, balloon tour is kind of leisure activity which provides improvement of knowledge about region, formations, pre-flight preparation, navigation and landing system. In the literature it has been noted that guided tours are very important for this dimension (Williams, 2006; Oh, Fiore ve Jeung, 2007; Guzel, 2014). So the pilots of the balloons and the local guides are very important in order to activate this dimension as it has been highlighted that the experiences in tourism should be design as multidimensional (Schmitt, 1999; Shaw, 2005). So, viewed through a regional lens, the benefits of strong management policies or a focus on brand development for balloon tourism has become more obvious. For example, consider New Zealand, which for years has invested in the 100% pure brand. The marketing campaign, focused on sustainability and the pristine qualities of the country's natural assets, has contributed to its sustained growth in the adventure tourism sector (ATDI, 2016).

Supported by qualitative data, the results clarified the important role and function of well-staged ballooning experience which come into existence by combination of four main realms and sub-components in creating visitors who recommend the destination to potential tourists, collect unforgettable memories and have the intention of re-experience ballooning in Cappadocia. In line with these findings, it can be alleged that satisfaction-focused and wonderfully-organized ballooning with high service standards can contribute to creation of memorable destinations which can call the visitors back to the region and continuation of competitive advantage in tourism market.

The supportive evidences included in e-reviews point out that attractiveness and magnetic power of ballooning experience can pushing motivation that can be influential in overcoming the acrophobia. Moreover, some of the tourists are found out to describe the ballooning as a '*safe experience*' after witnessing a secure and smooth landing performed by skilled and professional pilot. This can show that experiencing the sky on hot-air balloon basket is not a fear-some activity to take part in.

Findings of the study put forward that tourists used positive adjectives and laudatory expressions in the description of their early-day activity accompanied by sunrise and tranquility.

It is possible to allege that ballooning is one of the best once in lifetime experiences that have magical power leading to arousal of emotions such as 'love, romanticism, passion, attachment.' The word frequency results have supportive evidences that strengthen the possibility of personal emotional arousal. Experiencing a successful flight in Cappadocia sky by joining a well-organized balloon tour with professional pilot and staff might have the potential to put tourists in positive emotional states leading to satisfaction. This result can be assessed as an indicator that emphasizes the role of the experience in changing people's mood and driving them into more positive emotional situation.

This paper focused on balloon experience as an adventure tourism activity and plumbs the depth of accessible online tourist reviews in limited number. Because of time constraint, the review types were classified into two main categories according to their principal focal points. The results of this study can not be generalised and further supportive qualitative or quantitative researches based on different approaches and viewpoints with relevant theoretical frameworks are required to improve understanding of the subject efficiently.

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