VACATIONING AT A DESTINATION UNDER TERORISM RISK: TOURISTS' DESTINATION IMAGE PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ISTANBUL

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Abstract: The main purpose of this study is to analyze the consequences of terror related risks on destination image perceptions of tourists who are vacationing at a destination under terrorism risks. The survey was conducted with tourists, who were visiting Istanbul during a risky period. Before surveying with tourists, several terrorism attacks had took place in Istanbul.   This study investigates the impact of terrorism activities on tourists' destination image perceptions of Istanbul as a travel destination, and also its impact on destination satisfaction, which in turn influence tourists revisit intentions and word of mouth behavior. The survey was conducted with 156 respondents at the Sultan Ahmet Square. Destination image of Istanbul is assessed with the destination atmosphere, travel environment, attraction & events, shopping, accommodation, and dining dimensions. Although tourists are vacationing at a destination under terrorism risk, results of this study indicate that the destination image of Istanbul is positive in the mind of tourists. Visiting Istanbul is quite valuable in terms of emotional, functional and overall values. Overall, respondents are highly satisfied with their decision to travel to Istanbul and strongly agree that it is right choice to visiting Istanbul. Majority of the respondents indicated that they are satisfied or extremely satisfied with their visit to Istanbul. Lastly, the findings showed that tourists, who visited Istanbul under terrorism risks, are highly satisfied with their travel experience and expressed that they will recommend Istanbul to others, say positive things about Istanbul, and they stated that they are willing to revisit Istanbul.

Keywords: Destination Image, Perceived Value, Destination Loyalty, Terrorism

Introduction

There has been substantial growth in the tourism industry and it has become one of the most rapid growing economic sectors in the world for last decades. According to World Tourism Organization 2015 Annual Report international tourist arrivals grew by 4.4% in 2015 with an additional 49 million more than in 2014, to reach a total of 1,184 million in 2015 (World Tourism Organization, 2015). Kim, Holland, and Han (2013) state that since tourism has been playing important role for regional development, there are strong competition among destinations to attract more tourists and make them become loyal to destination. Therefore, tourism professionals and destination marketers should re-consider their tourism marketing strategies to increase customer loyalty and build long-term relationships with their customers.

It is commonly recognized that destination image, that is "the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination", is a key factor in destination marketing (Taşçı & Gertner, 2007). Liu (2014) argues that in order to survive at the global competitive marketplace, it is crucial to create a unique destination image that differentiates a destination from the other destinations to get a positive positioning in the minds of customers. Baloglu and McCleary (1999) state that brand image is mainly shaped by two major forces: stimulus factors (e.g. information sources and previous experiences), and personal factors (e.g. psychological and social factors).

It is argued that favorable destination image leads to higher perceived value. Perceived value is one of the most important key determinant of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Kim, Holland, & Han, 2013) as well as repurchase intentions (Demirgüneş, 2015). Favorable destination image positively influence tourists' satisfaction (Prayag et al., 2015). In other words, it is stated that perceived value has positive effect on future behavioral intentions (e.g. intention to revisit) (Kim, Holland, & Han, 2013). Demirgüneş (2015) argued that customer's perceived value can be determined by money, quality, benefit, and social psychology; while Peng and Liang (2013) identified perceived values as functional, emotional and price values. Lee, Yoon, and Lee (2007) argued that perceived value is

identified in the form of emotional, functional and overall value, which can be used to measure tourists' perceived value for a destination.

Buyong and Rajani (2011) state that destination loyalty can be expressed as: behavioral loyalty, attitudinal loyalty, and composite loyalty. While behavioral loyalty can be defined as repeat visits, attitudinal loyalty refers to tourists' psychological expression such as intention to revisit a destination or recommend it to others, and finally composite loyalty is an integration of both attitude and behavior loyalty (Buyong & Rajani, 2011). Kim, Holland, and Han (2013) argue that repeat visits have often been regarded as desirable behaviors in terms of destination loyalty. In the literature it is argued that satisfied the customers are more likely to revisit the same destination, and are more willing to share their positive travel experience with their friends and relatives (Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Chia & Qub, 2008).

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the consequences of terror related risks on destination image perceptions of tourists who are vacationing at a destination under terrorism risks. The survey was conducted with tourists, who were visiting Istanbul during a risky period. Before surveying with tourists, several terrorism attacks had took place in Istanbul. This study investigates the impact of terrorism activities on tourists' destination image perceptions of Istanbul as a travel destination, and also its impact on destination satisfaction, which in turn influence tourists revisit intentions and word of mouth behavior

Research Methodology

The survey was conducted with tourists at the Sultan Ahmet Square. The data for this research were collected by using a self-administrated questionnaire. Destination image scale of this study includes 33 items that is adapted from several studies (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Qu, Kim, & Im, 2011; Kim, Holland, & Han, 2013). Perceived value scale embraces 8 items and it is adapted from the study of Kim, Holland, and Han (2013). Lastly, 3- item scale which is also adapted from the study of Kim, Holland, and Han (2013) is used to assess tourist destination loyalty. Destination image, perceived value, and destination loyalty scales are measured with seven-point Likert-type scale (1= "strongly disagree" to 7= "strongly agree"). To measure overall satisfaction, a single-item scale was used and respondents were asked to rate satisfaction level with the visiting experience of Istanbul on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1= "extremely unsatisfied" to 7= "extremely satisfied".

Cronbach's Alpha value for the destination image, perceived value, and destination loyalty scale are 0.95, 0.92, and 0.84, respectively. Since Cronbach's Alpha of 0.70 or above is considered acceptable as a good indication of reliability, it is clear that scales of this study is reliable.

Table 1 Reliability of the scales

	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	N of Items
Destination Image (DI)	.945	5.41	33
Perceived Value (PV)	.916	5.85	8
Destination Loyalty (DL)	.837	6.07	3

Findings of the study

The survey was conducted with tourists at the Sultan Ahmet Square and the survey was conducted throughout May 2016. A total of 156 usable responses was gathered and demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented as frequencies and percentages in Table 2. The distribution of gender groups are quite fairly distributed. Among the 156 respondents, 84 were female; while 72 were male. Approximately 60% of the respondents were between the ages of 26-40, 24.4% of them between the ages of 18-24, 11.5% of them between the ages of 41-65, and finally 4.5% of them were above the age of 65. Most of the respondents were the first time visitors (69.9%), 22.8% of them visited Istanbul 2-4 times, and 8.3% of them visited Istanbul 5 and more times. Regarding their

country of origin, 12.9% of them were from United Kingdom, while 12.2% of them were from Germany and 7% of them from United States. The majority of the respondents (49%) had come from European countries.

Approximately 65% of tourists visited Istanbul for holiday purpose; while 20% of them had come Istanbul in order to visit their friends or relatives, and 6% of them visited Istanbul for business purposes. While surveying with tourists, 31.4% of tourists had been in Istanbul since 3 or 4 days, and 32.7% of them had been in Istanbul since 5 or 6 days. Since approximately 90% of tourists stayed in Istanbul at least 3 days, it is clear that respondents spent enough time to experience about the city and gain some ideas about Istanbul.

Table 2 Demographic profile of tourists

		N	%			N	%
Gender	Male	72	46.2		1-2 days	16	10.3
	Female	84	53.8		3-4 days	49	31.4
Age	18-25	38	24.4	**Duration of Stay**	5-6 days	51	32.7
	26-40	93	59.6		7-9 days	14	9.0
	41-65	18	11.5		10 and over days	26	16.6
	65 above	7	4.5				
Number of Visit	First time visitors	109	69.9	**Country of Origin**	United Kingdom	20	12.9
	2-4	34	21.8		Germany	19	12.2
	5 and more	13	8.3		U.S.	11	7.0

Table 3 indicates the descriptive analysis of the 33-item destination image scale. Since the mean value of the scale of destination image is (μ: 5.41); it can be said that the destination image of Istanbul are positive in the mind of tourists. Destination image of Istanbul is assessed with the destination atmosphere, travel environment, attraction & events, shopping, accommodation, and dining dimensions. Tourists have favorable perceptions about the destination atmosphere (μ: 5.78), attractions & events (μ: 5.69), and dining (μ: 5.49) in Istanbul. The mean value of these three dimensions are higher than the average mean value of the destination image scale (μ: 5.41). The perceptions of tourists with the other destination image dimensions of Istanbul are also mildly positive.

Tourists strongly agree that Istanbul has distinctive (μ: 6.47), interesting (μ: 6.43), and variety of (μ: 6.38) historic and cultural attractions. Tourists also considered Istanbul as an exciting (μ: 6.19), enjoyable (μ: 6.11), and pleasant destination (μ: 5.94). Moreover, tourists have favorable perceptions about local cuisine (μ: 5.84). Tourists also agree that Istanbul has a wide variety of shop facilities (μ: 5.55) and is a good place for shopping (μ: 5.43). With regard to accommodation, tourists agree that Istanbul has a wide variety of accommodation alternatives (μ: 5.56), accommodation facilities in Istanbul provide satisfactory customer service (μ: 5.33), and they are reasonable priced (μ: 5.32).

Table 3 Descriptive statistics for destination image

	N	Min	Max	Std. Deviation	Mean	Cronbach Alpha
Destination Atmosphere					**5.78**	**.809**
Istanbul is an exciting destination	156	1.00	7.00	.97792	6.1923	
Istanbul is an enjoyable destination	156	1.00	7.00	.94331	6.1154	
Istanbul is a pleasant destination	156	1.00	7.00	1.10012	5.9487	
Istanbul is relaxing and restful destination	156	1.00	7.00	1.49986	4.8782	
Travel Environment					**5.01**	**.799**
It is easy to access Istanbul	155	1.00	7.00	1.32084	5.5226	
Native people in Istanbul is friendly and helpful	156	1.00	7.00	1.46459	5.4423	
Using local transportation in Istanbul is easy and convenient	154	1.00	7.00	1.42957	5.0455	
Istanbul is clean and tidy environment	156	1.00	7.00	1.60070	4.7756	
Istanbul has secure and safe environment	154	1.00	7.00	1.40862	4.7662	
Information about local transportation is easily accessible in Istanbul	154	1.00	7.00	1.58066	4.5390	
Attraction and Events					**5.69**	**.864**
Istanbul has distinctive history and heritage	155	1.00	7.00	.88501	6.4710	
Istanbul has interesting historic and cultural attractions	156	1.00	7.00	.99144	6.4359	
Istanbul has variety of historic and cultural attractions	156	1.00	7.00	1.09816	6.3846	
Istanbul has variety of breathtaking scenery and natural attractions	155	1.00	7.00	1.20058	5.7871	
Istanbul has a colorful night life	148	1.00	7.00	1.20006	5.3108	
Istanbul has variety of cultural events and festivals	144	1.00	7.00	1.21918	5.1944	
Istanbul has tempting cultural events and festivals	147	1.00	7.00	1.31315	5.0408	
Istanbul has a wide variety of outdoor activities	148	1.00	7.00	1.43101	4.9189	
Shopping					**5.13**	**.871**
Istanbul has a wide variety of shop facilities	156	2.00	7.00	1.23519	5.5577	
Istanbul is a good place for shopping	155	1.00	7.00	1.27930	5.4323	

Shopping in Istanbul is convenient	156	1.00	7.00	1.31208	5.1987	
Prices are reasonable for shopping in Istanbul	156	2.00	7.00	1.29724	4.9679	
Shops in Istanbul provide satisfactory customer service	154	1.00	7.00	1.41733	4.9351	
Shops in Istanbul sell high quality of merchandise	154	2.00	7.00	1.31216	4.7143	
Accommodation					**5.33**	**.848**
Istanbul has a wide variety of accommodations	156	1.00	7.00	1.17633	5.5577	
Accommodation facilities in Istanbul provide satisfactory customer service	155	1.00	7.00	1.24895	5.3290	
Accommodation in Istanbul is reasonable priced	156	1.00	7.00	1.23386	5.3205	
Accommodations facilities in Istanbul are clean and of good quality	155	1.00	7.00	1.31148	5.1419	
Dining					**5.49**	**.771**
Istanbul has tempting local cuisine	156	3.00	7.00	1.10222	5.8462	
Istanbul has a wide variety of restaurants	156	1.00	7.00	1.26922	5.7692	
Restaurants in Istanbul provide satisfactory customer service	156	2.00	7.00	1.21017	5.5000	
Restaurants in Istanbul has standard hygiene and cleanliness	156	1.00	7.00	1.32187	5.1987	
Restaurants in Istanbul are reasonable priced	156	1.00	7.00	1.18780	5.1218	

Table 4 illustrates the descriptive analysis of the 8-item perceived value scale. Since the mean value of the scale of perceived value is (μ: 5.85); it can be said that perceived value of visiting Istanbul is considered as positive by tourists. Perceived value of visiting Istanbul is assessed with the functional (μ: 5.79), emotional (μ: 5.92), and overall value (μ: 5.85) dimensions. Although, perceived emotional value is higher than perceived functional value of visiting Istanbul, tourists strongly agree that visiting Istanbul is valuable and worth it (μ: 6.07) and good value for the given money (μ: 5.73). They also considered visiting Istanbul is reasonably priced (μ: 5.58). With regard to emotional value, tourists strongly agree that they got pleasant experiences during their visit Istanbul (μ: 6.05) and visiting Istanbul made them feel better (μ: 5.80). Overall, respondents are highly satisfied with their decision to travel to Istanbul and strongly agree that it is right choice to visiting Istanbul (μ: 6.36). Besides, they emphasize that Istanbul is a place where they want to travel always (μ: 5.95).

Table 4 Descriptive statistics for perceived value

	N	Min	Max	Std. Deviation	Mean	Cronbach Alpha
Functional Value					**5.79**	**.809**
Visiting Istanbul is valuable and worth it	155	1.00	7.00	1.12302	6.0710	
Compared to other tourism destination. Istanbul is a good value for the money	156	1.00	7.00	1.26668	5.7308	

	N	Min	Max		Mean	
Visiting Istanbul is reasonably priced	156	1.00	7.00	1.19655	5.5833	
Emotional Value					**5.92**	**.893**
I got pleasant experiences during my visit to Istanbul	155	1.00	7.00	1.06504	6.0452	
Visiting Istanbul made me feel better	156	1.00	7.00	1.18278	5.8013	
Overall Value					**5.85**	**.741**
The choice to visit Istanbul was the right decision	155	1.00	7.00	.98045	6.3677	
Istanbul is a place where I want to travel always	156	1.00	7.00	1.22523	5.9551	
After visiting Istanbul. my image of Istanbul was improved	156	1.00	7.00	1.51709	5.2436	

To measure overall satisfaction, a single-item scale was used and respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction level with their visiting experience of Istanbul on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1= "extremely unsatisfied" to 7= "extremely satisfied". 25% of the tourists are extremely satisfied, 51% of them are satisfied, and 19% of them are somewhat satisfied with their visit to Istanbul. Therefore, it can be stated that respondents perceived a positive value and had good travel experiences.

Loyalty to Istanbul was measured with 3-item destination loyalty scale. The value for the scale of destination loyalty is high with a mean of μ: 6.07. As it can be seen from the Table 5, tourists are strongly willing to make positive word of mouth (μ: 6.28), encourage their friends to visit Istanbul (μ: 6.23), and revisit Istanbul (μ: 5.71). Therefore, the results shows that tourists, who visited Istanbul under terrorism risks, are highly satisfied with their travel experience and expressed that they will recommend Istanbul to others, say positive things about Istanbul and they stated that they are willing to revisit Istanbul.

Table 5 Descriptive statistics for destination loyalty

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach Alpha
Destination Loyalty				**6.07**		**.837**
I will say positive things about Istanbul to other people	155	1.00	7.00	6.2839	.99188	
I will encourage friends and relatives to visit Istanbul	156	1.00	7.00	6.2308	1.06466	
I will definitely revisit Istanbul	154	1.00	7.00	5.7143	1.3658	

Conclusion

Although several terrorism attacks had took place before and during the visit of tourists, it can be said that the destination image of Istanbul in the mind of tourists are positive. Tourists have highly favorable perceptions about the destination atmosphere as well as attractions & events of Istanbul. Tourists strongly agree that Istanbul has distinctive, interesting, and variety of historic and cultural attractions. They also considered Istanbul as an exciting, enjoyable, and pleasant destination. Moreover, tourists have favorable perceptions about local cuisine, as well as shopping and accommodation facilities. Overall, respondents are highly satisfied with their decision to travel to Istanbul and strongly agree that it is right decision to visiting Istanbul. They emphasized that visiting Istanbul is valuable and worth it. The majority of respondents' are highly satisfied with their overall travel experience, and they expressed that they will recommend their visits to others, say positive things about Istanbul, and they are willing to revisit Istanbul.

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