A STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM STUDENTS TOURISM PREFERENCES

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to determine why vocational high school students in Turkey want to study hospitality and tourism management (HTM) and why they want to continue HTM degrees abroad. The data was collected from the students in Fethiye and Kırklareli using questionnaire technique and analyzed using the statistical package programs. Frequency analysis, t-test, one way Anova, factor analysis and regression analysis were used on the study. The most important criteria on students' tourism choices was learning a foreign language followed by easy communication of tourism sector and more practising oppurtunities.

Keywords: Tourism, Tourism Education, Tourism Students.

Introduction

The global travel and tourism industry's contribution to the GDP was more than USD 2 trillion, adding 2.9% to the global GDP in 2012. The World Travel & Tourism Council forecasts that the total contribution of travel and tourism to the GDP will reach USD 10.5 trillion by 2023. The Turkish tourism industry has grown more than the global travel and tourism industry. The direct contribution of the travel and tourisms industry to the GDP has been TL 57.5 billion and the total number of international visitor arrivals was more than 31.5 million tourists. The industry has boomed since 2004 and this steady growth can be attributed to incentive mechanisms and regulations within Turkey, which supported growth in the industry. Numerous successful projects to attract tourists from all over the world also played an important part in tapping tourism potential (http://www.invest.gov.tr). Turkey at present with its enormous tourism potential and a great diversity of its natural resources, historical treasures, cultural values and activities, life style, attractions and with its efficient, dynamic tourist industry offers wide selection of products that can satisfy the demand of different market segments including the most sophisticated and demanding traveller (http://www.tursab.org.tr/).

The power of an educated human being is getting a meaningful aspect and provides activities for the physically employed staff in the tourism sector. The qualification of the educated human being provides the fullfillment of the expectations of the tourist. The comprehension of the importance of tourism by the society and sector being provided with enough qualified staff are both necessary to enable it to enter the World Tourism Market where a harsh concurrence is being encountered. The education of the qualified staff is only possible with an education of tourism of high quality. It is only possible to succeed with a well educated staff in order to obtain more from the piece of tourism market(Güzeller,2009:5).

1. A Brief Overview of Higher Education in Turkey

In 1981, in accordance with the new Higher Education Law (No. 2547), the administration of higher education in Turkey was comprehensively restructured. The system thereby became centralized, with all higher education institutions tied to the Council of Higher Education (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, or YÖK). After this restructuring, all higher education institutions were designed as universities. Expansion of higher education throughout the country was achieved, application to higher education was centralized, and a central university exam and placement were introduced. In addition to state universities, non-profit foundation universities started to be established since 1984(Okumuş, 2005: 94).

1.1 Vocational Tourism Education at Universities in Turkey

Turkey has a vocational tourism education system at associate degree level, graduate level, master level and post graduate level. After finishing the high school, the students enter the central university exam. Candidates either have an oppurtunity to choose associate degree level or graduate level according to their

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degrees. The students completing the associate degree programs can make vertical transfer to 4 years universities if they are successful at the DGS(The Exam for Vertical Transfer).

1.2 Tourism Education at Associate Degree Level

According to YÖK laws, the associate degree education includes a program of at least 4 semesters based on elementary education. In addition, at some programs, 2 semesters of obligatory foreign language education is added. (Güzeller,2009:10) The aims of associate degree programs are; training of mid-level managers ,training of management trainee , training of qualified personnel. In Turkey, the number of associate degree level High School is 151 and associate degree programs related with tourism are; Tourism and Hotel Management, Sailing and Yacht Management, Cooking, Tourism Guiding, Food Technology, Tourism and Travel Management, The Host and Hostess Gastronomy and Culinary Arts, Ready Meals and Cooking (http://www.comcec.org/).

1.3 Tourism Education at Graduate Level

Graduate education includes at least 8 semesters of program which is based on elementary education. Additionally, at some programs, 2 semesters of foreign language education is given (Güzeller, 2009: 10). The graduate degree programs related with tourism are; Accomodation Management, Travel Management and Tourism Guiding, Food and Beverage Management, Travel management, Tourist Guiding, Tourism Management, Accomodation Management and Teaching, Travel Management and Tourism Guide Teaching (Gürbüz, 2007: 159).

1.4 Tourism Education at Master and Post Graduate Level

The Council of Higher Education (YÖK) has established certain rules and regulations for opening and running master's and doctoral programs. For example, university graduates need to obtain a minimum grade in the Postgraduate Education Examination (LES) if they want to study at the postgraduate level. It is also essential for them to have a minimum grade in the Inter-Universities Language Exam (UDS) to prove that apart from Turkish, they are also proficient in a foreign language, mainly English. Universities that offer master's and doctoral programs advertise their quotas for each program annually, usually in August or September. Interested university graduates can apply to enter these programs on the basis of their LES and UDS exam results, as well as their degree grades for master's programs and master's grades for doctoral programs. Further to their application, they may further need to take a university-based written and/or oral qualifying exam(Okumuş,2005:106).

2. The Survey

A questionnaire was conducted, on 450 students studying in Fethiye town and Kırklareli province, in order to determine why vocational high school students in Turkey want to study hospitality and tourism management (HTM) and why they want to continue HTM degrees abroad.. The data was collected from students between February and May on the year 2015.

The questionnare had two sections. Questions on the first section was aimed to determine the factors affecting the students choosing the tourism department. Questions on the second section was aimed to identify demographic characterisitcs of students. 23 statements on the second part were rated on a seven point Likert scale as follows; 1-Strongly agree, 2-Agree,3- Somewhat agree 4-Neither agree nor disagree,5-Somewhat disagree 6-Disagree 7-Strongly disagree

The statements in the questionnaire were prepared according as the study made by Lee, Kim ve Lo on the year 2008.

The data collected from the field was edited, coded and processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Frequency analysis, t-test, one way Anova, factor analysis and regression analysis were used on the study.

The hypothesis were as following.

H₁: Students' evaluation of the factors effective on tourism choice differs according to their genders.

H₂: Students' evaluation of the factors effective on tourism choice differs according to their working period.

H₃:There is a significant relation between students' evaluation of the factors effective on tourism choice and their satisfaction on choosing tourism.

3. Findings

3.1 Demographic Findings

The demographic findings were as follows.

Table 1: Demographic Findings of Students and Reasons of Choosing Tourism

Age	Number	%		Number	%
			7-9 years	35	8,0
Gender	Number	%	Years of tourism work experience	Number	%
Female	195	43,3	Less than 1 year	440	100,0
Male	255	56,7	Total	127	28,9
Total	450	100,0	Their satisfaction level on tourism department choice	Number	%

21	92	23,8	Strongly agree	87	19,5
22	64	16,5	Agree	184	41,2
23	45	11,6	Somewhat agree	82	18,3
24	6	1,6	Neither agree nor disagree	58	13,0
25	5	1,3	Somewhat disagree	5	1,1
26	2	,5	Disagree	15	3,4
Total	**387**	**100,0**	Strongly disagree	16	3,6
			Total	**447**	**100,0**

According to Table 1; 56.7% were male and 43.3% were female. 24.8% were 20 years old and 23.8% were 21 years old. The average age of 387 students were 20.83. The highest rate of the students tourism work experience was consisting the students less than 1 year experience with the rate 39.8% . The rate of students that has sector experience between 1 and 3 years was 28.9%. The satisfaction level rate of students choosing tourism was 79%. Students were highly satisfied with their tourism choice.

Table 2: Foreign country preferences of students studying tourism department

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS (N=450)		FEMALE STUDENTS (N=195)		MALE STUDENTS (N=255)	
Preferred Country	Frequency (%)	Preferred Country	Frequency (%)	Preferred Country	Frequency (%)
Europe	171	Europe	71	Europe	100
America	109	America	47	America	62
Switzerland	16	Switzerland	7	Switzerland	9
England	59	England	30	England	29
Australia	8	Australia	5	Australia	3
Japan	16	Japan	4	Japan	12
China	5	China	1	China	4
Holland	9	Holland	2	Holland	7
Sweden	4	Sweden	2	Sweden	2
Korea	16	Korea	12	Korea	4
France	22	France	11	France	11
Not answered	15	Not answered	3	Not answered	12

Students were asked to specify the name of the country they would like to study. Both male and female students stated their first choice as European countries followed by America. While male students stated their last choice as Sweden, female students' choice was China. As American and European cultures were more recognized and the cultures and distances of Asian- Pacific countries were far from Turkey, students were considered to choose Sweden and China less than other coounties.

Table 3: The most preferred tourism departments

TOURISM DEPARTMENT MALE STUDENTS (N=195)	Number and Frequencies (%)	TOURISM DEPARTMENT FEMALE STUDENTS(N=255)	Number and Frequencies (%)
Gastronomy and Culinary Arts	47 (24,1)	Gastronomy and Culinary Arts	57 (22,4)
Tourism Guiding	32 (16,4)	Tourism Guiding	38 (14,9)
Tourism and Hotel Management	22 (11,3)	Tourism and Hotel Management	46 (18)
Travel Management	55 (28,2)	Travel Management	60 (23,5)
Food and Beverage Management	14 (7,2)	Food and Beverage Management	21 (8,2)
Recreation Management	9 (4,6)	Recreation Management	8 (3,2)
Transportation Management	6 (3,1)	Transportation Management	9 (3,5)
Civil Aviation	10 (5,1)	Civil Aviation	16 (6,3)

The students were asked to specify which tourism department they prefererred. Both male and female students with the rate of 51.7% specified Travel Management as their most preferred department which was followed by Gastronomy and Culinary Arts with the rate of 46.5%. On the students department choice, we consider the easiness of finding a job in travel management department. Male students stated transportation management with the lowest ratio (3.1%) and female students stated recreation management with the lowest ratio.(3.2%)

3.2 Factor Analysis Findings

Factor analysis was used to determine the dimensions of statements effective on students' choice of tourism. First the statements were tested whether they were adequate for factor Analysis. Kaiser Meyer Olkin Scale and the results of Bartlett test were examined.

Table 4: Factor Analysis Results

Name of the Factor	Statement	Factor Weight	Factor Exp.	Eigen Value	α
Self realization	I would like to prove myself on tourism sector.	,762	27,526	4,129	,788

	Tourism fits to my qualifications	,750			
	I have more interest on tourism when compared to other departments.	,715			
	I would like to be a successfull scientist on tourism	,638			
	I am glad to serve the people.	,543			
	I would like to carry on my graduate and post graduate education on tourism	,532			
Attraciveness of tourism field	I believe that tourism has a wide variety of job opportunities.	,752	11,157	1,674	0,696
	As it is introduced in written and oral media, working tourism seems interesting to me.	,741			
	I believe that job opportunites in tourism sector will be a serious potential in future.	,608			
	I believe that tourism consists of practice rather than theory.	,599			
Easiness of studying in tourism	Studying tourism is easier according to other sectors.	,865	8,979	1,347	0,586
	My university entrance exam score is good enough at national level.	,804			
	It is easier on tourism to get a higher score average when compared to other areas.	,440			
Foreign culture adaptation.	I want to learn a foreign language.	,735	7,337	1,100	,574
	When compared to other sectors, tourism sector is more available to communicate with foreign cultures.	,691			
	Total	54,999	Sd	105
Kaiser Meyer Olkin Scale Validity		,805	P value	,000
Bartlett Test	Chi Square	1458,546		

Both the results of KMO value (0,805) and Bartlett test (,000) signifies our variables are adequate for factor analysis (Durmuş et al.,2013).In order to measure the validity of statements, we used Principle Component Analysis(PCA) and Varimax Rotation. Because factor rotation is generally orthogonal and prevents the factors entering the correlation with each other. Varimax(the maximum of variances) method could be preferred for orthogonal rotation. (Akgül et al., 2005).As the commitments 6,7,12,14,15,17,20 and 21 were not normally allocated, they were not included for analysis.

Each factor consists of minimum two statements. As a result of factor analysis; for 15 statements, 4 factors were determined. The eigen values of 4 factors were more than 1. According to reliability analysis, the reliability value of each factor was determined more than 0,57 for each factor.

These factors were named as self realization, field attractiveness, easiness of studying in tourism and foreign culture adaptation considering the literature research. The value of total variance explained for 4 factors were 54.999. Finally, we used t test, One Way Anova and Regression Analysis on the factors which were obtained after factor analysis. In this way, we tried to determine whether there were any difference on students' opinions choosing tourism department according to their demographic characteristics.

Table 5: The average factors of students' choosing tourism department and standart variances

	Art. Mean	Standart Deviation
Self Realization	**5,26**	
I would like to prove myself on tourism sector.	5,94	1,50
Tourism fits to my qualifications	5,65	1,58
I have more interest on tourism when compared to other departments	5,22	1,79
I would like to be a successfull scientist on tourism	4,37	2,09
I am glad to serve the people.	4,94	1,72
I would like to carry on my graduate and post graduate education on tourism	5,43	1,76
Attraciveness of tourism field	**5,68**	
I believe that tourism has a wide variety of job opportunities	5,63	1,35
As it is introduced in written and oral media, working tourism seems interesting to me.	5,06	1,60
I believe that job oppurtunities in tourism will be a serious potential in	5,94	1,32

future..		
I believe that tourism consists of practice rather than theory.	6,07	1,30
Easiness of studying in tourism	**4,66**	
Studying tourism is easier according to other sectors.	4,70	1,75
My university entrance exam score is good enough at the national level.	4,70	1,82
It is easier on tourism to get a higher score average when compared to other areas.	4,57	1,82
Foreign culture adaptation	**6,58**	
I want to learn a foreign language.	6,68	,86
When compared to other sectors, tourism sector is more available to communicate with foreign cultures.	6,47	,91

According to Table 5, arithmetic mean of "self Realization" dimension was 5,26.The statement of "I would like to prove myself on tourism sector." had the highest arithmetic mean with 5,94. On the other side the statement of "I would like to be a successfull scientist on tourism " had the lowest arithmetic mean with 4,37. We can evaluate the reason of difference on arithmetic means as the students would like to work in sector more than improving themselves academically. Arithmetic mean of the statements which belong to Attractiveness of tourism field was 5,68. The highest statement was "I believe that tourism consists of practice rather than theory."with the 6,07 arithmetic mean and the lowest statement was, "As it is introduced in written and oral media, working tourism seems interesting to me." with 5,06. Students could find more practising oppurtunities which were estimated as the most important factor on their tourism choice. With more practising oppurtunities, students could easily find a job in tourism sector. We consider that high degree of labor turnover rate was a result of this process.The arithmetic mean of statements that belong to "Easiness of studying in tourism" was 4,66. The arithmetic means of statements; "Studying tourism is easier according to other sectors" and "My university entrance exam score is good enough at the national level." were 4,70. The lowest arithmetic mean was 4,57 with the statement "It is easier on tourism to get a higher score average when compared to other areas."As one doesn't need a high score in university exam to study tourism and the lessons in tourism are easier according to others(e.g business,accounting, finance et al.), it is considered that the students preferred tourism department.

Table 6: Students' Perception of Diversities According to Their Genders

The arithmetic mean of "Foreign culture adaptation" factor was a high mean with 6,58.The highest arithmetic mean was 6,68 with the statement "I want to learn a foreign language."The statement of "When compared to other sectors, tourism sector is more available to communicate with foreign cultures. " had the

Factors	Mean. Male	S.D.	Ort. Female	S.D.	p
Self Realization	5,20	1,32	5,32	1,12	,339
Attraciveness of tourism field	5,64	1,07	5,74	,910	,286
Easiness of studying in tourism	4,61	1,40	4,72	1,21	,410
Foreign culture adaptation	6,54	,752	6,64	,589	0,094
* p<0,05					

lowest arithmetic means with 6,47. Students believe that they will learn a foreign language in tourism sector easier than other sectors.

4. Testing the Hhypotheses

We used Independent samples t-test to analyze whether the factors that affect the students' choice of tourism department differ according to students' genders. The results of t test were as following.

As the significance value of all the statements were higher than 0,05, H₁ hypothesis was reduced. The results indicated that the factors affecting the students' choice of tourism department did not differ according to students' genders. Both male and female students stated that they have the same possibilities in tourism sector.

Table 7: Students' Perception of Diversities According to Their Year of Work Experiences in Tourism Sector

Factors	F	Sig.
Self Realization	**3,208**	**,013***
Attraciveness of tourism field	1,321	,262
Easiness of studying in tourism	2,322	,056
Foreign culture adaptation	1,008	,403

*p<0,05

According to ANOVA Analysis, as the significance value of "Self Realization Factor" was less than 0,05; there was a difference on "Self Realization Factor" affecting the students' choice of tourism according to their years of work experience. In order to identify the difference we used Scheffe Test related to "Self Realization Factor". According to Scheffe Test, there was a significant difference between the students who had 1-3 years work experience and 10 and more years work experience in tourism sector. According to the results of ANOVA and Scheffe test; H₂ hyphothesis was accepted. Students who have 10 year and more experience in tourism sector thought different for "self realization factor" than those who had 1-3 years work experince. We estimate that experienced students worked in better conditions and higher positions.

In order to understand whether there was a relation between dependent and independent variables, regression analysis was used. It was also used to identify the degree of the relation and to estimate the values that belong to dependent variable (Yazıcıoğlu and Erdoğan, 2004: 227).

We used regression analysis in order to test the following hypothesis (H₃).

"There is a significant relationship between the students' evaluation of the factors effective on their tourism choice and their satisfaction on tourism sector"

Table 8: Relationship Between the Students' Evaluation of the Factors Effective on Their Tourism Choice and Their Satisfaction on Tourism Sector

Independent Variables	β	t	p
Self realization	**-,667**	**-12,344**	**,000***
Attraciveness of tourism field	**-,245**	**-3,810**	**,000***
Easiness of studying in tourism	-,045	-,992	,322
Foreign culture adaptation	,078	,868	,386
R²=0,49 F=70,715 p=0,000 ***p<0,01**			
*Dependent variable: Students' satisfaction of choosing tourism department.			

R² value, which is close to 0, implies that there is a relation between the satisfaction and factors effecting students' choice. According to values of F=70,715 and P=,000(less than 0,05) , a significant relationship between components was determined. The students choosed tourism because they believed they could achieve the full development of their abilities and talents in tourism sector and tourism field was attractive. On the other side the results showed us they were not content with their choices. The problems in sector like long working hours, high labor turnover rate, sector's seasonality were considered to decrease the satisfaction level of students.

CONCLUSION

Education of personnel and professional development are very important for hospitality and management, which is confirmed by global education institutions and associations. High-quality personnel, their knowledge and experience, as well as unused potential, greatly affect the achievement of business results, and, through that, the future of a company (Perman and Mikinac,2014:617). It has been observed that over the years, there has been a change in the demand and supply pattern of human resources for the travel

industry, with the demand in favor of more educated and specialized personnel.(Rekha and Srinivas, 2013:1).

In this study, after a brief overview of tourism education in Turkey, we tried to determine why vocational high school students in Turkey want to study hospitality and tourism management and why they want to continue HTM degrees abroad. The measurement scale was developed according to which used in the works of Lee, Kim and Lo (Lee,Kim and Lo,2008). The factors which we determined were similar to those determined in the work of Lee, Kim and Lo (2008).

On students' tourism choices, learning a foreign language was the most important criteria followed by easy communication of tourism sector and more practising oppurtunities.

The factors affecting the students' choice of tourism department did not differ according to their genders.

We realized a difference on " Self Realization Factor" affecting the students' choice of tourism according to their work experience. Self realization factor of the students who had 1-3 years work experience was different than students who had 10 and more years experience.

Another significance difference between factors affecting students' choice and their satisfaction was realized in our study. The relation between the factors affecting their choice(self realization and attractiveness of tourism field) and their satisfaction was negative. Even the tourism was attractive and an tool was self realization, students were not satisfied with their choice.

According to literature review, survey conducted and data analysis resulting from this survey following recommendations are derived:

- Research was limited only Fethiye and Kırklareli regions. Research conducted on bigger sample size and among students studying in different regions and towns will be more effective in terms of generalization.
- In order to increase the satisfaction level of students, the managers should be informed and help the students to discover their potential.
- Better working conditions for interns, such as reasonable working hours and wages that will dedicate them to their works, should be provided.

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