Cruise Tourists' Experiences, Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions: A Case Study in Istanbul

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Extensive Summary

Introduction

In recent years, the most striking and the most demanded tourism type in some countries is cruise tourism. The advantage of cruise tourism is the possibility of seeing more than one city or one country on a trip, and not feeling annoyed because of organization of hotel, transportation for every each of destination. In this form of tourism which usually appeals to the middle and upper income group, the standards and concepts of the cruise ships vary according to the allocated budget. In this type of tourism which is particularly active in Europe and North America, the Mediterranean coast is also increasingly popular. The most visited ports by cruise ships in Turkey are Istanbul and Kuşadası. Being close to the touristical destinations and ancient ruins is often the reason of preference for the interest of ports. Since the participants are mostly included in the middle and upper income groups, expenditures for shopping and food-and-beverage sectors, contributes to the local economy.

It is important to understand the cruise tourists' experiences, their satisfaction and the behavioral intentions resulting from the cruise travel, in order to understand the cruise tourism market. In this study, proposed research model that examined the relationship between these variables was tested by a field study. The results show the general structure of cruise tourists who've been in Turkey in the case of Istanbul Port and in this respect significant theoretical and practical deductions have been made. The increasing number of such researches for cruise tourism as a developing tourism type, will contribute to the utilization of Turkey's richness in different tourism varieties and the maintaining its competitiveness in the world tourism sector.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to determine cruise tourists' perceptions about their experiences of cruise tourism and reveal the influence of experience on overall satisfaction and behavioral intention. In the light of similar researchs (Hosany and Witham, 2009; Oh, et al., 2007; Altunel and Erkut, 2015; Pine and Gilmore, 1998; White and Yu, 2005; Liang and Zhang, 2012; Lewis and Palmer, 2014; Teye and

Lecrerc, 1998), a research model which assuming a linear relationship between experience, overall satisfaction and behavioral intention was established.

In this research, questionnaire was used as data gathering tool and in May 2015, researcher asked to the Royal Caribbean, Celebrity Cruises, Princess Cruises companies' participants to participate in the investigation on a voluntary basis. A total of 322 English-language surveys were collected in this manner, but 307 available surveys remained after the erroneous ones were eliminated. The questionnaire consists of four parts. In the first part, there are questions about gender, age, marital status, education level, nationality, occupation, average household income, travel accompanist, cruise travel experience, in order to obtain the demographic characteristics of the participants. In the second part, there are statements for the experience scale that Pine and Gilmore (1998) proposed and Oh, Fiore and Jeoung (2007) tested the construct validity. In the third part of the questionnaire, there are two statements from Teye and Leclerc's research (1998) that measure overall satisfaction. In the last part, three statements from Mattila and Duman's (2003) research were used to measure behavioral intentions.

Findings

In this researh, the methodology of Hosany and Witham (2009) was used and the dimensions of experience were explained through explanatory factor analysis. In the first phase of the analysis, the scale was subjected to reliability analysis and Croanbach's Alfa coefficient was found to be 0.924. In the following step, Kaiser Meyer Olkin(KMO) test was conducted to determine if the number of samples was sufficient for factor analysis. It was found that the result (0.907) was sufficient (Büyüköztürk, 2011). In the questionnaire form, 16 statements were subjected to factor analysis to determine participants' experiences. As a result of the factor analysis, four dimensions emerged with an eigenvalue of 1 and explaining 86.4% of the total variance. The first dimension, "Education", accounts for 26.7%, the second dimension, "Entertainment", was 25.4%, third dimension, "Esthetics", was 20.6% and the last dimension, "Escapism", was 13.6%.

A correlation analysis was conducted to reveal the relationship between experience dimensions and overall satisfaction and behavioral intentions. It was found that except escapism and satisfaction, there was a significant relationship between all other variables.

According to the results of the regression analysis which was conducted to see the effect of experience dimensions on overall satisfaction (F: 103,179 (0,000)); Aesthetic (0,510) and Education (0,335) have the most effective and positive impact on overall satisfaction. The regression model (F: 64,045 (0,000)), which measures the effect of experience dimensions on behavioral intentions, is significant. The explanatory level of the model is 46.9%. The highest value among the obtained regression coefficients belongs to Aesthetic (0,515). In other words, aesthetic is the dimension that have the most efficient influence on participants' positive behavioral intentions.

Conclusion

This research has revealed that if the experience, gained from cruise travel, specifically addresses aesthetic and educational expectations, participants will be able to achieve a significant and positive increase in their overall satisfaction. The aesthetic

dimension of cruise experience is the dimension that most influences participants' positive behavioral intentions. The effect of Entertainment, Education, Escapism is low. This research is a significant contributor to the literature, especially as the research on cruise tourism is limited. It is important to have an advantage in the cruise industry which provides material means of return and serious promotional opportunities.

If the cruise industry uses the outcomes of the research, there will be beneficial returns in this subject. For example; the results show that participants give so much importance in aesthetics and the educational dimensions so it can be expressed in the way that package tours should be prepared on cultural tours concepts and the importance of aesthetics in restaurants, yachts and boats should be emphasized.

However, the research was conducted only for the 5star class cruise ships and it limits the work. Subsequent researchs may lead to different ship concepts and participant groups. Another limitation of the research, it was conducted in May, 2015. However, unpleasant circumstances occured in Turkey in May 2016 and affected the cruise industry in a negative way. Because of this reason, it was impossible to update the data. So the given data for this research may be accepted as the recent data which can be collected in a normal cruise season for Turkey.