

ANALYSIS OF DESTINATION IMAGE THROUGH WORD ASSOCIATION TEST: THE CASE OF SINOP AS AN ECO-TOURISM DESTINATION

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to determine the cognitive structures of tourists receiving accommodation services in the destination of Sinop regarding the concept of "Sinop". In this context, data were collected from a total of 200 people with different demographic characteristics receiving accommodation services in the destination of Sinop using the survey technique. The data collection process of the research was completed between November 1, 2024 and January 01, 2025. During the data collection process of the study, face-to-face interviews were conducted with the research participants and information was given about the word association test beforehand. The data obtained from the participants were used to measure how they perceived the concept of "Sinop" using the word association test form. As a result of the research, it was determined that the participants mostly associated the words with "natural", "local", "healthy", "slow", "organic", "quality", "traditional", "taste", "sustainability", "enjoyable", "Karakum", "local food", "cultural", "Alaaddin Mosque", "Seyyid Bilâl", "sunset" and "dark tourism". Participants used the words "Pasha's Redoubts", "cittaslow", "unique landscape", "Yalı Kahvesi", "kotra", "linen", "knife", "calmness" and "Adabaşı" at a lower level as conceptual equivalents of the concept of "Sinop" and expressed it with terms that they assumed would convey its meaning.

Keywords: Tourism, Destination, Destination Image, Word Association Test, Sinop.

INTRODUCTION

Cities are places where modern societies are organized, both containing economic activities such as trade, industry and service, and restructuring together with the individual. The unique values of cities make them exceptional structures for each individual, allowing them to re-interpret space and create awareness. Cities are exhibitions that

are created by the individual, but also re-created and constantly transformed both in the physical space and in the mind with everyone who experiences them. While physical transformation is rapidly taking place with the benefits of the age, the heart of technological, economic and socio-cultural differentiations also beats in cities. It can be said that cities have been systems that have undertaken and operated the production, accumulation and distribution systems of civilizations from the earliest ages to the present, that they exhibit a changing and transforming structure, and that they ensure the continuity of social memory by undertaking the task of connecting yesterday to today and tomorrow. At this point, the most obvious thing about cities is that the meaning they carry in the eyes of those who live in them or experience them is cultural, historical, and at the same time collective and alive. At this point, Calvino mentions that what is truly impressive in cities or what will always be remembered is not the physical wonders of cities, but rather what the individual looks for in that city, what they ask them and what answer they receive (Calvino, 1972; Balcıoğlu, 2007; Yayınoglu & Susar, 2008; Şentürk, 2016; Aytaç, 2017). So what the city is and what it means exists in direct connection with the individual. At the same time, cities have the power to make those who live or experience the city like themselves within this two-way mechanism. Of course, it is quite difficult and complicated to structure this ability to change and transform correctly and make it continuous. Creating “what the city is and what it means” for those who are there requires a difficult process. The city image becomes the most important issue to work on at this point. While the city image reconstructs the meaning of the region with its organic and dynamic structure, it not only makes the region sustainable and livable in the cultural context, but also can make that city quite advantageous in terms of competition in the touristic field with a solid image structure.

Ekşioğlu Çetintahra (2011) does not consider image as merely physical and sensory inputs that are perceived and reprocessed in the cognitive field. According to him, the concept called image is related to the individual and therefore closely related to political, ideological or intellectual structure. When considered in terms of city image, the concept can be explained as the shaping of the city within a certain political or ideological line. The city image, which distinguishes the city from others and creates a new context where meaning, identity and structure are intertwined, becomes even more important as cities become saturated with crowds, become old or experience social erosion. The ability of cities to remain more vibrant in the field and to create correct touristic policies depends on understanding the changing image beyond the social, cultural, physical, economic, ideological, etc. changes within the city and creating outputs accordingly. From developing new touristic products to protecting cultural heritage, from creating touristic strategies to creating new gastronomic, cultural or artistic images, from protecting the city memory to creating new excitement points in the destination, many applications can only be realized by structuring a good city image. A city's ability to demonstrate its touristic potential is parallel to having a positive image that is compatible with its past, present and future. This image can sometimes be formed naturally, while other times it becomes a man-made output that needs to be diagnosed and corrected through research (Giddens, 1994; European Commission, 2000; The Urban Land Institute, 2003; Tek, 2009; Lynch, 2010).

City image refers to the sum of the opinions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions of the potential target audience about the city. This sum is effective for each individual in their decisions to visit, shop, commit, travel or invest in that city (Özdemir & Karaca, 2009; Demirel, 2014). The image of a destination, similar to the image of a city, refers to the first impression or perception a tourist has about a place. Personal factors, social, psychological factors, sources of information, experiences or distribution channels each constitute one of the important elements of the destination image and the image is established with the holistic structure of all these components (Baloğlu & McCleary, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). Destinations are areas with touristic infrastructure where visitors stay overnight and can be explained as a place where all touristic services and products, activities and experiences are positioned together in the tourism value chain (UNWTO, 2017). Destination image is the holistic impression created by the destination. It characterizes the totality of all impressions, ideas and beliefs that people associate with the destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Ekinci, 2003). Image exhibits a subjective structure as much as the characteristics attributed to the destination personality. However, this subjectivity is also evaluated quite positively in the literature. Because this image is more important than concrete resources and motivates perceptions rather than reality in terms of encouraging tourists to take action (Gallarza et al., 2002; Nadeau et al., 2008; Souiden et al., 2017).

In addition, this personal relationship established with the touristic city or destination makes the touristic experience more “valuable”. Researching the image of the destination and perceiving it correctly can enable the communication to be developed with the tourist to deepen and to offer more appropriate products and services. The image of the destination consists of both perceptual and emotional elements. The evaluation of the image in the perceptual sense is expressed in the cognitive field with the information obtained and beliefs held about that region. Emotional data

expresses the feelings that the touristic destination makes the tourist feel. Thus, a tourist processes his/her feelings about the destination in his/her mind and forms a general image of that region (Hanyu, 1993; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). On the other hand, the concept of destination personality can be considered as human characteristics-personality traits attributed to destinations (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006). Destination image affects both tourist satisfaction and revisit motivations. Destination personality, which is often used together in the literature, is also effective in satisfaction and revisit behavior. Therefore, within the framework of the literature examining these two concepts, it is understood that the issue of "how a destination is and how it is perceived" is actually a premise for increasing the touristic value of that region in an integrated manner and making it selectable (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Chi & Qu, 2008).

The origin of branding strategies in the world is to emphasize the uniqueness of destinations. The most important strategy here is to be able to select and shine the features or perceived points that position the destination separately from others (Souiden et al., 2017; Kim & Stepchenkova, 2017). The personality and image of a destination contain important clues to correctly define that place. For example; whether a place is interesting, exciting or friendly characterizes the personality of the destination. On the other hand, whether a destination is cold, underdeveloped, expensive or exotic subjectively defines its image. Although these highly subjective definitions cannot be generalized, they can serve as an attractive element when included in the personalized comments of tourists. The personality and image of the destination are seen as two important elements that work together, and personality supports and revitalizes the image. For both concepts, the impact of culture, heritage, local people, organic advantages and visitor profiles is great. At the same time, the structure of the touristic product and service, employees and all stakeholders play a major role in the formation of the image and personality (Ekinci, 2003; Chen & Phou, 2013; Gomez-Aguilar et al., 2016; Lam & Ryan, 2020). Understanding why a destination is preferred is becoming more and more important both for sector representatives and academic literature. Because while tourism revenues are increasing, competition within the sector is also sharpening at a similar pace. The condition of being a pioneer in competition is directly related to effectively applying the factors affecting the choice in terms of destinations. As the structure of demand changes with the age, ordinary marketing activities are now in the background and new values suitable for the age come to the fore for the effective marketing of destinations. At this point, branding touristic destinations and strengthening their images are the leading factors in terms of competition for planners and politicians (Beerli et al., 2007; Chen & Pou, 2013).

Different needs, demands and different characteristics of the destinations can lead to completely different purchasing behaviors of tourists. In fact, these behaviors and preferences can even change depending on whether the tourists are local or foreign. For example; Falk (2013) concluded in his study conducted in winter sports centers that domestic tourists are more sensitive to changes in weather conditions than foreign tourists, but foreign tourists are also more sensitive to nightly accommodation prices than domestic tourists. Similarly, in their study examining the comment pages of guests staying at hotels of a Sri Lankan hotel group, they determined that the satisfaction levels of their guests about a product offered in their hotels differed between domestic and foreign tourists. In the study in question, it was determined that the majority of foreign tourists were generally satisfied with the services in the group's hotels, but the majority of domestic tourists complained about other facilities in the hotels, especially the quality of accommodation (Herath & Munasinghe, 2017: 304). In this context, it is possible to say that the behaviors, purchasing preferences and decisions of tourists should be evaluated in terms of whether they are local or foreign. In this way, product or service design suitable for the needs of tourists can be realized in the planning, marketing and management of countries and affiliated tourism destinations (Hayamin & Srivihok, 2018: 39). One of the most important factors that determine where tourists will go is the image level of the destinations. In fact, many studies in the literature emphasize that image is an important component in the decision-making process of tourists (Junadi et al., 2017: 89). In fact, most of these studies have concluded that tourists' evaluations of destination images differ depending on whether they are local or foreign. In terms of application, a sample study was conducted in the Gold Coast destination in Austria regarding these findings. Gold Coast destination management organizations and marketers took an important step in order to strengthen the position of the destination in the domestic markets and analyzed extensively what domestic tourists expect from an Australian holiday. Thus, they developed special recommendations for each of the country's important and intensive tourist demand core domestic markets such as Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. As a result, they strengthened the image and brand value perceptions of tourists towards the destination (Chalip et al., 2003).

The destination of Sinop is located at the northernmost tip of Türkiye and consists of the districts of Ayancık, Boyabat, Dikmen, Durağan, Erfelek, Gerze, Merkez, Saraydüzü and Türkeli. With its preserved and unspoiled history, culture, sea, nature and local gastronomy, Sinop is one of the important alternative tourism destinations in terms of tourism. With its approximately 5000-year history, Sinop has been a center of attraction for past civilizations with its natural, geographical, economic and cultural characteristics and being a natural harbor. The destination hosts protected areas such as Hamsilos Nature Park, Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park, Topalçam Nature Park and Bazalt Rocks Nature Monument; natural riches such as Ayancık Akgöl Tourism Center, Gerze Kozfindık-Bozarmut Plateau Tourism Center and Bahçeler Tourism Center; many historical monuments such as Sinop Castle, Historical Prison, Alaaddin Mosque, Pervane Madrasa, Balatlar Church and Pasha's Redoubts and many gastronomic local delicacies such as nokul, mantı, sırık kebab, chestnut, chestnut honey, seafood and Gazidere tomatoes (Sinop City Guide, n.d.). In addition to all these touristic riches, Sinop is a brand city in terms of wooden boat models, linen weaving, silver jewelry design and knife manufacturing. Local and foreign tourists who come to the destination frequently buy wooden boat models called "kotra" and other related products as souvenirs, promotional materials and visuals (Sinop Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, 2024). According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism "Tourism Statistics" 2023 data, 108,924 local, 1496 foreign and a total of 110,420 facility arrivals were made to Sinop destination. 218,401 local tourists, 2958 foreign tourists and a total of 221,359 overnight stays were provided in the destination. The average length of stay of tourists is two days and the total occupancy rate is %21,79 (T.C. Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2024). In addition, according to the 2021 data of the Turkish Statistical Institute, a total of 295,000 people visited the Sinop destination (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2024). Sinop is a remarkable destination with all its valuable touristic riches and the number of visitors. However, there are almost no studies on both image and cognitive aspects of the destination. In this context, the main purpose of the study was to determine the cognitive levels of tourists receiving accommodation services in the Sinop destination. For this purpose, a word association test was applied to measure the awareness levels of the research participants regarding the concept of "Sinop". Thus, the participants' opinions about the concept of "Sinop" were taken and their ideas and suggestions were evaluated. The study is valuable in terms of being one of the pioneering studies conducted in the Sinop destination in terms of its subject and method.

Conceptual Framework

Cities are social products. In this respect, they have their own personality traits, a unique identity and image (Laborit, 1990). Cities create social processes by establishing contact with individuals through their physical structures, past and spaces. Therefore, in cities, which are living structures, time, identity, memory and image form an intertwined plane (Keleş, 2005; Lynch, 2010). The concept we call destination is also touristic areas with unique features that include facilities, attractions and activities suitable for travel. In this respect, the concept considered as destination image is related to the ideas, beliefs and attitudes held about the place in parallel with the city image; it constitutes one of the most effective parameters in creating demand. Destinations try to maintain a positive position in the minds of tourists in order to differentiate themselves from their competitors with their different aspects from others. In other words, the preferability, attractiveness and unforgettability of a destination are actually related to "how it is perceived", that is, the "image" (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010; Pike & Kotsi, 2016). Determining this image and perception is considered as an important factor in the promotion, marketing and branding of destinations. The prepared study aims to reveal the image, perception and the portrait of Sinop in the minds by analyzing this perception with the word association test technique.

While designing the study, the literature framework was examined in detail. As can be seen, it is possible to come across many studies on the image of destinations. For example; there are studies in the literature that compile, examine and theoretically criticize studies on destination image (Pike, 2002; Kock et al., 2016). Apart from this, there are also studies that focus on the components of destination image (Martin & Bosque, 2008; Phillips & Jang, 2008), examine the relationship of destination image with tourist behavior (Chi & Qu, 2008; Adan, 2015) and focus on the effects of parameters such as gender, age, income, education, etc. on destination image and different perceptions of the image (Bertan, 2013; Albayrak & Özkul, 2013; Serçek & Serçek, 2017). While examining the destination image, it is also possible to see specific studies that emphasize the influence and participation of local people on the image, underline the effect of destination branding on repeat visits (Çiçek & Ilgaz, 2015; Ertaş & Gürsoy, 2016), or directly try to determine the image of a particular destination.

Both the information acquired and the feelings formed by the interaction in the tourist's mind create a new meaning about the region (image) within the communication established with the destination. The tourist conceptualizes this meaning by processing it in his mind and expresses it with some matching human attributes (personality). Thus, a destination is restructured in the tourist's mind and settles on a foundation. According to this new meaning,

satisfaction, revisit, recommendation or the opposite negative behaviors may occur (Chon, 1990; Baloglu, 2001; Phillips et al., 2011).

This perception and interpretation process also reveals an important layer that creates the general touristic potential of the destination through word of mouth communication. This layer includes both image and personality concepts. The concepts of destination personality and image are considered in close relation to each other. Both have positive effects on each other. While there are many studies on this subject in the literature (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Hosany et al., 2006; Prayag, 2007; Artuğer & Çetinsöz, 2014), there are also many studies that state that personality shapes the perception of image in a subjective way (Apostolopoulou & Papadimitriou, 2015; Kim et al., 2018), focus on the relationship between adjectives and characteristics considered within the scope of destination personality and image (Kim & Lee, 2015), examine the sub-dimensions of image and personality (Upadhyaya, 2012) and underline the effects of image on brand identity (Chen & Phou, 2013). The definition of destination personality is the attribution of human characteristics that facilitate a place to take place in the human mind, making it more familiar and understandable. The emotions and closeness provided by personality are effective in many points such as ease of decision-making, deepening of the relationship and repeat visits. Positive destination personality also ensures that the perceived destination image is positive, and these two concepts support each other (Prayag, 2007; Chen & Phou, 2013; Kumar & Nayak, 2014). Based on this, a word association test was applied in the study to measure the image and perception of the destination. It is seen that association tests are frequently used in studies on destination image and tourist perceptions. While there are studies investigating the relationship between tourism and cognitive representations and destination perception (Guzman-Parra et al., 2021), it is possible to come across many studies in the tourism literature that directly use word association tests (Keskin & Örgün, 2015; Doğan et al., 2018; Akyurt, 2019; Bucak & Yiğit, 2020; Özişik Yapıcı, 2022). The main purpose of the study, which is shaped on the basis of the data obtained from the literature, is to determine the cognitive levels of tourists who receive accommodation services in the destination of Sinop regarding the concept of "Sinop" with the word association test. Sinop, which has an important place in the Black Sea geography in its historical journey and has been home to many civilizations, has begun to distinguish itself as a destination with tourism projects since the late 1970s. Known for its propensity for tourism types such as cultural tourism, sports tourism, sea-sand-sun tourism, Sinop is a place that is easily accessible due to its airport, has unspoiled natural beauties, has a strong cultural heritage, and can be experienced easily (Aytuğ et al., 2020). The preference of Sinop in the study is due to the fact that a similar depth of research has not yet been established on this destination. The aim of the study is to measure the awareness levels of the destination "Sinop" in terms of conceptual image and personality. Thus, it will be more clearly explained what kind of a place Sinop is for those who experience it.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Method

Purpose and Importance of the Research

The main purpose of this study is to determine the cognitive levels of tourists who receive accommodation services in the destination of Sinop regarding the concept of "Sinop". For this purpose, a word association test was applied to measure the awareness levels of the research participants regarding the concept of "Sinop". Thus, the participants' opinions about the concept of "Sinop" were obtained and their ideas and suggestions were evaluated. The study is valuable in terms of being one of the pioneering studies conducted in the destination of Sinop in terms of its subject and method.

Data Collection Process of the Research

In the study, the qualitative analysis method was determined and the participants were given a word association test. When qualitative research methods are examined, it is seen that there has been an increase in the number of scientific studies conducted with qualitative research techniques, especially in the last fifty years. In parallel with this development, it is expected that the number of data obtained through qualitative research will increase and be evaluated from a broad perspective (Güneş & Erdem, 2022). In this context, the word association test and applied forms were given to the participants through face-to-face communication. In the data collection form prepared in 10-point Likert format, the participants were asked to write the words they associated with the concept of "Sinop" and to make sentences expressing the concept of "Sinop". Participants were informed about the word association test in advance and were then given thirty seconds to express the equivalents of the words and measure their conceptual

awareness. While creating the research data form, the concept of Sinop... was written ten times under each other on a page in order to prevent participants from giving the same answer. Below is an example of a word association test;

- 1- Sinop
- 2- Sinop
- 3- Sinop
- 4- Sinop
- 5- Sinop
- 6- Sinop
- 7- Sinop
- 8- Sinop
- 9- Sinop
- 10- Sinop
- Related Sentence

During the data collection process of the research, 200 tourist from different demographic groups who received accommodation services in Sinop destination were included in the research sample. Simple random sampling was preferred in the sample selection process. The data collection process was terminated at the point where the answers and association results began to resemble each other.

Data Analysis of the Research

Word association test; contributes to the analysis of the validity and significance level of terms that have been in memory for a long time. This test; is an evaluation method that involves finding the keyword, performing it in a limited time period, and having people write down what they can remember. The test is also used to determine the mental levels of people and measure their relationships with terms at this level (Doğan et al., 2018).

Findings. Of the tourists participating in the research, 57% were male, 53,5% were between the ages of 25-60, 43% had a bachelor's degree, 37,5% were public employees, 47,5% had a monthly income of 25,001 TL-50,000 TL and 70% had visited the destination more than once (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants (n=200).

Demographic Characteristics		Number (n)	Percentage(%)
Gender	Female	86	43,0
	Male	114	57,0
Age	Between 15-24 Years Old	75	37,5
	Between 25-60 Years Old	107	53,5
	Ages 61 and Above	18	9,0
Education	Primary Education	5	2,5
	High School	27	13,5
	Associate Degree	32	16,0
	Undergraduate	86	43,0
	Postgraduate	50	25,0
Job	Student	18	9,0
	Self-Employed	68	34,0
	Private Sector Employee	24	12,0
	Public Employee	75	37,5
	Retired	10	5,0
	Housewife	3	1,5
Income	Unemployed	2	1,0
	0 TL-25,000 TL	37	18,5
	25,001 TL-50,000 TL	95	47,5
Number of Arrivals to Destination	50,001 TL and Above	68	34,0
	First Time	60	30,0
	Multiple Times	140	70,0
Total		200	100

As a result of the analysis (Table 2), it was determined that the 200 participants who participated in the study associated the concept of "Sinop" with 4497 words. The participants answered all the questions in the word association form completely. The fact that there were no questions left blank indicates that a common term related to the concept of "Sinop" was formed in the minds of the participants.

Table 2. Results of the Word Association Test for the Concept of Sinop.

	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	K6	K7	K8	K9	K10
Total Participants	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Response Status	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200

When the data in Table 3 is examined, it is determined that tourists associate the concept of "Sinop" with 66 different words. Tourists repeated the relevant words a total of 4497 times in their answers. The participants mostly used the words natural (95), local (93), healthy (91), slow (91), organic (90), quality (88), traditional (87), taste (85), sustainability (84), enjoyable (84), Karakum (83), local food (83), cultural (82), Alaaddin Mosque (82), Seyyid Bilâl (81), sunset (80) and dark tourism (80) as the conceptual equivalents of the concept of "Sinop" and expressed it with terms that they assumed to convey its meaning. Participants used the words Pasha's Redoubts (49), cittaslow (49), unique landspace (48), Yalı Kahvesi (48), kotra (48), linen (47), knife (46), calmness (45) and Adabaşı (45) at a lower level as conceptual equivalents of the concept of "Sinop" and expressed it with terms that they assumed would convey its meaning.

Table 3. Words that Participants Associated with the Concept of Sinop and the Repetition Rates of These Words.

Word	n	Word	n	Word	n
Natural	95	Relaxation	77	Fish	58
Local	93	Expensive	77	Anchovy	57
Healthy	91	Katlama	77	Lakerda	57
Slow	91	Peace	76	Şahin Hill	57
Organic	90	Society	75	Radar (Base)	56
Quality	88	Unique	75	Mobil Beach	56
Traditional	87	Clean Air	74	Forest Camp	55
Taste	85	Diogenes	74	Aşıklar Street	53
Sustainability	84	Historical Prison	74	Pardon	53
Enjoyable	84	Manti	73	Aldırma Gönül	52
Karakum	83	Nokul	73	Sabahattin Ali	50
Local Food	83	Hamsilos	72	Mushroom	50
Cultural	82	Aklıman	70	Kuzeyfest	50
Alaaddin Mosque	82	Sand Lily	67	Pasha's Redoubts	49
Seyyid Bilâl	81	Pervane Madrasa	65	Cittaslow	49
Sunset	80	Sakarya Street	62	Unique Landscape,	48
Dark Tourism	80	Shipyard	60	Yalı Kahvesi	48
Village Product	79	Sinop Castle	60	Kotra	48
İnceburun	79	Erfelek Waterfall	60	Linen	47
From the Past	78	Chestnut	59	Knife	46
Fresh	78	Princess	59	Calmness	45
North	78	Nisi Pond	58	Adabaşı	45
				Total	4497

According to the word cloud analysis (Figure 1), it was determined that the participants associated the concept of "Sinop" with concepts such as natural, local, healthy, slow, organic, quality, traditional, taste, sustainability, enjoyable, Karakum, local food, cultural, Alaaddin Mosque, Seyyid Bilâl, sunset, dark tourism, village product, İnceburun, from the past, fresh, North, relaxation, expensive, katlama, peace, society, unique and clean air. In addition, the participants expressed their thoughts on the concept of "Sinop" with different words and again at a high level of participation.

definition, image is the perception of symbols related to all the values of a person, institution, object or country in the short and long term (Yerdelen Karagöz, 2017: 44). Image is a kind of visual transfer of reality. This transfer can be concrete as in photographs and pictures or abstract as in literature and music. When considered in terms of tourist destinations, image is the reality given by photographs and pictures, such as all kinds of facilities that are attractive for tourism in a country or region, all kinds of emblems and slogans designed for the marketing of that region; while prejudices, dreams, expectations and feelings about the destination can be evaluated as the feeling given by literature and music. In this context, image is a phenomenon that includes the logical and emotional perceptions of tourists. These logical and emotional components cause the image to be perceived as a whole as positive or negative (Aksoy & Kiyici, 2011: 479-480).

Destination image can be defined as the sum of a set of beliefs, ideas and impressions that people have about the qualities or activities available in a destination (Alcazar et al., 2014: 159) and the mental representation of people's knowledge, feelings and general perceptions about a particular destination (Assaker & Hallak, 2013: 601). For this reason, the level of image perceived by tourists about destinations has an important effect on tourists' consumption behavior (Blazevic & Stojic, 2006: 57). Indeed, many studies in the literature reveal that image is an important component in tourists' destination choices. For example; Bigne et al. (2001) determined in their studies that there is a relationship between the level of image perceived in destinations and tourists' behavioral intentions and Tascı & Gartner (2007) determined in their studies that destination image is effective in tourists' revisiting a destination and in their recommendation decisions. As can be seen, measuring, evaluating and correctly understanding tourists' destination image perceptions is important in terms of correctly determining and interpreting tourists' behaviors, preferences and recommendation decisions (Artuğer et al., 2013). In future studies, studies comparing different destinations can be conducted on the subject. In more comprehensive research areas, studies can be conducted with larger sample sizes and generalizable results. In addition, different studies and comparison studies can be conducted by determining samples from different nations.

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