Determining of Dark Tourism Participants’ Travel Motivations

Hande AKYURT KURNAZ  
Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, İçmeler School of  
Tourism Management and Hospitality, 48720 Marmaris  
Muğla, Turkey  
hande_akyurt84@hotmail.com

Hüseyin ÇEKEN  
Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, School of  
Tourism Management and Hospitality  
48170 Kötekli  
Muğla, Turkey  
huseyin_ceken2001@yahoo.com

Burhan KILIÇ  
Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, School of  
Tourism Management and Hospitality  
48170 Kötekli  
Muğla, Turkey  
bkilic@mu.edu.tr

Extensive Summary

In recent years, with the development of tourism, various countries have been competing with each other in order to raise their revenues. With the increase in competition, the concept of marketing the regions of countries as destinations has emerged. From this point, countries have been marketing their cities or regions in terms of tourism. With the increase in marketing in terms of tourism, differences among destinations have occurred and special interest tourism types, formed depending on demand, have emerged. One of these special interest tourism types is the “dark tourism”. Dating back to the ancient times and introduced to the academic literature by Foley and Lenon, the dark tourism is a kind of special interest tourism related to the concept of death and the feelings such as pain, grief, etc. Fields of war, genocide memorials, prisons and museums displaying execution and war memorials constitute the major attractions of dark tourism. Together with the increase in the interest to the dark tourism, a lot of destinations have begun to create demands towards dark tourism so that they can improve their competitive power. According to the 2012 statistics regarding dark tourism, Pont de l’Alma Road Tunnel (France), the one in which Princess Diana had passed away, Zero Point (USA), the place where there had been the Twin Towers, Kwai Bridge (Taiwan), Auschwitz Jews Concentration Camp (Poland), and Chernobyl Nuclear Plant Influence Field (Ukraine) are five the most popular destinations in the world for dark tourism.

With her unique history, a great number of old civilizations and cultural fields, Turkey hosts a lot of destinations for dark tourism. Gallipoli-Çanakkale, Mausoleum-Ankara, Sarkamış-Kars, Historical Commander-in-chief National Park-Afyonkarahisar, Dolmabahçe Palace-Istanbul, and Ulucanlar Prison-Ankara are the most famous dark tourism destinations of Turkey. In spite of a large number of rich tourism sources for dark tourism, dark tourism activities in Turkey rather limited. On the other hand, it has been observed that there are few studies dealing with dark tourism and especially
Turkey’s dark tourism. In this respect, this study was carried out to determine the push factors of the local tourists’, travelling for the purpose of dark tourism, travel motivations.

Within the scope of study, local tourists visiting the Historical Gallipoli and Çanakkale National Parks constituted the population of the study. Survey method was used in the study as the mean of data collection. Having scanned the related literature, a survey form was formed and through face-to-face interviews, it was carried out.

In survey form, consisting of three parts, determination of the demographic features (sex, age, marital status, level of education, occupation, monthly income, and place of reside) was aimed in the first part. The second part included the statements aiming at determining the travel characteristics of local tourists. Finally, 19 statements dealing with visiting Çanakkale and 4 factors form the third part. In order to be able to determine the opinions of the participants a 5 item Likert scale was used.

The survey was carried out with 400 local tourists visiting Çanakkale-Gallipoli in July, 2011 and the data was analyzed via SPSS 14.0 software. During data analysis, a reliability analysis was carried out in order to determine the reliability of the obtained data. According to the reliability analysis results, Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found as 0.775 and as a consequence, the research scale was regarded to be reliable.

Having identified the reliability level, various demographic features of the participants were identified by using percentage and frequency. According to the results, 51.8% of the participants were female whereas 48.2% were male. Most of the participants were between 30-29 years old (34.5%) and 40-49 years old (28.4%). On the other hand, 81% were married, 33.9% were university graduate, 26.6% were high school graduate, and 24.6% were primary school graduate. Moreover, it was found out that 28.9% of participants were housewife and 27.4% were public official; 26.8% had 2001-3000 TL monthly income whereas 53.6% had 1001-2000 TL. Finally, 73.5% of the participants were living in Marmara region while 10.3% were living in Central Anatolia region. According to the demographic results of the study, most of the participants had a family, between 30-39 age intervals and had 1001 TL monthly income at least. Also, Çanakkale was usually being visited by people living in Marmara and Central Anatolia regions.

According to the travel characteristics of the participants, the majority of them were travelling with their families (62.9%) in parallel with their marital status. Although 99.1% of the participants believed that they had to visit the war field, 69.9% of them had never visited Çanakkale before. The results, also, showed that visitors did not gather information about Çanakkale while planning their visits. Of the participants collecting information about Çanakkale beforehand their visits, 85.4% collected information from their relatives, friends, or intimates whereas 7.3% gathered information through internet.

After descriptive statistics of participants, a confirmative factor analysis was carried out in order to find out the push factors leading the local tourists, responding the survey, to travel. The value (0.775) obtained from Kiaser-Meyer-Olkin test showed that the sample was suitable for factor analysis. According to the confirmatory factor analysis, 18 statements related to the push factors were grouped under four factors representing the 66.62% of the total variance. The four factors in question were named as Dark Tourism, Self-Motivation, War Motivation and Getaway Motivation.
In the final stage of data analysis, agreement levels of the participants to the 18 statements were analyzed with frequency tables. With regard to the results, the statements, I wanted to pray and memorialize our martyrs (ST 5-79.8%), I wanted to visit the museums and war fields (ST 6-76.6%), I wanted to live the excitement of the Turkish Independence war (ST 3-76.3%), I wanted to be the witness of history (ST 11-7.3%), I wanted to feel the emotions of people who had fought here (ST 10-72.2%), I wanted to take information about Turkish Independence War and Çanakkale Victory in the field (ST 4-71%), I wanted to see the region where my ancestors had passed away (ST 9-70.8%), I wanted to see the place where my ancestors had fought (ST 8-68.8%), and I wanted to learn about my history by visiting historically important places (ST 2-64%), were determined as the most important factors leading the local tourists to travel. According to the local tourists’ travel motivations analysis results, the most important travel motivation regarding tourists’ travels was determined as “Dark Tourism Motivation”.

As a result of t-test and ANOVA test, aimed at examining the differences among groups in the field of determining dark tourism participants’ travel motivations, a meaningful difference was seen in Factor 3 and Factor 4 dimensions in comparison of travel motivations to occupation groups. As a consequence of TUKEY test, aimed at determining within which groups these differences are, it is examined that there were meaningful differences between the participants who were retired and students and between participants who were retired and public officials. In this respect, sex, marital status, age criteria, level of education and income level, which were demographic characteristics, were determined as not being distinctive variances.

The research results showed that the most important motivation as regards with visiting Çanakkale was derived from individuals’ inner motivation for visiting Gallipoli Historical National Park and Gallipoli Historical National Park was being visited throughout the year. In this sense, dark tourism is a special interest tourism that can be carried out throughout the year. Therefore, dark tourism should be evaluated as an important component that decreases seasonality and increases domestic tourism activities.

Since there are few studies related to the subject, this study aiming at determining the push travel factors for Çanakkale has limitations. Also, study results are limited with 400 participants’ opinions. Thus, in order the dark tourism to be able to be used as an efficient tourism product, more detailed studies should be carried out in the future.