

Preliminary Study On Destination Attributes Of Northern Cyprus: Iranian Travellers' Perspective

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Submitted to the
Institute of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

Master of Science
in
Tourism Management

Eastern Mediterranean University
June 2012
Gazimağusa, North Cyprus

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine the attributes of Northern Cyprus ; Iranian travelers' perspective. It will be tried to determine strong and weak attributes of North Cyprus from Iranian travelers perspective. Furthermore, this study tends to examine a conceptual model that will examine the relation between attributes, overall image, and future behaviour. The aforementioned relationship were tested by data obtained from Iranian travellers. According to the study the strong and weak cognitive attributes of Northern Cyprus have been determined. The study demonstrated that unpolluted environment, climate, calm atmosphere and safety are considered as strong cognitive attributes of North Cyprus. The weak attributes are lack of shopping facilities, lack of seasonal festivals and museums. This study also will demonstrate the direct effect of cognitive and affective attributes of North Cyprus on overall image. The direct effect of overall image on visitors' future behaviour will be discussed as well. In addition management implications are provided based on the results of the current study. Furthermore, some information regarding the limitations of this study as well as implication for future research will be presented in this thesis.

Keywords: destination attributes, cognitive attributes, affective attributes, North Cyprus.

ÖZ

Çalışma; KKTC'nin destinasyon özelliklerini, güçlü ve zayıf özelliklerini belirlenmeyi amaçlamıştır. Ayrıca çalışma; destinasyon özellikleri, destinasyon imajı ve turistlerin ileriye yönelik tutumlarını ölçen kavramsal modeli de test etmeyi hedeflemiştir. Çalışmanın dar alanını İranlı turistler oluşturmuştur. Çalışmada; KKTC'nin güçlü ve zayıf bilişsel özellikleri faktör analizine tabi tutulmuş ve 6 temel faktör ortaya konmuştur. Temiz çevre, iklim, sakin ortam ve güvenlik öne çıkan özellikler olmuştur. Zayıf özellikler olarak ise; alışveriş tesislerinin, yerel festivallerin, ve müzelerin yetersizliği belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca çalışma hipotezlerinin test edilmesinde çoklu regresyon yönteminden faydalanılmış ve gerek bilişsel gerekse duyuşsal özelliklerin adanın toplam imajı üzerindeki etkisine yönelik hipotezler doğrulanmıştır. Yine toplam imajın; gelecekte yeniden seyahat etme ve tavsiye üzerine etkisinde çoklu regresyona tabi tutulmuş ve bu ilişkinin varlığı da doğrulanmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları; devlet düzeyinde KKTC'nin imajının oluşturulmasında rol oynayan kurumlara, akademik alanda ise destinasyon özellikleri ve imajına yönelik çalışmalara ışık tutacak nitelikte sonuçlara ulaşmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: destinasyon özellikleri, bilişsel özellikler, duyuşsal özellikler, KKTC.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First and foremost, I am immensely grateful to Asst. Prof. Dr. Ruchan Kayaman, my supervisor, for giving me to explore and think on my own while keeping me on track and enhancing my ideas with her astute and illuminating comments.

This work would not have been possible for me without the help of her. I express my sincere gratitude to her for providing me all clarifications and relevant information which have immensely benefited my work. I really owe a great deal to her as my supervisor whose constant teachings and guidance have enabled me to produce the present dissertation.

I would also like to express my thanks to the entire academic staffs who had given me exposure to current trends in various branches of tourism during my master course work. I would really like to thank all of them for the enlightening courses they taught me, and their constant encouragement of my study into academic research. I am grateful to my husband, Pasha, who has been my inner strength and made it possible for me to devote so much time on my dissertation.

Words are not able to express my gratitude to my lovely parents, my mom and my dad, for their endless supports in all steps of my life and for believing me, and my brothers, Majid and Nima, and my beloved sister Maryam, for their encouragements. Finally, thanks to my little sister, Sarvi, for being so supportive and being next to me as my best friend.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Brand image influences the tourists' choice of the holiday destination. According to Beerli and Martin (2004) it has great influence on behavior of consumer in tourism market.

It is very important for practitioners to understand different attributes of a destination. In this case they will be able to apply suitable marketing strategies for destinations and fulfill travelers' expectation (Murphy, Moscardo, Benckendorf, 2007).

Destinations have different images to different travelers relative to their geographic proximity (Bull, 1995). Different travellers have different perceptions of destinations. As a result determining the important attributes for a destination seems an important issue that leads to attract more tourists for the destination.

Reserachers have to try for applying sustainable strategies for tourists in North Cyprus. As people have different perceptions and expectations from a destination, various demographic characteristics must be studied.

This study will be conducted in order to investigate the attributes for North Cyprus by choosing the Iranian travelers as sample study and to determine the unique features that Iranian travelers associate with North Cyprus.

1.2 Purpose of the Study:

The main purpose of this study is to identify North Cyprus's destination attributes by investigating the following questions:

1. What are Iranian travelers' perceptions of North Cyprus's destination attributes?
2. What unique places and features do Iranian travelers associate with North Cyprus?
3. What are the weak and strong attributes of Northern Cyprus as seen by Iranian travellers.
4. Provide a framework to improve the weak attributes.

As far as the studies show, there is a lack of information regarding to examine the attributes for North Cyprus and it seems that there is a significant gap in the literature in this regard. There are only two studies by Vaughan and Edwards (1999) that attempted to study tourism attributes for Cyprus. As a result this study seems to be a significant contribution to the new literature.

Despite the growing body of work on brand image, there are limited studies on the brand image of small island in general (Naidoo & Munhurrun 2012).

This study will follow Echtner and Ritchie (1991) conceptualization of the destination image construct based on extensive review of the literature on destination image research for the period of 1975-2011.

Many studies confirmed that Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) had successfully developed a conceptual framework that managed “to identify ‘true’ images of tourist destinations” (Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001, p. 7).

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study would help both governmental bodies and managers to better understand and serve the international tourists, so they may be able to better design the destination products and marketing focus, and eventually increase the suitable strategies for North Cyprus.

The current study is conducted to understand main strengths and weaknesses of attributes of North Cyprus and to make recommendations for policy makers and researchers.

1.4 Outline of the Thesis

The present thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter will provide a brief explanation about the statement of the problem, purpose of this study, and significance of the current study. At the end of this chapter, a brief explanation about North Cyprus and its cities as a tourism destination will be given.

The second chapter will present the literature review. It will provide a description of the relevant literature about destination image and its components, destination attributes, and the influence of the studied attributes.

The methodology of the current study can be found in chapter three. In this chapter, population and samples, data collection procedures. At the end of this chapter, the information about data analysis will be discussed.

In chapter four, the results of the study, response rate, demographic characteristics as well as hypothesis testing will be discussed.

Finally, chapter five will reveal the discussion and conclusions of the research. Implication for practitioners, future research direction, and limitaion of the study will be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 2

NORTH CYPRUS AS CASE STUDY

2.1 North Cyprus as a Tourism Destination:

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is a state that comprises the northeastern part of the island of Cyprus (<http://www.wikipedia.org/>). In the north east, the island extends from the top of Karpass, from west part extends to Morphou Bay and Cape Kormakitis and it is extended to the village which is called Louroujina in the south part. Under the control of the UN, a buffer zone stretches between North Cyprus and the rest of the island. Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. It occupies an area of 9851 km. It lies 60km. south of the coast of Turkey, 96 km. west of the coast of Syria, and 322 km. distant from Greece (Rustem, 1987). Winter in North Cyprus is mostly rainy and cool, especially between December and February. Although the temperature may really be low during the nights in winter, there is no snow fall in different part of North Cyprus. (<http://www.cyprus-beach.co.uk/north-cyprus-holiday/>). In spring the weather is unstable and pretty short. Summer that is followed by a short autumn is very hot and dry enough to turn the island brown.

In recent years, the charter flights from different parts of the world such as the Netherlands, Poland, Azerbaijan and Iran have been arriving via Turkey. There are more efforts in order to have charter flights from southern part of Europe and Russia as well.



Figure 1: Cyprus Map

2.1.1 Tourism Sector:

Gilmore, Carson, Fawcett and Ascenção (2007) in their study worked on sustainable marketing for the case of North Cyprus. In their article they claimed that tourism has a significant role for revenue as well as employment in North Cyprus. They stated that international economic sanctions that occurred in 1974 had a dramatic effect on North Cyprus and it led some restrictions to tourism sector as well. There also appeared many difficulties for having a balance between major activities such as economic, social and environmental perspectives. Some scholars such as Hall (1994), Clements & Georgiou (1998) claimed that North Cyprus tourism has faced many difficulty and instability that originated from political issues between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots on the island. According to Lockhart (1993), Manfield & Kliot (1996), Ioannades (1992) and Gunce (2003) in Greek Cypriot part, tourism activities is more developed compared with the Turkish part.

Altınay (2000) states that most investment that is including the building of highways, electricity plants, water supply and so forth are financed by Turkey. However, these activities are not compatible with EU standards.

North Cyprus, as a tourist destination, has a rich natural and cultural attractions. Creating marketing strategies to enter international tourism and attract potential tourists to North Cyprus is the main problem that facing today. Understanding attractiveness for North Cyprus is an important issue that must be considered precisely.

There are different and interesting water-sport activities that people can do in North Cyprus while visiting the place. People and visitors can also benefit beautiful historical memorials as well as rich archaeological ruins and monuments (<http://www.holidaysinnorthcyprus.com/north-cyprus.htm>). The cities in North Cyprus are Nicosia, Kyrenia, Morphou, Famagusta, Iskele, and Karpaz. North Cyprus is having the most beautiful and a unique beauty in the beaches and it has a rich nature. The beaches are truly clean and outstanding. Additionally, visitors can enjoy the cuisine and warm and friendly people that you can rarely find in other countries. "If you are a nature-addict, an archaeologist, a jogger, a sportsman or a sun-lover, the island is the correct place for you to be".

Tourists and visitors will have the opportunity to enjoy all these marvelous beauties combined with Besparmak Mountains' beauty and magnificence. They can have everything that they desire such as having food under sunshine in Famagusta, watching and resting in beautiful harbor in Kyrenia and the next day they can visit

golden beaches in Karpaz which are truly rare. “Visitors can do almost everything; enjoy the sea, and water-skiing; and they can experience this beauty”.
(<http://www.holidaysinnorthcyprus.com/north-cyprus.htm>)

As mentioned before, the cities of North Cyprus are Nicosia, Kyrenia, Morphou, Famagusta, Iskele, and Karpaz. In this part, a brief explanation of the tourist attraction of these cities will be discussed.

2.1.1.1 Nicosia:

Nicosia that is the capital city of North Cyprus is the biggest and most populated city in North Cyprus. The city is a significant center of culture, business, diplomacy and arts. There are various visiting places in Nicosia. Some important places to visit are “Kyrenia gate”, “Mevlevi Tekke Museum”, “National Struggle Museum”, and “Arab Ahmet Mosque”(North Cyprus Tourist Guide, 2010-2011, p. 43).



Figure 2: Mevlevi Tekke
Museum



Figure 3: Kyrenia gate

2.1.1.2 Kyrenia:

According to information published in North Cyprus Tourist Guide (2010-2011), the city Kyrenia was founded in 10th century BC. The city was recognized as one of the ten kingdom of Cyprus. “In the 7th century, it was fortified by the Byzanties

who built the original Kyrenia Castle” (North Cyprus Tourist Guide, 2010-2011, p. 75). The town was a minor port under Ottoman rule. Then the British constructed a harbor. From then on, the city was a place for captains, officers, and their families and it had very beautiful harbor and there were various leisure activities and romantic atmosphere. It still has many restaurants and bars and there are different hotels for visitors’ accommodation. This region that is characterized by attractive resorts, historic places and beautiful boats attract many tourists around the world. Some important places to visit in Kyrenia are Kyrenia Castle, shipwreck museum, Agha Cafer Pasha Mosque, museum of folk arts, and Saint Hilarion Castle.



Figure 4: Shipwreck Museum



Figure 5: Kyrenia Castle

2.1.1.3 Morphou:

“The city Morphou that is situated in the northwest of Cyprus is one of the richest agricultural areas in Cyprus, and it is well-known for famous particularly for the Citrus and strawberries. Spring is a great season to enjoy the nature of the city. There are some places in Morphou that deserve seeing such as Pigades Temple.



Figure 6: Pigades Temple

2.1.1.4 Famagusta:

Famagusta is one of the most important cities in North Cyprus. It is located on the shores of the Mediterranean. Famagusta is laid to ruins of Salamis in North. It is believed that the city has been founded in 11th BC.

The spectacular ruins give a fascinating insight into long-lost civilizations and include magnificent amphitheatres, Roman baths, a gymnasium and royal tombs. The mosaics are particularly beautiful. Just inland from Famagusta are the church and monastery dedicated to St. Barnabas, the founder of the apostolic church in Cyprus in 45 AD.

The largest university of the island is situated in Famagusta. For the last 20 years, Famagusta is the most important center of scientific activity of Cyprus.

Once port city, Famagusta bears signs of many civilizations that have passed by for centuries and as well as being a tourist heaven, it is a center of science as a university city (North Cyprus Tourist Guide, 2010-2011). There is an increase in the number of visitors to Famagusta due to its tourist attractions, and a huge

number of foreigners reside in the city for academic purposes. Some important places to visit are “Salamis ruins”, “Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque”, “Venetian Palace”, “Othello Tower”, and “St. Antonio Church”.



Figure 7: Salamis Ruins



Figure 8: Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque

2.1.1.5 Iskele:

Passengers can pass through the village that is called “Yeni Iskele” on the return from Karpaz to Famagusta. It is an important touristic center where green meets blue on a 25-km-long coastline (North Cyprus Tourist Guide, 2010-2011). There are many hotels and seafood restaurants in the Boghaz region of Iskele. This region is known as an entertainment center. In the small harbor of Boghaz, the fishing boats offer the visitors cruises along the eastern coast of North Cyprus. The Bafra Beach area which was recently opened for tourism investments will boom as one of the major recreation spots of Mediterranean in the near future. The most interesting visiting place in Iskele is Kantara Castle.



Figure 9: Kantara Castle

2.1.1.6 Karpaz:

“Karpaz” is located in north-east part of Cyprus. The beautiful beaches and wild life are important attraction for the city. During summer holiday, the city welcomes different tourists from various countries. They can enjoy the nature as well as nice weather during summer. One important tourists’ destination is Golden Beach that is one of the most beautiful beaches in the world.



Figure 10: Golden Beach



Figure 11: Karpaz Village

Chapter 3

REVIEW LITERATURE

3.1 What is Destination Image?

Different researchers such as Hunt (1971), Mayo (1973), and Gunn (1972) have tried to study the concept of “image”.

According to the existing literature, we can claim that the studies and researches about destination image has been a key concern among researchers and scholars. There have been various articles and studies, especially in the recent years, that have focused on this issue (Naidoo, & Ramseook-Munhurrun, 2012; Yang, He, & Gu 2012; Qu, & Im 2011; Mohan 2009; Stepchenkova, & Morrison 2008, Hosany, Ekinci, & Uysal 2005).

Leisen (2001, p. 50) states that: “The traveler creates an image by processing information about a destination from various sources over time”. He believes that this information about a destination may be organized into a mental construct that is meaningful to the individual.

Destination image has been a significant area of tourism research especially during the past three decades (Hosany, Ekini, & Uysal 2005). Studies on destination image trace back to the early 1970s with Hunt (1975) influential work that tried to investigate the role of image in tourism development. There are various definitions

used by destination image researchers (Hunt (1975); Crompton (1979); Gartner & Hunt (1989); Reilly (1990); Pearse (1988).

For instance Hunt (1975, p. 1) in his research, that was done to measure the images of four states, defined destination image as “perceptions held by potential visitors about an area”. According to Crompton (1979) destination image is the ideas that individuals have of a destination. Reilly (1990) in his research that resulted to measure the image of Montana defined destination image as the total impression an entity makes for individuals. But Etchner and Ritchie (2003) believe that although there are different and various usage of “destination image”, only one tourism researcher has confirmed that “image is one of those terms that will not go away... a term with vague and shifting meanings”.

Tasci and Gartner (2007) believe that because destination image has a great effect on supply and demand issues of marketing, it is an important factor in order to have a successful tourism development and destination marketing.

After reviewing the literature relevant to this subject we can claim that tourism image consists of overall perception of a destination.

As stated before, many authors and researchers agree that the Tourism Destination Image research line started from Hunt’s work in 1971 and they consider his work as the primarily study about destination image (Gartner and Hunt, 1987; Embacher & Buttle, 1989 ; Reilly, 1990 ; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991 ; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991 ; Driscoll , Lawson , & Niven, 1994).

Among various articles that have been published thus far, the one by Echtner and Ritchie (1991) is so significant, because they have tried to examine the concept of destination image with the goal of designing appropriate and rigorous techniques for its measurement. Tourism destinations such as states, regions and countries need an affective positioning strategy such as the other products and services (Echtner & Ritchie 1993). Echtner and Ritchie (1991) tried to conduct a detailed review and assessment of prior research concerning destination image measurement. According to Echtner and Ritchie in order to completely measure destination image, several components must be considered. These components include attribute-based images, holistic impressions, and functional, psychological, unique and common characteristics.

According to Tapachai and Waryszak (2000), destination image is defined to comprise of the image characteristics of a destination that influence tourists' decision to visit particular vacation destinations.

Other scholars and researchers also tried to work on the issue of destination image in the recent years. Among various researches we may come up with the research by Qu, Kim, & Im (2011). They believe that destination image has different dimensions that can affect tourists' behavior. They confirmed that due to the existence of a competitive environment for tourism, marketers must pay attention to establish a positive and strong image for destinations. In this case, revisit intention will increase significantly.

Lee and Lockshin (2011) in their survey also came up with some considerable results regarding to destination image. They tried to apply a conceptual model that investigates the relationship between the variables which are destination image, product beliefs, and preference for domestic product. They claim that tourism research in destination image demonstrates that tourists with positive and favorable image of a destination tend to favour visiting or revisiting the destination. They tried to investigate the relationships among destination image, product beliefs, and preference for domestic product. They concluded that “consumers may use destination image to form product beliefs. A favorable destination image leads to positive product beliefs (Lee & Lockshin, 2011, p. 11).

According to Assaker, Vinizi, and O’Conner (2011) if a traveler is not satisfied or happy about the place that he has visited or if he had a poor experience about a destination, improving a destination’s image is a critical solution and method in order to generate future revisits. They confirm that “a positive image can suggest that the traveler’s poor experience was a rare exception” (Assaker, Vinizi, & O’Conner, 2011, p. 899). As a result, it should be tried to improve a destination’s image, so travelers tend more to visit the destination and revisit intention will be increased.

According to Buhalis (2000) image of a destination is an important indicator for competing with other destinations. It can affect individuals’ perceptions of the place and can affect future behavior. Consequently, Ahmed (1991) also claimed that the capacity of a destination depends on the positive image that a destination has. As a

result it is very important to create a good image in the mind of actual and potential travelers (Buhalis, 2000; Morgan, 1999; Morgan & Pritchard, 1999).

Konecnik (2004) believes that a destination's image has been recognized as a complex and crucial concept in the destination selection process (Konecnik, 2004). A positive place brand encourages internal investment; tourism is a magnet for talent for professional jobs, and if it is properly managed, it can create a renewed sense of purpose and identity for the inhabitants of the country, region, or city (Anholt, 2004).

Furthermore, destination image must be monitored precisely and regularly and check whether the projected image is suitably adopted by visitors and tourists.

3.2 Destination Image Components:

Different studies designated several components for destination image. This part is allotted to review components of destination image according to the existing literatures.

Many scholars such as Baloglu and Brinberg (1997); Walmsley and Young (1998); Chen (2001); Hong, Kim, Jang, & Lee (2006) consider two main and important components for image. These components are called "cognitive" and "affective".

3.2.1 Cognitive (Perceptual), Affective, and Overall Image:

A cognitive or perceptual component, also known as the designative component is "beliefs and knowledge about the perceived attributes of the destination" (Alcañiz et al. 2009, p. 716).

The majority of studies that are related to destination image focus on its cognitive component (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Walmsley & Young, 1998; Chen & Uysal, 2002) and they did not investigate the affective component very precisely.

The affective or evaluative component of destination image has been recognized by some scholars and researchers.

“Affective or evaluative component is the individual’s feelings towards the destination” (Alcañiz et al. 2009, p. 716). O’Neill & Jasper (1992) stated that affective image (AI) is the component that deals with the emotional response of visitors to a place or product.

Particularly, as suggested by Gartner (1993), image can be considered as an effective tool in that is applied in some activities such as advertising, promotions, or similar marketing activities. According to Kim and Yoon (2003) destination image is a mixture of affective and cognitive components that have direct effect on overall image.

The overall image has been considered to be a third component of the image, which may be similar to, or different from, the two mentioned components (Baloglu & Love, 2005; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gartner, 1993). As a result we may claim that all these components must be measured and studied. This issue is very significant to comprehend destination positioning.

According to (Qu, H. Kim, & H. Im, 2011) overall image of a destination that is also called the perceived image is better to be assessed with the projected image.

3.2.2 Organic and Induced Image and Complex image:

According to Gunn (1972) destination images have two main components that must be considered on a continuum. The components of this continuum are organic, induced and complex.

According to Gunn (1972) the stage of an individual's image is truly dependent on his or her experience with the destination. Because the organic image arise from a long history of non-tourism information such as books, newspapers, and so forth, individuals who have never visited a destination will have some information in their memory.

Organic images are substituted by induced images which are formed by exposing to a destination's marketing program (O'Leary & Deegan, 2005). Thus, induced images are those that arise from the destination area itself and are derived from marketing and promotional material such as brochures and magazines designed to attract tourists (Jenkins, 1999). The induced image is created by a conscious effort of tourism promotion that is directed by tourism organization. The induced image depends upon colorful brochures that are distributed in travel agencies and information centers or TV advertisements. (cited in Leisen, 2001).

According to Gunn (1972) the last stage of the continuum which is the complex image is a result of an actual visitation. Chon (1991), Fakeye and Crompton (1991) believed that the complexity of image is as the result of this direct experience with

the destination. For example in a research that was done by Baloglu and McCleary (1999), US travelers' perception of Mediterranean tourist destinations has been studied. In their study, they found interesting results that revealed from visitors and non-visitors. They concluded that non-visitors considered Turkey, Italy, and Greece as equally interesting and attractive, whereas visitors found Greece less attractive when compared with Turkey and Italy.

O'Leary and Deegan (2005) believe that although organic and induced images will be formed prior to travel to a destination, induced images can be changed by actual vacation experience, thus producing a "modified induced" image.

Mayo (1973, p. 217) in this regard concluded "whether or not an image is, in fact, a true representation of what any given region has to offer the tourist, what is important is the image that exists in the mind of the vacationer."

3.2.3 Conative (Behavioral) Element:

Another element in the destination image construct has been proposed by some other scholars (Gartner 1993, Pike & Ryan 2004, and White 2004). This element is called conative or behavioral element which is related to how travelers act toward a destination on the basis of the cognition and affect they have about it. According to Pike & Ryan (2004) "conation reflects a likelihood of destination selection, or brand purchase, and can be interpreted as a propensity to visit a destination within a certain time frame". Cognitive and affective components both affect conative element of destination image.

3.3 Destination Attributes:

Several studies have attempted to identify the brand image attributes of different countries (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; O’Leary & Deegan, 2005; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008; Qu., Kim & Im 2011; Naidoo & Ramseook-Munhurrun, 2012). In these researches, it has been tried to consider some attributes that have been arranged along the functional-psychological continuum, mainly by using the unstructured techniques to elicit the relevant destination image attributes and dimensions, then using these attributes in a structured way to investigate images.

Etchner and Ritchie (1993, p. 6) in their article suggested a list of attributes that have been arranged along the functional-psychological continuum that consists of 35 physical and measurable as well as abstract items such as tourist sites, historic sites, beaches, hospitality, opportunity for adventure, quality of service, fame. Etchner and Ritchie (1993) believed that in order to have effective positioning and marketing strategy, appropriate and suitable destination image must be created and managed. In their study they concluded that each destination has some functional components that are more tangible and some psychological components that are more abstract. As a result, “functional characteristics are defined as directly observable or measurable such as scenery, costs, and climate; whereas psychological characteristics cannot be directly measured such as friendliness and atmosphere” (Etchner & Ritchie, 2003, p. 40).

3.3.1 Functional Characteristics:

According to Etchner and Ritchie (2003, p. 40) “functional characteristics are defined as directly observable or measurable characteristics such as price”. These

characteristics are more tangible. Many scholars have tried to determine the important functional characteristics for destinations in their work.

Naidoo and Ramseook-Munhurrin (2012) in their research study examined the Characteristics for Mauritius. Mauritius as a tourist destination has attractive functional attributes that can address the needs of the tourists and motivate them to travel long distances to reach the destination.

Naidoo and Ramseook-Munhurrin (2012) in their research reported that both functional and psychological attributes are so important on the selection of a holiday destination. The main purpose of their study was to determine whether Mauritius that is a small island destination, benefits from a strong positioning through its brand image attributes. Mauritius as a tourist destination has attractive functional attributes that can address the needs of the tourists and motivate them to travel long distances to reach the destination (Naidoo & Ramseook-Munhurrin, 2012). According to this study, there are some strong attributes for Mauritius such as historical sites, beaches and local cuisine.

Another significant study that tried to determine destination attributes for specific destination is the research by Stepchenkova and Morrison (2008). This study measured Russia's destination image among US pleasure travelers by the means of a Web-based survey by using the methodology proposed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993). They identified some important attributes such as sites/museums, agriculture, customs/culture, arts, scenery and so forth.

O'Leary and Deegan (2005) also in their research tried to identify different tourist's attributes and they tried to examine the importance of certain Ireland's destination attributes for French tourists and to determine how French visitors rate Ireland's performance with respect to these attributes pre- and post visitation. In their study, they identified 17 attributes that are important to French tourists. Some important attributes in this study are beautiful scenery, environment, tranquility, price- quality ratio, litter free and so forth. The study also reveals that "Ireland's destination image is largely confirmed by the experience of French visitors.

3.3.2 Psychological Characteristics:

"Psychological characteristics cannot be directly measured such as friendliness and atmosphere" (Etchner & Ritchie, 2003, p. 40). Different studies have attempted to determine psychological characteristics of destination.

According to Vengesayi (2008), conceptual and empirical studies have examined and focused on the determinants of destination attractiveness. Different destination attributes have been identified as determining the attractiveness of tourism destinations.

Vengesayi (2008) believes that the attractiveness of a tourism destination is often referred to as the opinions of visitors about the destination's perceived ability to the extent that they satisfy their needs. Research has demonstrated that attractiveness studies are necessary for understanding the elements that encourage people to travel (Formica, 2002). The more a destination is able to meet the needs of tourists, the more the destination is perceived to be attractive and the more the destination is likely to be chosen in preference to competing destinations (Vengesayi, 2008).

In studying tourism attributes, there are several attributes that are associated with a destination. Zho (2005) believes that just some attributes are important for attracting the tourists, while the others are not so significant for attracting the tourists to a destination.

According to Zhou (2005, p. 3) “in order to be successful in the competitive tourism market, tourism planners need to clearly understand the difference between attributes of tourism products and tourism attractions, and how important they are”. In some studies in tourism literature, the word ‘attribute’ and ‘attraction’ were used interchangeably, although they sometimes have different connotations. According to Zhou (2005) for a non-tourism product, the attributes are supposed to be its attractions.

Choi, Chan, Wu (1999) tried to investigate destination attributes of Hong Kong that are important and significant in attracting tourists. They used a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches that was developed by Etchner and Ritchie (1991). In their research they collected a sample of numerous tourists at the Kai Tak airport hall in April 1996. Their findings indicated that Hong Kong was considered as a “shopping paradise” by most tourists. The respondents believed that the considerable weakness is the crowded, stressful and busy urban environment.

Choi, Chan, Wu (1999) tried to extract the attribute-base and holistic images of Hong Kong as well as spreading the attributes from functional to physiological characteristics by combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Their findings

were supplemented by images that were distinctive and unique in the world travel market. In their research, they illustrated a more comprehensive view on the image of Hong Kong. They believed that “the attributes identified will help marketers to understand Hong Kong's competitive position as a tourist destination, while holistic impressions will help to find out its unique symbols” (Choi, Chan, Wu, 1999, p. 346). Furthermore, they concluded that the psychological and functional characteristics of Hong Kong can help to reveal the “pull” factors of Hong Kong as a destination.

Mayo and Jarvis (Becker, 1981, p. 201) define destination attractiveness as, “the relative importance of individual benefits and the perceived ability of the destination to deliver these individual benefits”. This ability is increased by the specific attributes of a destination that makeup the destination. According to (Hu & Ritchie, 1993) a tourism destination is therefore a combination of destination attributes, mostly including tourist facilities and services. In order to assess the attractiveness of a destination tourists evaluate the perceived ability of the destination attributes to meet their needs (Mayo & Jarvis, 1981). The attractiveness of a destination would fade away in the absence of these attributes. Furthermore, in the absence of destination attractiveness tourism would not exist and there could be little or no need for tourist facilities and services (Kim & Lee, 2002).

Meng and Uysal (2008), in their research, tried to investigate the gender differences about the perceived importance of destination attributes. They claimed that there are significant gender differences about the perceived importance of destination attributes and travel values when potential nature tourists consider destination

choices. They tried to investigate the demographic controlling and travel behavior variables such as age, gender, and marital status. They illustrated that gender differences exist in the perceived importance placed on destination attributes. In their research, they concluded that there is a difference in perception of a destination according to gender. Women, in comparison with men put a higher importance on attributes related to the destination. The research also revealed that men put higher performance on resort facilities and related activities such as golf and tennis and so forth.

Chang, Kivela, and Mak (2011) in their research tried to identify the attributes that are related to gastronomy and dining. They believe that various destination marketers have applied gastronomy as a source of activities that may attract tourists to a destination. Local food and travel dining experience are both considered as “attraction” for many destinations (Kivela & Crofts, 2006; Stewart, Bramble, & Ziraldo, 2008). As a result Chang, Kivela, and Mak (2011) claim that the way that tourists evaluate local food and travel dining experiences is so important. In their study they examined Chinese tourists' real life travel dining behavior while they were on holiday in Australia. They tried to identify the important attributes affecting the evaluation of travel dining experience. They identified 15 different attributes that were classified under six main categories which are: tourists' own food culture, the contextual factor of the dining experience, variety and diversity of food, perception of the destination, service encounter, and tour guide's performance. Some important attributes are as follow: flavor, cooking method, authenticity, variety of dishes, expected service level, service speed and facilitation (Chang, Kivela, and Mak, 2011, p. 311).

3.4 The influence of attributes:

Investigating the influence of tourism attributes and destination image is an important and remarkable issue. There are some various studies that tried to focus on the role and influence of destination image. The psychological and functional components for studying the attributes that were suggested by Echtner and Ritchie (1999, p. 6) exercise a great and significant influence on the overall image of the destination (Alcaniz et al, 2009). According to the existing literatures, we can claim that destination attributes seem to have various effects. Studies showed different influence of destination attributes on consumer behavior, image formation, tourist satisfaction, competitiveness of destinations.

3.4.1 The Effect of Attributes on Behavior:

“Customer behavior is the study of how individuals, groups, and organizations select, buy, use, and dispose of goods, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and wants” (Kotler & Keller, 2012, p. 190).

There are many studies that confirmed the effect of destination attributes on behavior intention (Ross (1993); Alhemoud & Armstrong (1996); Chen & Kerstetter (1999); Joppe, Martin, & Waalen (2001); Alcaniz et al, (2009).

The importance of destination image in decision making has been universally acknowledged, since it affects the individual's subjective perception and consequent behavior and destination choice (Stabler, 1988 ; Telisman- Kosuta, 1989 ; Chon, 1992 ; Echtner and Ritchie, 1991).

As mentioned before, there are various studies that demonstrate the impact of attributes on post-purchased behavior of tourists. Image has also a great impact on tourist's post-purchase behavior.

Alcaniz et al, (2009) claimed that the psychological component of attributes have the greatest effect on behavior intention. They concluded that the only variable that has a significant influence and effect on tourists, behavior is the overall image. In this case if the visitors have positive image of a destination, they tend to visit the place again or they may suggest to their friends as well. One other significant issue in this regard is that they consider psychological aspects as important components when recommending the place to other people arises. In other words future behavior in terms of recommending the place to other people is more affected by psychological attributes than functional ones.

Naidoo and Ramseook-Munhurrin (2012) in their article mentioned that brand image has an impact on the behavior of individuals. They claim that "brand image influences the tourists' choice of the holiday destination" (Naidoo and Ramseook-Munhurrin, 2012, p. 55).

Brand image "represents tourists' mental picture formed by a set of attributes that define the destination in its various dimensions" and "exercises a strong influence on consumer behaviour in the tourism sector" (Beerli & Martin; 2004, p, 623). Tourists usually have limited information about the places and destinations that they have not previously visited; therefore, destinations with stronger images are more likely to be chosen as a tourist destination. Secondly, brand image influences

post-purchase decision-making behaviours including evaluation (satisfaction) and future behavioural intentions (Bigné *et al.*, 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chon, 1990; Joppe *et al.*, 2001).

Assaker, Vinizi, and O’Conner (2011) suggested that destination image has direct as well as indirect effect on behavioral intentions which is considered to be the most important effect in this regard. This finding is consistent with the previous studies (e.g., Bigne *et al.*, 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008). In particular Assaker, Vinizi, and O’Conner (2011) suggest that destination image has great impact on future visit intention. This is completely consistent with other findings by various researchers in this regard.

Another research that tried to investigate the effects and influence of destination image is the one by Tasci and Gartner (2007). In their study, they tried to determine the effects of destination image by reviewing literature in this regard. They concluded that “destination image is a composite of a wide spectrum of inputs that can be viewed as affecting either the demand or supply side of the image construct” (Tasci and Gartner, 2007, p. 423). They claim that destination image has direct effect on pre-, during- and post trip consumer behavior. This finding is consistent with the previous findings such as the studies by Joppe, Martin, and Waalen (2001), Chen and Kerstetter (1999). They all confirmed that destination attributes can affect consumer behavior in different steps.

3.4.2 The Effect of Attributes on Tourist Satisfaction:

“In general, satisfaction is a person’s feeling of pleasure or disappointment that result from comparing a product’s perceived performance (or outcome) to their expectations” (Kotler & Keller, 2012, p. 164).

In tourism literature, it is confirmed that tourist’s satisfaction is determined by his judgment and estimation of different attributes of a destination (Alegre & Garau 2010; Alegre & Cladera, 2006; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Kozak, 2002; Baker & Crompton, 2000; Murphy, Pritchard, & Smith, 2000). All these studies confirmed that tourist’ overall satisfaction is determined by how the visitors evaluate the attributes related to the destination.

One significant study that attempted to investigate the influence of destination attributes on satisfaction is the one by Meng, Tepanon and Uysal (2009). In this study, they examined the relationship between destination attributes importance and performance, travel motivation, and satisfaction in Southwest Virginia for the visitors who took vacation in resorts. They attempted to measure tourists satisfaction by attribute of the destination. They believe that “destination attribute plays an important role in tourists’ evaluation of the attractiveness, image, and satisfaction of a particular destination” (Meng, Tepanon & Uysal, 2009, p. 42).

They concluded that for resort destination there are some significant indicators that can result in the overall satisfaction for the visitors. According to their findings the important indicators are friendliness of people, quality service and lodging

facilities. These issues are so important and lead to overall tourist satisfaction for the visitors to resorts.

3.4.3 The Effect of Attributes on Competitiveness:

The Economist (1998, p. 10) noted that “there may be more tourists to go round, but there is also more competition between destinations as cities, countries and continents latch on to the charms of tourist revenue”.

Different studies have studied destination competitiveness. Among them, many of the studies diagnosed the competitive positions of specific destinations such as the studies by Ahmed, Enright & Newton (2005); Vengesayi (2005); Papatheodorou (2002); Krohn (1990); Hudson, Ritchie, & Timur (2004) . These studies confirmed that destination attributes have significant effect on destination competitiveness.

Another significant study that examined the influence and impact of attributes is the one by Crouch (2011). According to Crouch, some attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations. He claimed that two attributes, that are physiography and climate, are considered to be the most important determinant attribute that affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations.

The result of this study also reveals that there are some other important attributes that may affect competitiveness. These attributes are “culture and history, the quality of its tourism superstructure, the creation and hosting of special events, a thriving entertainment sector, and the development of a broad mix of recreation and tourism activities, which to a large extent are the outcome of competitive activity” (Crouch, 2011, p. 41).

According to Crouch (2011) destination's image and reputation in the tourism market as well as infrastructure and accessibility also are so significant attributes that may affect competitiveness in tourism market. He believes that "a destination's awareness and image is formed and created by many and varied forms of information that shape the perceptions of tourism consumers" (Crouch, 2011, p. 42).

Chapter 4

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

In this chapter the conceptual model of the current study will be presented. This study tends to develop and test three hypotheses. The model demonstrates that different components and attributes that have been categorized have direct effect on overall image of a destination. Furthermore, the model tends to test the direct effect of overall image on future behavior.

4.1 Conceptual Model:

Destination attributes can be labeled by different terms. There are different components for a destination. The knowledge about the perceived attributes of the destination that is called cognitive components has been studied by researchers and scholars and its effect on overall image has been confirmed as well (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Walmsley & Young, 1998). Furthermore affective components which is individual's feeling towards a destination and its direct effect on overall image have been studied by scholars (Alcañiz et al. 2009, O'Neill & Jasper, 1992). The overall image that is sometimes called the perceived image should be assessed with the projected image by the destination (Qu, Kim, & H. Im, 2011, p. 474). Future behavior in terms of revisit intention, likelihood to recommend to other people and positive word of mouth is an important issue which is positively and directly affected by overall image of a destination (Fakeye and Crompton 1991, Ross 1993, and Alcaniz et al, 2009).

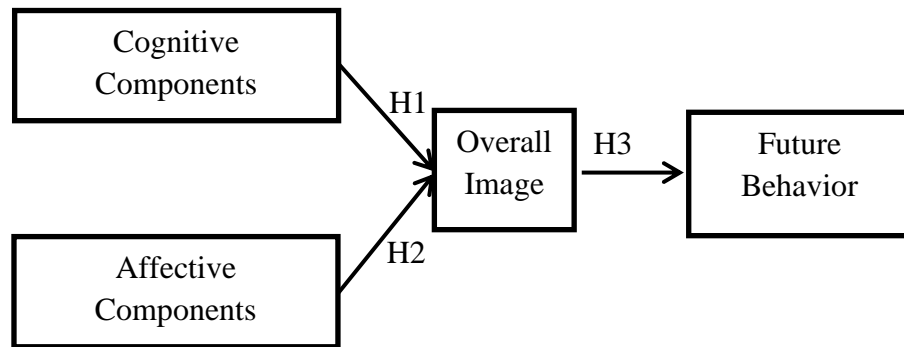


Figure 12: Conceptual Model

4.2 Hypothesis Development:

4.2.1 The Effect of Cognitive Component on Overall Image:

Cognitive components are considered as important category in studying destination attributes. According to what has been discussed earlier we can mention that a cognitive or perceptual component, also known as the designative component is the ideas and knowledge that people and individuals have of a destination.

The majority of studies that are related to destination image focus on its cognitive component (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Walmsley & Young, 1998; Chen & Uysal, 2002) and they did not investigate the affective component very precisely. However, some scholars such as Baloglu and Brinberg (1997) believed that the practice of focusing on only the cognitive component is not appropriate and efficient for studying destination image and can result in measurement issues. These components consists of characteristics such as natural scenery, pleasant weather, local festivals, great beaches, historical attractions, shopping facilities and so forth. These components can be categorized as functional and psychological on a

continuum as well. According to the existing researches, these components have direct effect on overall image. As a result the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Cognitive attributes have direct effect on overall image.

4.2.2 The Effect of Affective Component on Overall Image:

Affective component that can be explained as travelers' and individuals' feeling of a destination and it has been discussed by scholars. According to Kim & Yoon (2003, p. 17) "the image of destination products that is appropriately combined from both affective and cognitive images should be communicated to potential tourists". The affective components that show the feelings and perceptions of travelers can be discussed as whether a destination is pleasant or not, sleepy or arousing, distressing or relaxing and so forth. It seems that affective components have direct and positive effect on overall image of a destination.

There is empirical evidence that affective components of a destination can affect overall image of travelers. The positive effects of affective components that is discussed in terms of general feelings of the travelers towards a destination has been accepted by scholars (Alcaniz et al. 2009, O'Neill & Jasper, 1992). Accordingly, the following hypothesis can be proposed in as the second hypothesis of this study:

H2: Affective attributes of a destination have direct effect on overall image.

4.2.3 The Effect of Overall Image on Future Behavior:

Some empirical studies have suggested the effect of overall image of a destination on future behavior. According to Kotler & Keller (2012) can be study in terms of

the way individuals and groups act towards goods, services, and ideas. This behaviour can be demonstrated in different ways.

There are many studies that confirmed the effect of destination attributes on behavior intention (Fakeye and Crompton (1991); Ross (1993); Alhemoud & Armstrong (1996); Chen and Kerstetter (1999); Joppe, Martin, & Waalen (2001); Alcaniz et al, (2009).

The importance of destination image in decision making has been universally acknowledged, since it affects the individual 's subjective perception and consequent behavior and destination choice (Stabler, 1988 ; Telisman- Kosuta, 1989 ; Chon, 1990, 1992 ; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991).

According to what has been discussed the following hypothesis can be proposed:

H3: Overall image has direct effect on future behaviour.

Chapter 5

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will focus on various issues associated with the methodology of this empirical study. It consists of information regarding to the research approach, namely deductive approach, and the reason why this approach is used in this study. This chapter will present information about the sample of the study, data collection, and questionnaire structure. It provides information about the operationalization of the study variables and the relevant information regarding data analysis will be explained in the latter parts of this chapter.

5.1 Deductive Approach:

According to what has been explained in previous chapters, the approach that is used in this research is deductive approach and the study applies deductive approach in order to develop and test a conceptual model. According to Graziano & Raulin (1993) “The constructs (the ideas) guide the researcher in, making and testing deductions from the construct. The deductions are empirically tested through research, and thus support for the theory is obtained” (Graziano & Raulin, 1993, p. 37).

5.2 Sampling Method

In this study, the sampling method is convenience sampling. In the real world of hospitality and tourism research, probability sampling is often difficult to achieve. Time, cost, and ethical considerations are the most common obstacle for researchers in making the necessary arrangements. As result, another sampling

method that is called non-probability sampling can be applied (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008). Convenience sampling that is categorized as a sub-category of non-probability sampling sometimes referred to as haphazard or accidental sampling. With convenience sampling, participants are selected because of their convenient accessibility. The trade-offs made for the comfort of this technique are the non-representative nature of the sample, and the bias that is likely to be introduced into it (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008).

5.3 Instrument Development:

This study primarily was done by using a structured questionnaire that is based broadly on the study by Echtner and Ritchie (1991) conceptualization of the destination image. Literature review confirmed that Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) had successfully developed a conceptual framework that managed “to identify ‘true’ images of tourist destinations” (Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001, p. 7).

An operationalisation of the concept resulted in list of 24 attributes. 24 scale items focus on several areas of destination images, including: natural resources and climate; tourist attractions, facilities, services, and social-cultural characteristics; and safety and cleanliness.

All items in the survey instrument were performed in English and then translated into Farsi by using back-translation method (McGorry, 2000). The cross linguistic comparability of the questionnaire was further tested with the experts who were fluent in both languages. The questionnaire was pretested before giving it its final form, asking total 20 Iranian students.

The questionnaire was in five sections: the first part with questions about general traveler profile. Second part was to identify the sample's socio demographic characteristics. Third and fourth part of the questionnaire was consisted of functional and psychological components of the destination image. And last section aimed to capture future behavior and overall image of Northern Cyprus.

5.4 Population and Samples:

The survey population came from Iranian travelers over 18 years old visited North Cyprus. The data was gathered by using convenience sampling method as well as the interviewer's judgment.

Data was gathered during the months of March and April 2011 in TRNC. In this research, a total of 400 questionnaires were distributed. 16 questionnaires were excluded from the analysis because they did not provide complete responses. The valid 384 questionnaires were used for the analysis. Missing values, outliers and distribution of all measured variables were examined to purify the data and reduce systematic errors. The sample profile is displayed in table 1.

The sample consisted of 176 male respondents (45.8 %) and 208 female respondents (54,2 %). 53.3 % of the respondents had university with four-year program and 26.9 % had Master or PhD degree. Among the respondents, 19.8 % had high school degree. 56.8% of the respondents were married, followed by 38.8% single respondents. Regarding to income, great number of respondents, 54.9%, had salary less than 30,000\$ per year. Other relevant information such as source, the purpose of the visitation and so forth has been demonstrated in table 1.

5.5 Data Collection Procedure:

The current study uses a convenience sample of Iranian travelers in North Cyprus. The participants were selected because of their convenient accessibility. The questionnaires were distributed to 400 Iranian travelers in different cities in North Cyprus. Most of the questionnaires were distributed in March, which is holiday period for Iranians and there were many Iranian travelers during this month. Among 400 questionnaires, 16 were eliminated due to the respondents' age which was below 18. Most of the questionnaires were distributed in hotels in North Cyprus and some questionnaires were distributed at the airport as the researcher has tried to benefit from the experienced travelers who have spent more time in North Cyprus.

5.6 Measurement and Data Analysis:

In this study destination image measurement scale consisted of 24 items evaluated 5 point Likert scale. Overall image was measured using a single five point scale following where respondents were asked: rate overall image of Northern Cyprus as a vacation destination on 5 point scale from (1) very negative to (5) very positive.

Future behavior of travelers were asked: would you recommend Northern Cyprus to your friends and relatives on 5 point scale from (1) Not recommend at all to (5) definitely recommend and intention to revisit (1) Do not intend to visit to (5) very likely to visit.

Chapter 6

RESULTS

6.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Sample:

The sample consisted of 176 male respondents (45.8 %) and 208 female respondents (54,2 %). 53.3 % of the respondents had university with four-year program and 26.9 % had Master or PhD degree. Among the respondents, 19.8 % had high school degree. 56.8% of the respondents were married, followed by 38.8% single respondents. Regarding to income, great number of respondents, 54.9%, had salary less than 30,000\$ per year. Other relevant information such as source, the purpose of the visitation and so forth has been demonstrated in Table 1. Table 2 also consists of some information reading to source of information, with whom the travelers are, the purpose of visiting, and whether it is their first visit or not.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (n= 384)

Age	Frequency	%
18-27	86	22.4
28-37	128	33.3
38-47	87	22.7
48-57	60	15.6
58-70	23	6.0
Total	384	100.0
Gender		
Male	176	45.8
Female	208	54.2
Total	384	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	149	38.8
Married	218	56.8
Other	17	4.4

Total	384	100.0
Education		
high school	76	19.8
University	206	53.6
Master/PhD	102	26.6
Total	384	100.0
Income		
less than 30000	211	54.9
30000-59999	100	26.0
60000-89999	40	10.4
90000-119999	13	3.4
120000 and more	13	3.4
6.00	1	.3
Total	378	98.4
9.00	6	1.6
Total	384	100.0

Table 2. Primary Respondents Information

Source	Frequency	%
official guide	18	4.7
Brochure	9	2.3
Map	4	1.0
travel agent	113	29.4
Book	8	2.1
Friend	197	51.3
Other	35	9.1
Total	384	100.0
With whom		
Alone	25	6.5
Family	264	68.8
Friends	79	20.6
Tour group	13	3.4
Other	3	.8
Total	384	100.0
Purpose		
Relaxation	147	38.3
Fun	175	45.6
experience new things	27	7.0
Business	3	.8
Other	32	8.3
Total	384	100.0
First Visit		
Yes	315	82.0
No	68	17.7

Total	383	99.7
Missing	1	.3
Total	384	100.0
Total	384	100.0

Table 3 consists of attributes regarding to a destination. As stated earlier, a cognitive or perceptual component that is also known as the designative component is the ideas of people of a destination. As mentioned earlier in literature review part, the attributes are categorized as functional and psychological (Etchner and Ritchie, 1993). The functional attributes such as historic sites, natural attractions, night life, and shopping are physical and measurable attributes, while the psychological attributes such as hospitality, atmosphere, and service quality are more abstract and they are not measurable.

The table demonstrates the number of respondents to each attribute, and the minimum and maximum score, which is 1,00 to 5,00, have been shown as well. Mean score and standard deviation are also demonstrated in the table.

“Affective or evaluative component is the individual’s feelings towards the destination” (Alcañiz et al. 2009: 716). In table 3 it has been tried to demonstrate people’s feeling towards North Cyprus in terms of whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, distressing or relaxing, sleepy or arousing, and gloomy or exciting. These components also have been scored and the number of the respondents and minimum and maximum score have been shown in the table.

Other significant factors such as overall image of the visitors, recommendation to other people and intention to visit have been rated in table 3.

Table 3. Affective and Cognitive Components

Cognitive/perceptual (based on 1-5 scale)						
Item No	Question	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviat.
1	Scenery	384	1,00	5,00	3,1979	1,04589
2	Historical	384	1,00	5,00	2,5859	0,96838
3	Cultural	383	1,00	5,00	2,3420	1,06121
4	Unpolluted	384	2,00	5,00	4,4193	0,72172
5	Friendliness	384	1,00	5,00	3,8802	0,91761
6	Cleanliness	384	1,00	5,00	3,2292	0,98000
7	Accessibility	382	1,00	5,00	2,9634	0,98478
8	Climate	384	1,00	5,00	4,2891	0,98144
9	Atmosphere	384	1,00	5,00	4,2578	0,88131
10	Restaurants	382	1,00	5,00	3,3325	0,92611
11	Accommodation	384	1,00	5,00	3,2865	0,89747
12	Safety	384	1,00	5,00	4,0443	1,00942
13	Shopping	382	1,00	5,00	2,2042	1,13414
14	Casinos	330	1,00	5,00	2,6026	1,07869
15	Beaches	378	1,00	5,00	3,7540	1,06813
16	Transportation	380	1,00	5,00	2,6026	1,07869
17	Local tours	370	1,00	5,00	2,5108	1,04694
18	Nightlife	363	1,00	5,00	2,7960	1,7981
19	Sports	359	1,00	5,00	2,5847	1,05105
20	Cuisine	372	1,00	5,00	2,9785	1,2954
21	Festival	310	1,00	5,00	1,8839	0,95161
22	Museums	357	1,00	5,00	1,7143	0,88187
23	Service	383	1,00	5,00	2,8512	0,93579
24	Cost	382	1,00	5,00	2,3351	1,09294
Affective (based on 1-5 scale)						
25	Unpleasant-Pleasant	384	1,00	5,00	3,4766	1,10043
26	Sleepy-Arousing	384	1,00	5,00	2,8125	1,07244
27	Distressing-Relaxing	384	1,00	5,00	3,6745	1,24987
28	Gloomy-Exciting	384	1,00	5,00	2,7760	1,02799
29	Overall image (based on 1-5 scale)	384	1,00	5,00	3,3802	1,06999

30	Recommendation (based on 1-5 scale)	384	1,00	5,00	3,1901	1,28571
31	Intention to Visit (based on 1-5 scale)	384	1,00	5,00	2,3750	1,31669

6.2 Reliability and Validity:

As shown in Table 4, in the initial solution, 6 factors with eigen values greater than one were extracted. Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.82; communalities ranged from 0.40 to 0.79; all factor loadings were greater than 0.40. The total variance explained by this initial solution was 55.74%. Rules of thumb lower limit for Cronbach's Alpha be 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978; Nunnally s of and Bernstein 1994; Hair et al., 1998). Alpha coefficient was 0.84 at the aggregate level.

6.3 Factor Analysis:

Exploratory factor analysis was performed with varimax rotation, the latent root criterion of 1. Was used for factor inclusion and a factor loading of 0.40 was used as the benchmark to include items in a factor. All of these procedures were performed using SPSS 10.

The results are given in Table 4. The factors were named as environment (F1), attractions (F2), quality (F3), Local attractions (F4), activities and cost (F5), and transportation (F6). According to the mean scores of the composite indicators, 'environment' (M=4.17), 'quality' (M=3.14), 'local' (M=3.00) were perceived respectively as important factors in destination attributes for Iranian travelers.

Table 4: Destination Image Factors

Factors	Total	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6
		Environment	Attractions	Quality	Local Attraction	Activities & Cost	Transportation
Variance explained %	55.74	12.65	10.72	10.02	9.11	8.06	5.19
Eigenvalue		3.04	2.57	2.40	2.19	1.93	1.25
Cronbach's alpha	0.84						
Composite Mean		4.17	2.59	3.14	2.82	3.00	2.69
Variables and communalities							
<i>Climate</i>	0.63	0.75					
<i>Calm Atmosphere</i>	0.57	0.73					
<i>Unpolluted/unspoiled environment</i>	0.59	0.73					
<i>Safety and security</i>	0.64	0.70					
<i>People's friendliness/hospitality</i>	0.51	0.52					
<i>Historical Attractions</i>	0.66		0.79				
<i>Cultural Attractions</i>	0.67		0.76				
<i>Scenery</i>	0.64		0.73				
<i>Shopping facilities</i>	0.58		0.47				
<i>Quality of accommodation facilities</i>	0.54			0.70			
<i>Quality of restaurants/cafes</i>	0.55			0.69			
<i>Cleanliness and hygiene standards</i>	0.43			0.55			
<i>Accessibility</i>	0.44			0.53			
<i>Quality of service</i>	0.53			0.49			
<i>Availability of local festivals and fairs</i>	0.66				0.75		
<i>Local cuisine</i>	0.57				0.66		
<i>Museums</i>	0.58				0.65		
<i>Nightlife and entertainment</i>	0.41				0.46		
<i>Local tours/excursions</i>	0.43				0.43		
<i>Casinos</i>	0.34				0.39		
<i>Sports facilities and activities</i>	0.66					0.76	
<i>Cost/value</i>	0.53					0.59	
<i>Beaches</i>	0.60					0.52	
<i>Public transportation</i>	0.63						0.76
Notes: Each item is measured on a five point likert scale(1= poor, 5= excellent). Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is 0.82. Bartlett's test of Sphericity $p < 0.000$.							

6.4 Multiple Regression Results:

In order to carry out multiple regression analysis the dimensions of destination attributes (DA), Cognitive (CO), Affective (AF) were taken as the independent variables. Overall Image (OVI) was taken as the dependent variable.

$$\text{OVI} = -0.153 + 0.822 (\text{AF}) + 0.298 (\text{CO})$$

R square = 0,608 Adjusted R square = 0,606 $F_{2,383} = 295,846, p < 0.000$ (using the stepwise method).

Significant variables are shown below.

Table 5. Multiple Regression Analysis Results

Predictor Variable	Beta^a	t value	p
Cognitive	0.136	3,578	$p < 0.000$
Affective	0.699	18,433	$p < 0.000$

Notes:

^a Standardized coefficients

By looking at Table 5 there is no evidence of multicollinearity problem, meaning that each conditioning index is lower than 30 and at least two variance proportions are lower than 0.50 (Tabachnik & Fidell, 1996, p. 87).

According to the results cognitive attributes have significant positive effect on overall image ($\beta = 0.14$). Affective attributes have positive significant effect on overall image ($\beta = 0.70$).

According to the research hypotheses, the multiple regression analysis results show that hypotheses 1 and 2 were accepted.

In total, dimension of our model explain 61% of overall image.

Table 6: Regression model for tourists overall image and future behavior

Variables	Coefficient	t statistics	p
FUTBEH	0.75	21,939	p <0.000

R square = 0,558 Adjusted R square = 0,556 F1,383 = 481,325, p < 0.000

Overall image has significant and positive effect on tourist's future behavior intention to visit and recommendation to others. The effect of overall image on future behavior was %56 of the explained variance. Results indicate that a unit change in overall image leads to positive change in their future behavior by 0.56.

As a result, H3: Overall image has a significant positive effect on future behavior has been accepted.

Chapter 7

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter will give detailed information regarding the results and discussion of this empirical study. As mentioned in previous parts, the current study mainly tried to focus on determining destination attributes of North Cyprus and it has been tried to determine the strong and weak attributes from Iranian travelers' perspective. The data was gathered from Iranian travelers which was mainly conducted in March and April 2012 as it was a holiday period for Iranian travelers. In order benefit from the experienced travelers, the researcher has tried to gather data at Ercan airport.

7.1 Evaluation of Discussion:

Determining attributes for a destination is an important issue that must be considered by researchers and practitioners. As a result, they may be able to apply suitable strategies for attracting tourists to a destination.

There were three hypotheses for the study that have been proposed by the researchers according to the existing literature review. Different components of destination attributes helped to design a research model.

This study reveals important attributes for North Cyprus. Different attributes have been rated and mean scores reveal the importance of different attributes. The results show that the important and strong attributes of North Cyprus are respectively unpolluted environment (4,42), climate (4,29), calm atmosphere (4,26) and safety

(4,04). These mean scores demonstrate the important attributes that can be classified in terms of cognitive attributes are so important for travelers.

Another important issue is regarding to the attributes that are weak and rated very low by the visitors. These attributes are respectively shopping facilities (2,20), festivals (1,88), and museums (1,71). The low scores demonstrate that these attributes are not strong enough to attract Iranian travelers.

The results also supported the hypotheses of the study. The first hypothesis, cognitive attributes have direct effect on overall image, was supported. As other previous studies confirmed, cognitive attributes that can be categorized in terms of functional and psychological, have great influence and effect on overall image of the visitors (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Walmsley & Young, 1998; Chen & Uysal, 2002).

Another hypothesis of this study that was also supported was the effect of affective attributes on overall image. This is consistent with the previous findings of other researches (O'Neill & Jasper, 1992; Kim & Yoon, 2003). The affective attributes that is discussed in terms of whether the destination is pleasant or not, relaxing or distressing and other ideas and believes about a destination have great on overall image of a destination.

The third hypothesis that tried to examine the effect of overall image on future behavior was also supported. The results of the current study demonstrate that future behavior is strongly affected by overall image. This is also consistent with

previous studies. There are different researches that examined the relation between overall image and future behavior and they all confirmed the positive and direct relation between these dimensions (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Ross, 1993; Alhemoud & Armstrong, 1996; Chen & Kerstetter, 1999; Joppe, Martin, & Waalen, 2001; Alcaniz et al, 2009).

7.2 Conclusion:

The aim of the current study was to determine important attributes of North Cyprus from Iranian perspective. It has been tried to determine the strong and weak attributes of North Cyprus and to examine the proposed conceptual model. A quantitative method by using the questionnaires has been applied in order to examine and determine strong and weak attributes of North Cyprus.

Based on the results we can conclude that there are some important attributes in North Cyprus that have important role in attracting tourists. The strong attributes are unpolluted environment, climate, calm atmosphere, safety, friendliness of people. Iranian travellers consider the mentioned attributes as the strong attributes that are helpful to satisfy the travellers while visiting North Cyprus. Furthermore, according to the results we may conclude that there are also some weak attributes in North Cyprus that need to be considered by the planners and marketers. The weak attributes are shopping facilities, festivals, museums, and relatively high cost of expenditures. Most of the Iranian travellers were dissatisfied with the shopping facilities and lack of shopping centers and malls in North Cyprus. As visiting museums and festivals are important activities for tourists while visiting a place, lack of good museums and seasonal festivals are other weak attributes that Iranian travellers related to North Cyprus while visiting the cities.

The attributes that were studied in terms of cognitive and affective are so important for a destination to form a positive image. Travelers' ideas are directly affected by these attributes. Furthermore, we may conclude that future behavior is directly affected by overall image. Travelers tend to revisit the place or they desire to recommend the place to other when they have positive image of a destination.

According to the results and discussion, some implication for managers and practitioners will be discussed. Limitation of the study and avenues for further research also will be proposed in this thesis.

7.3 Managerial Implications:

Based on the results and discussion of the current study, several implications for practitioners and managers can be proposed. Firstly, according to the result, unpolluted environment, calm atmosphere, and safety are some important attributes that can attract many tourists to North Cyprus. As a result, related organizations, namely municipality, city planning, and tourism sectors must pay attention to these issues and try to provide sustainable programs for enhancing these important attributes of North Cyprus.

Regarding to weak attributes, this study can suggest providing some facilities for shopping, arranging some seasonal festivals, and enhancing the quality and variety of the museums in North Cyprus. These attributes can simply affect the overall image which can increase revisit intention and positive word of mouth. Managers and marketers should consider these important attributes in order to enhance the quality in tourism sector in North Cyprus.

7.4 Limitation and Future Research Direction:

Based on the result of the current study, some future research directions can be offered in this study. Based upon the destination decay theory, which indicates that destinations have different images to different travelers relative to their geographic proximity (Bull, 1995), and the presumption, as offered by Scott, Schewe, and Frederick (1978) that the geographic region in which an individual lives influences perceptions of destinations and hence the resultant consumer behavior, the current study suggests that different travelers' perceptions of North Cyprus, other than Iranian travelers, can be investigated. Future studies can determine the unique places and features that other travelers and visitors associate with North Cyprus and the strong and weak attributes of North Cyprus as seen by travellers from different countries, such as England, Australia, Azarbaijan, Cameron, Nigeria, and so forth can be determined.

Furthermore, future research can be conducted in order to determine the Iranian students' perceptions as temporary residents in North Cyprus. As there are many Iranian students in North Cyprus, mainly in Famagusta, their perceptions as temporary residents may differ from the tourists who are visiting the destination for a short time.

Some issues regarding to this research's limitations can be discussed in this part. First and foremost, it can be mentioned that the sample chosen among Iranian travelers may not be able to represent all travelers' perceptions of all visitors. Therefore, according to what has been mentioned in the previous part, various individuals' perception should be studied in future research. Another limitation of

the current study is that some travelers and visitors, mainly in the airport, did not intend to respond to the questionnaires. They were so pressed by the time and preferred to finish the check-in and departure processes on time.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Questionnaire:

Dear Respondent;

You are being asked to participate in a study examining the Destination Attributes of Northern Cyprus. All information that you provide will be confidential and in no way will you be identified when the results of this study are reported.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey and being a part of this study. Have a nice holiday in Northern Cyprus.

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Section I.

1. How long have you been in Northern Cyprus?days.

2. Is this your first visit to Northern Cyprus? Yes NO, I visited North Cyprustime(s) before. (number)

3. What is the main purpose of your trip on this occasion?

Relaxation Fun/Excitement Experience new things
 Business Other

4. With whom are you traveling on this trip?

Travel alone Family/relatives Friend(s) Tour group
 Other

5. Sources of information?

Official Guide Book/Article Brochure Map Travel agent
 Friend/Family Other.....

Section II.

Some demographics about you:

6. Age: _____ 7. The country residence: _____

Gender: Male Female

Marital Status: Single Married Other

Education: High School or less University Master
or PhD

Household income in US dollars:
 Less than \$30,000 \$60,000-\$89,999 \$120,000 or more
 \$30,000-\$59,999 \$90,000-\$119,999

Section III.

Listed below are some attributes that determine the quality of a tourist destination. Using the scale below, where " 1 " means "Poor" and "5" means "Excellent," and "X" "No idea". Please rate these attributes for Northern Cyprus by circling the appropriate number.

Poor	fair	good	very good	excellent
1	2	3	4	5

1. Scenery/natural attractions	1	2	3	4	5
2. Historical attractions	1	2	3	4	5
3. Cultural attractions	1	2	3	4	5
4. Unpolluted/unspoiled environment	1	2	3	4	5
5. People's friendliness/hospitality	1	2	3	4	5
6. Cleanliness and hygiene standards	1	2	3	4	5
7. Accessibility	1	2	3	4	5
8. Climate	1	2	3	4	5
9. Calm Atmosphere	1	2	3	4	5
10. Quality of restaurants/cafes	1	2	3	4	5
11. Quality of accommodation facilities	1	2	3	4	5
12. Safety and security	1	2	3	4	5
13. Shopping facilities	1	2	3	4	5
14. Casinos	1	2	3	4	5
15. Beaches	1	2	3	4	5
16. Public transportation	1	2	3	4	5
17. Local tours/excursions	1	2	3	4	5
18. Night life and entertainment	1	2	3	4	5
19. Sports Facilities and activities	1	2	3	4	5
20. Local Cuisine	1	2	3	4	5
21. Availability of local festivals and fairs	1	2	3	4	5
22. Museums	1	2	3	4	5
23. Quality of service	1	2	3	4	5
24. Cost/Value	1	2	3	4	5

Section IV.

Below is a list of scales that can be used to describe your feelings towards places. Evaluate Northern Cyprus as a tourist destination on each word set by checking the appropriate box.

Unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5	Pleasant
Sleepy	1	2	3	4	5	Arousing
Distressing	1	2	3	4	5	Relaxing
Gloomy	1	2	3	4	5	Exciting

Section V.

A) Please rate your **overall image** of **Northern Cyprus** as a vacation destination on a scale from 1 to 5.

Very negative	1	2	3	4	5	Very Positive
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B) Please indicate if you would **recommend Northern Cyprus** to your friends and relatives on a scale from 1 to 5/

Not Recommend at all	1	2	3	4	5	Definitely recommend
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D) Please rate the level of your **intention to visit Northern Cyprus** for vacation purposes **over the next two years.**

Do not intend to visit	1	2	3	4	5	Very likely to visit
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