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Country and destination image perception of mass tourists: generation comparison

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to determine whether the generations make a difference in the perception of destination image of tourists. The study is carried between July-October 2019 at Antalya Airport International Terminals with 806 departing tourists. While CHAID analysis is performed for discovering age groups, multiple correspondence analysis is used to detect intersections and distinctions among destination image perceptions of tourists from different generations. Baby boomers have the highest destination experience and have more positive evaluation compared to Gen-X. Gen-Z outstands as a group with the least positive perception of destination and country image. Gen-Y has the most positive evaluation, thus some of the women in Gen-Y are young mothers and prefer all-inclusive system at their holiday.

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Generation; gender; nationality; experience; country image; destination image

Introduction

The emergence of differentiation in destinations with developing conditions has led them to strengthen their infrastructures and create a positive image, different products and alternatives. Image is considered an important issue in understanding the relationship between destination and tourists (Rodrigues et al., 2017). For tourists participating in a tourism event, their experiences at the holiday destinations they have visited become an important factor in choosing the destination. When tourists visit a destination, they make decisions about the destination by comparing their personal experiences with the information they receive from their immediate surroundings. In this process, a relationship is created that enables them to evaluate their holiday expectations in the context of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. As a result, when tourists are satisfied with a destination, they are more likely to revisit and tell others about their positive or negative experiences there. At this point, the image element seems to play an important role in differentiating destinations (Pearce, 1982; Kozak, 2001; Yüksel & Akgül, 2007).

Destination image emerged in the 1970s and is conceptualized by many researchers. While Gunn (1972) defines the image of destination as "an indication of personal preferences about a place", according to Hunt (1975) the image of destination expresses all the judgements and attitudes that people hold about the region or country that is outside their permanent residence. Crompton (1979), on the other hand, defines it as "a series of beliefs, ideas and impressions that people have regarding a place or a destination". Destination image studies, which started with Hunt's (1975) work on the role of the image in tourism development, focused on the cognitive image of tourists in the early stages (Crompton, 1979; Pearce, 1982). As the number of studies increased, sub-dimensions such as the emotional dimension (Russell & Pratt, 1980) and the

general destination image (Choi et al., 2011) distinction have been introduced to literature and relations between the dimensions explored. The concept of destination image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993), the relationship between the dimensions of the destination image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004) and the premises and results of the destination image (Milman & Pizam, 1995; Tavitiyaman & Qu, 2013) have been under investigation since the 1990s. One of the prime subjects that destination image research focuses on is the relationship between the destination image and socio-demographic profile of tourists (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

The aforementioned studies are based on general models that explain the destination preferences of tourists. The main idea of these models is to reveal important factors that affect the behaviour of tourists (Decrop, 2000). In other words, the variables including the socio-demographic characteristics of the tourists, the sources of information used and the image and attitudes of tourists have been defined as important determinants of destination selection (Um & Crompton, 1990). However, some researchers (Decrop, 2000; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005) suggest that tourist behaviours may differ according to groups and contexts, and require specific models rather than general models that explain the relationship between tourists and destinations. In light of this understanding, studies were conducted to investigate the presence or absence of different perceptions and attitudes of first-time visitors and repeat visitors towards a destination (Phillips & Jang, 2010).

From a cognitive perspective, tourists are likely to accumulate certain information about a place they are familiar with. In contrast, tourists try to compare the destinations they have little information about as they portray them in their minds (O'Leary & Deegan, 2003). In this context, it can be said that the image of a country has started taking shape from childhood through education in the family and at school. Therefore, the age brackets of tourists affect not only social life but also the image perception towards a country or destination. Although the literature related to destination image is plentiful, studies on the relationship between nationality, frequency of visits (experience level) and destination image regarding generations are relatively limited (Chon, 1991; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Milman & Pizam, 1995; Kozak, 2001; Morais & Lin, 2010; Kim & Park, 2015; Tan, 2017). Therefore, this research aims to determine tourist perceptions of countries and destination images from the perspective of first-timers and repeat visitors between different nationalities and generations. Generations have different expectations and experiences regarding tourism activities. It has been shown that older adults tend to rely on more easily accessible knowledge structures and schemas when making social judgements (Horhota & Blanchard-Fields, 2006). It is necessary to use new methodological approaches to understand the basic sources of these differences based on age and to customize the services to be provided. In the first part of the research, the literature on generation theory and tourism research is summarized and then analyses whether there is a distinction according to generations and their characteristics regarding country and destination images of tourists with multiple correspondence analysis.

Literature review

According to the generation theory, each generation has predictable features, values and beliefs, along with the skills, qualities, capacities, interests, expectations and preferred habits that can be directly attributed to it (Benckendorff et al., 2010). Due to similar time frames, it is thought that every generation goes through the same social events and external influences in the years that shape its personality, thus creating similar life experiences. A generation is usually 20 to 25 years and determined by birth year. Significant external events help people create their core values and these often do not change significantly throughout one's life. These generational values are called "peer personality". As a generation gets older, their inner beliefs maintain a certain consistency throughout their life cycle like that of an ageing individual (Strauss & Howe, 1997).

Generations have a dynamic socio-cultural theoretical framework rather than an individual focus. Therefore, it shows models and trends over generations. Living generations continue to develop and redefine themselves, just as in human life. Generation theory is a concept originally from America. However, validity is considered to cover a wider audience due to the effects of globalization, development of information and communication technologies, and an increasing English-speaking population in the world (Benckendorff et al., 2010). There are also different approaches in terms of birth dates that are used to determine generations. For example, Kotler and Keller (2012) admit that Generation Y covers individuals born between 1979 and 1994, while Howe and Strauss (2000) prefer the period from 1977 to 1994 and Pendergast (2010) from 1982 to 2002 (Veiga et al., 2017).

An analysis of tourist profiles is important to understand the main dynamics of the tourism industry and generation theory can shed light on visitor research in tourism. Over the years, the generations that are the subject of study in the tourism industry, as well as the defining features of these generations, have changed. The baby boomers have been replaced by the X and Y generations in the workforce, and many recent studies have been conducted on Generation Y, who are in their 20s with busy lives and will become adults by 2020. Thus, as the years go by, tourism and generation research will remain a dynamic research topic.

Numerous generation studies in the field of tourism show the validity of the generation theory in tourism (Huang & Lu, 2017). A study in Canada analysed the travel activity preferences of tourists from different generations and found that travel activity differed by generation groups (Pennington-Gray et al., 2002). In their study, Li et al. included the silent generation, and their international travel behaviours are examined (Li et al., 2013). Research has shown that the differences in international tourist behaviour among the four American generations are greater than the similarities. The results of the research conducted by Gardiner et al. (2014) regarding the effects of three Australian generations (baby boomers, X and Y generations) on attitudes and intentions revealed significant generational differences in travel decision making and behaviour.

Some researchers such as Muller and Cleaver (2000) have expanded the scope of analysis to widen coverage beyond a single region or country, uniting the American, Canadian, Australian and New Zealander baby boomer generations to address travel behaviour. Although the geographical component is important, current research has not been able to identify important differences that could disrupt the current functioning of the tourism industry. Furthermore, various analyses were carried out to distinguish the effects of generation from age, life cycle and period. One of the first examples of this was an analysis by Oppermann (1995) where he reviewed travel patterns and destination selections of German tourists from different generations. Many studies conducted in later years have shown that generational effects dominate the age effect (Beldona, 2005).

The field includes different approaches to studies that characterize the distinctive features of generations in the literature. Santos et al. (2016) evaluated the baby boomers and the Silent Generation together in the senior tourist group and stated that the senior tourist group tended to consider themselves ten years younger than their actual age. They preferred to classify this group as "younger at heart" and "older at heart" rather than by their birth years (Santos et al., 2016). Generation Y has superior technological competencies and tends to be constantly connected, share with their social environment, use social networks intensively, seek authentic and unique experiences and prefer the expression "traveller" rather than "tourist". Thus, Generation Y has an impatient personality and as a result, demands immediate answers to questions, is accustomed to living with financial uncertainties, has a high level of education and a high level of awareness and interest in environmental issues (Santos et al., 2016).

In another study, Parment (2013) revealed that Generation Y and baby boomers have significant differences in their purchasing behaviour. Providing many options and much information to the baby boomer generation creates tension, while Generation Y likes it. Generation Y considers a plentitude of information and options to be an inspiration. Regarding purchasing criteria and product selection, Generation Y acts more emotionally, while baby boomers make

more rational decisions. Conversely, while baby boomers are more emotional and loyal customers in terms of suppliers and brand selection, Generation Y acts with more logic (Parment, 2013). In other words, Generation Y is emotionally attached to products and loyalty when purchasing under high exposure to social stimulus. While for Generation Y the image, brand value and quality of products are important in social environments, baby boomers only care about quality (Parment, 2013).

Veiga et al. (2017) selected 615 articles on generations in tourism literature with snowball methods covering research conducted in the US, Europe and Asia and concluded that the geographical differences did not create great differences in terms of tourism. Many researchers mentioned that the holiday budget allocated by Generation Y is lower than the previous generations. In addition, Generation Y is more educated compared to previous generations and has grown with digital technology. When making decisions about their holidays, social media advice and friend comments are more important to them than professional advice (official websites, agency information, advertisements, etc.). They love unique experiences and want to create memories specific to their destination (Veiga et al., 2017). Working less, appreciating the moment and hedonism are at the forefront for Generation Y (Leask et al., 2014).

Although Gen Y (also known as "millennials") has been the subject of much research, the next generation of Gen Z is still an untapped problem. This generation has developed in an environment where ICT is increasingly permeated and can be defined as a hyper-interconnected generation (Haddouche & Salomone, 2018). Generation Z are less loyal to the brand. Companies can implement effective methods like an social media to increase their visibility by letting Gen Z act as their brand advocates. Therefore, marketers must create content that is interesting, modern, and relevant (Dimitriou & AbouElgheit, 2019).

Methodology

We seek to answer the question, "Do generations make a difference in the perception of the destination and country image of tourists?" Correspondence analysis is used to detect intersections and distinctions among destination image perceptions of tourists from different generations. Studies provide a more holistic view when variables such as age or gender are designed, not only to create a distinction but to support the discovery of group-specific dynamics. The intersections of research-specific elements prevail with a clear view of age-related perceptions and attitudes. This research benefits from a neutral and non-predetermined categorization method, and therefore CHAID analysis was first used to discover how these groups are shaped without pre-categorizing individuals into specific groups. Age categories revealed by CHAID analysis are named according to the generations they correspond to as per the literature. The objective is to resolve the intersections of image perception by employing correspondence analysis between generation typologies discovered via CHAID analysis.

Various statistical procedures were applied following the research purpose. CHAID (Chi-Square Automatic Interaction Detection) analysis was carried out to present the age-specific change of attitudes towards the destination image. Generation typologies based on the CHAID results are included in the multiple correspondence analysis. Within the scope of the study, sub-dimensions for the image of the country and destination were categorized into two groups: average/below average and above average.

Multiple correspondence analysis allows the conversion of categorical/categorized data into cross tables and a graphical display of the results. MCA measures the association between categorical variables by representing the categories of the variables as points in a low-dimensional zone. It is primarily used for exploratory rather than confirmatory purposes and does not specify a dependent variable. The extracted dimensions can be seen as latent structures. The number of dimensions can be large, but generally only the two dimensions that explain the most variance are displayed visually on a map. In this study, to investigate the role of age in the perception of destination image components, we used MCA (Benzécri, 1992; Greenacre, 2007), which is a statistical technique applied to highlight the interrelationships between variables.

The study was carried between July and October 2019 at the Antalya Airport International Terminals with 806 departing tourists. Antalya is a very well-known sun-sea-sand (3S) destination dominated by all-inclusive (AI) package tourism located in the eastern Mediterranean region. Antalya is considered one of the most outstanding AI mass tourism destinations in the world and therefore is the best learning environment for tourists who understand destinations that are preferred due to AI products.

Of the participants, 47.9% were male and 52.1% female. Nationalities included 38.1% British, 27.9% German and 34% Russian. Regarding all-inclusive holiday experiences, 17.6% of the participants stated that this was their first experience, 21.3% had two experiences, 23.8% had three to five experiences, 30.8% had six experiences and more in the past, while 6.5% of the participants stated that they did not come for an all-inclusive holiday experience.

The scale utilized in this research was developed by Ceylan and Çizel (2018), and proven for measurement invariance for British, German and Russian tourists across genders in another study by Ceylan et al. (2020). Data collection was carried out under similar conditions, and respondents were assured that participation was voluntary and the results would remain anonymous. Respondents who agreed to participate in the survey received a copy of the questionnaire in their respective languages on a clipboard with a pen, and were asked to answer according to the Likert 7 measuring instrument. The answer "I don't know" was added to the 7-point Likert-type scale to avoid uninformed answers. In order to avoid bias in the general method, three months of data were collected from people of different nationalities in the summer of 2019. Out of 22 items on the scale, 16 items reveal perception of the destination image and six items reveal perception of country

Factor analysis was applied to explore the sub-dimensions formed on the 16-item scale, and a three-factor structure with an eigenvalue above 1 was examined using the varimax rotation technique. The factor structure is found to be statistically significant (KMO: 0.955, x2: 7168.98, p: 0.001) with the total explained at 60.3%. The three-factor structure is named as presented in Table 1: Factor 1 "Touristic Attractions", Factor 2 "Social & Touristic Environment" and Factor 3 "Natural Resources". All factors produced results CR (Composite Reliability) 0.7 for analysis. The extracted average variance (AVE) was not higher than 0.5, but we can accept 0.4 as Fornell and Larcker stated

Table 1. Factor structure of items.

	1	2	3	
Tourist Activities (amusement parks, theme parks)	,807			Touristic Attractions
Entertainment and sports activities	,743			
Cultural/historic attractions	,619			
Local tours and excursions	,615			
Shopping facilities	,555			
Local food (cuisine)	,551			
Hygiene and Cleanliness		,725		Social & Touristic Environment
Hospitable, friendly local people		,701		
Crowding		,668		
Family oriented		,631		
Accommodation		,620		
Service quality		,607		
Ease of access to Antalya (direct flights, flight schedules)		,476		
Climate			,785	Natural Resources
Beaches			,613	
Natural reserves (lakes, mountains, waterfalls, caves etc.)			,590	
Eigen Value	3,94	3,64	2,65	
Variance explained (%)	23,22	21,45	15,63	
Cronbach Alpha	0,892	0,873	0,920	
AVE	0,42	0,41	0,44	
CR	0,84	0,82	0,71	

Table 2. Country image.

	Factor loadings
Value for Money	,751
Personal safety	,746
Public and private transportation	,731
Infrastructure (roads, airports, telecommunication, buildings)	,721
Prices	,715
Political stability	,659
Eigen Value	3,12
Variance explained	52,1
Cronbach Alpha	0,968
AVE	0,52
CR	0,86

that if the AVE were less than 0.5 but the composite reliability greater than 0.6, then the effectiveness of convergence would still be sufficient (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

As indicated in Table 2, a single-factor structure consisting of six items was tested with factor analysis for country image. The factor structure was found statistically significant (KMO: 0.789, x2: 1556.92, p: 0.001), yielding a total variance explained at 52.1%.

Results

Before correspondence analysis, CHAID analysis was performed in order to discover age brackets based on altered attitudes instead of using pre-determined age brackets. CHAID analysis enables the ranking of independent variables from strongest to weakest in terms of altering attitude. CHAID analysis reveals effective variables, creating an impact on dependent variables (Fielding, 1977; Ritschard, 2013). CHAID in this examination of age-related differentiation related to the perception of the country image is statistically significant (F: 10,552, df = 803, p = 0.001). Three categories emerged in age-related differentiation: Category 1: individuals aged 22 and below; Category 2: individuals aged between 23 and 40; and Category 3: individuals aged over 40 (Figure 1). The generation categories were found to be compatible with the generation classification of Kotler and Keller (2012) in the literature.

As suggested by the literature, the over-40 age group is not homogenous. The way a person adjusts and adapts to ageing is influenced by individual, biological, psychological and social effects within the economic and political context in which they live, as well as lifestyle, and educational and

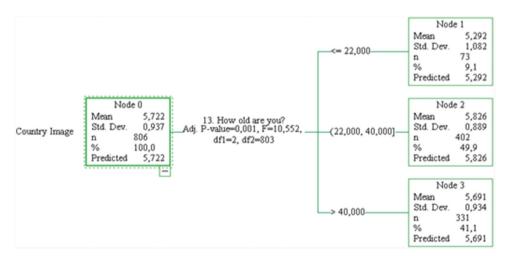


Figure 1. CHAID analysis age categories related to country image perception.

environmental processes (Hatcher et al., 2019; Von Humboldt et al., 2014). Therefore, to ensure non-bias in analysis, the over-40 age group is segregated into two generations, namely Generation X and baby boomers, resulting in four categories representing four generations.

Following CHAID analysis casting light on strong independent variables generating alterations in attitude, MCA was performed to reveal the basic determinants of tourist typologies in relation to independent variables highlighted by CHAID. This two-step approach led to the effective positioning of strong demographic variables relative to each other on a two-dimensional plot. Before the destination image perception was included in the correspondence analysis, the mean value was used as the cut-off point and two categories were created as low and high evaluations of destination and country image.

Destination image perception is visualized by positioning age typologies with other variables as presented in Table 3. Correspondence analysis offers the opportunity to see the individual's perception of destination image and their demographic variables that create differentiation in

Table 3. Correspondence analysis classis

Cluster	Generation	Gender	Nationality	Experience	Country Image	Natural Resources	Social and Touristic Attractions	Touristic Attractions	Affective Image	Conative Image
1	Z	*	*	*	-	-	-	-	-	-
II	Υ	Female	*	*	+	+	+	+	+	+
III	Χ	Male	German, British	Repeater	avrg	avrg	avrg	avrg	avrg	avrg
IV	Baby Boomer	*	*	*	avrg	avrg	avrg	avrg	avrg	avrg
V	*	*	Russian	*	+	+	+	+	+	+
VI	*	*	*	First timer	avrg	avrg	avrg	avrg	avrg	avrg

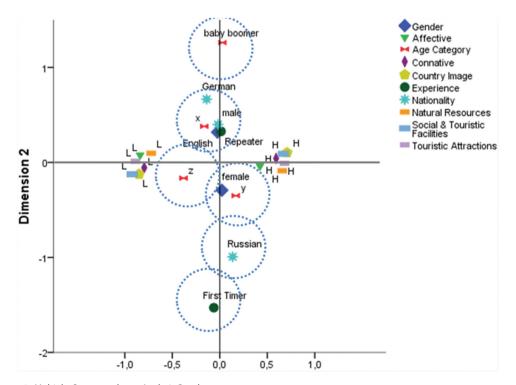


Figure 2. Multiple Correspondence Analysis Results.

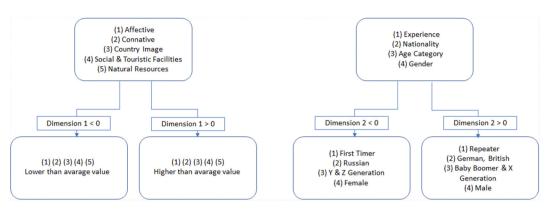


Figure 3. MCA dimensions. (MCA dimensions discrimination measures and Joint category plot of the exploredvariable categories).

their perception (Figure 2). The percentage of variance explained by two-dimensional structure is 31.76%. The Cronbach alpha value for first dimension is 0.851 and 0.762 for second dimension.

The vertical axis (Dimension 2) represents the demographical categories as gender, age, nationality and destination experience. The horizontal axis (Dimension 1) represents the destination image evaluation as their categories are located parallel to the axis (Figure 3).

- (a) Upper left quadrant of plot: Generation X German and British male repeat (experienced) tourists indicate an average evaluation for destination and country image perception.
- (b) Upper middle section of plot: baby boomers distinctively differentiate from all other generations with a moderate evaluation about destination perception of Antalya, but no other demographic characteristic other than generation is effective in this perception of baby boomers. It is free from gender, experience, nationality and other factors, meaning both genders and all three nationalities, regardless of their experience with destination, and tourists from the baby boomer generation share this moderate evaluation of destination and country image. These baby boomers represent the highest experience with Antalya as the destination.
- (c) Lower left quadrant of plot: Generation Z stands out as the group with the lowest destination and country image perception evaluation and yet no other demographic factor accompanies the dotted circle of Generation Z. This means that neither gender, nationality nor experience with destination has a role in this evaluation and only generation has a great impact.
- (d) Lower right quadrant of plot:
 - Generation Y female tourists who have been to the destination Antalya more than once represent the most positive evaluation of the destination and country image perception.
 - Russians are relatively younger and less experienced (more first-timers) compared to the other two nationalities and they indicate moderate evaluation for destination and country image perception.
- (e) Lower midsection of plot: First-timers regardless of their gender, nationality or generation indicate moderate evaluation of destination and country image. The only outstanding feature of this group is that it is their first visit to Antalya.

Conclusion and implications

Generations have different expectations and experiences in tourism activities. Therefore, it affects the image perception towards a country or destination and starts taking shape from childhood through education in society. Although the literature related to the destination or country image is abundant, there is still limited study in terms of evaluating how to relate between generations, nationality, frequency of visits (experience level) and destination image. In this context, this research aims to determine the tourist perceptions of the country and destination image from the perspective of generations of different nationalities and experiences. The research area was the city of Antalya (Turkey), a sea, sand and sun destination with mostly the centre of that kind of destination in the country.

From the MCA, the following four general findings were evident. First, Generation X German and British male repeat tourists have an average evaluation for image perception. Antalya, as a mass tourism destination dominated by an all-inclusive format, has been hosting European tourists since the 1990s and Generation X Germans are experienced repeat guests of this city as it offers proximity and reasonable prices.

Second, baby boomers from all nationalities and genders have the highest destination experience within the sample. The emotional and loyal profile of baby boomers refrains from risks and makes rational destination preferences (Parment, 2013). Antalya is considered the most rational mass tourism destination providing opportunities for all nations. People of this generation are of advanced age and Antalya provides accessible touristic products and services suitable for people needing physical support. In terms of geography and facilities, it may be an important factor affecting the image perception of the destination. Easy access, short-haul flights, frequent flight schedules, easy beach access, 24-hour F&B services, various entertainment activities including mild physical exercises and 300 sunny days on average are a few of the AI mass tourism opportunities provided in Antalya, enabling baby boomers to enjoy holidays at this destination.

Third, Generation Z stands out as the group with the least positive perception of destination and country image compared to other generations. The expectations of Generation Z, who are travelling with their families to Antalya, and the products and services offered by the destination do not match. However, they repeat their experiences in Antalya because they travel with families.

Lastly, an intersection group of Generation Y women from all three nationalities was identified in this study. Some of the women in Generation Y are young mothers. The all-inclusive system that is common in Antalya provides great comfort to those with families. Here, many options for safety, effectiveness and nutrition for children are provided free of charge. Especially for women, vacation means not only getting away from their busy lives but also getting rid of the mental and physical burden of organizing the family (Small, 2002). Leask et al. (2014) say that Generation Y has a high commitment to family and social groups. According to research, this generation has a high tendency to seek simple experiences and do not want to work harder for more glory or to save more money. Working less, appreciating the moment and hedonism are at the forefront for them (Leask et al., 2014).

The findings of the present study provide substantial theoretical implications for destination image and generation literature. First, in generation literature there are very few studies on the period from childhood to adolescence. Study is recommended to determine what features attract Generation Z, and how to design Antalya for Generation Z (Poria & Timothy, 2014). This generation can be defined as one that tends to escape from the realities of life (Wood, 2013). This group shows adolescent characteristics as of the year of the study. In adolescence, the search for independence, autonomy and innovation increases, but cognitive and regulatory abilities decrease. Therefore, there may be incompatibilities with limited new opportunities provided in the social context and adolescents often complain that they are bored. It is really hard to please them (Weybright et al., 2020). Second, the fact that people have recurring experiences does not change their perceptions about the destination in a positive way if the holiday destination selection is not their own. There is a need for further research to understand the factors that are effective in selecting touristic destinations for Generation Z when based on their ability to make the destination selection. Third, multiple correspondence analysis allows researchers to see possible sample associations that they can use in their studies. For this reason, it can be used not as a result analysis for



future studies, but as an intermediary analysis that will present possible typologies that exist in the research context.

Based on our findings, the following are several managerial implications for the accommodation industry and travel agents. Initially, Generation X is a repeat customer for Antalya, which may be due to a lack of competitors for tourism products and services. Therefore, it is suggested that travel agencies select different hotels, restaurants and transport facilities as the product of a package tour for Generation X. Moreover, accommodation establishments should give more consideration to their holiday requests. In addition, the results of this study show that Generation Z (youngest) and baby boomer (most senior) tourists stand out from other generations as their destination and country images are free from gender and nationality. Baby boomers are the most experienced and Generation Z less experienced, likely due to age. Baby boomers have a more positive evaluation of the destination compared to Generation Z, which may be due to avoiding risks of the unknown by repeating the same destination and even hotel. Baby boomers and Generation Z may be a part of the same travel party as it is common for parents, grandparents and grandchildren to share a holiday package. It is suggested that hotels especially geared towards serving that kind of family structure consider the different consequences that may arise when promoting their holiday facilities.

As with all research, the current study is not without limitations. Like many tourism and hospitality studies, this research was conducted at the airport with self-administered questionnaires bearing Likert-type questions in the respective languages of the source markets. For further studies, qualitative and quantitative methods can be used with an eclectic design. The inclusion of a qualitative research perspective by the research context allows for control of the research with a wider perspective. Furthermore, this perspective allows researchers bilateral testing of the research, preventing problems with attempts to measure through observation using structured measurement tools.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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