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Tourists' satisfaction with shopping experience based on reviews on TripAdvisor

Abstract

Although generally not the primary reason for traveling, shopping is considered to be an important part of any tourists' experience. A well-developed, diverse and attractive retail sector could not only generate additional revenues and foreign currency to the local economy but could also contribute to increasing destination attractiveness. It is, then, important for local authorities and for tourism development planners to ensure that tourists are satisfied with their shopping experience at the destination. The goal of this study is to examine the international tourists' overall satisfaction with their shopping experience in Istanbul's modern retail centers and to identify the main reasons for their satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The study will also determine whether or not international tourists' shopping experiences are influenced by their socio-demographic characteristics. The study is based on the quantitative and qualitative content analysis of reviews posted on TripAdvisor, the leading online travel community in the world. Our findings show that international tourists are, in general, satisfied with their shopping experience in Istanbul's malls; however, the reviews also pointed out a number of shortcomings which need to be carefully analyzed and fixed if the authorities intend to transform the city into a global shopping center. We could not document any statistically significant differences between groups based on socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age, shopping involvement or experience with online reviews. Only world region of origin and the grouping into western and non-western countries were found to be influential in determining statistically significant differences, with tourists from developing countries being more satisfied than their counterparts from western countries.

Key words: shopping tourism; shopping malls; shopping satisfaction; user-generated content; Istanbul, Turkey

Introduction

Although generally not the primary reason for traveling, shopping is considered to be an important part of any tourist's experience (Timothy, 2005). A well-developed, diverse and attractive retail sector could be considered an important element of the local economy generating additional revenues and foreign currency and, at the same time, could contribute to increasing destination attractiveness (Tosun, Temizkan, Timothy & Fyall, 2007). Therefore, creating ample and attractive shopping opportunities at the destination could entice tourists and could make them stay longer and spend more (Egresi & Kara, 2015). For these reasons, Kozak and Rimmington (2000) argued that satisfaction of tourists plays an important role in planning marketable tourism products and services. It is hoped that satisfied tourists will return in the future and will recommend the destination to others (Heung & Cheng, 2000; Suhartanto, 2016; Zabkar, Brencic & Dmitrovic, 2010). It is, then, important for local authorities and for tourism development planners to ensure that tourists are satisfied with their shopping experience at the destination.

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While there is a growing literature on shopping tourism and on tourists' shopping satisfaction, our research is novel in three aspects. Firstly, it deals with a country (Turkey), which has been very rarely studied by scholars of shopping tourism in spite of being globally famous for its many shopping opportunities. Indeed, more than 70% of all published research papers on this topic are from the USA and East and Southeast Asia (Choi, Heo & Law, 2016). Secondly, very few studies regarding tourists' satisfaction are based on the analysis of user-generated content (UGC) websites (Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom, 2015; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014) and more than half of these studies focus on hotels (Schuckert, Liu & Law, 2015a). This is surprising because studies based on the analysis of UGC have been proven useful for the development of various marketing strategies in the past (Banyai & Glover, 2012). Thus, in order to improve the image of tourism destinations and products, all authorities and tourism managers would have to do is to simply respond to tourists' complaints, demands and expectations. Thirdly, to our knowledge, only two studies using this method examine tourists' shopping satisfaction and both are conducted in traditional markets (Egresi, 2015; Wu, Wall & Pearce, 2014). By focusing on international tourists shopping satisfaction in Istanbul's modern shopping centers, the present study is attempting to close this gap.

The goal of this study is threefold:

- 1) To understand the international tourists' overall satisfaction level with their shopping experience in Istanbul's malls;
- 2) To learn about international tourists' shopping experiences (whether positive or negative) and to identify the main reasons for their satisfaction or dissatisfaction; and
- 3) To determine whether or not international tourists' experiences in Istanbul's malls are influenced by socio-demographic factors.

Literature review

Shopping tourism, tourist shopping and tourists' satisfaction with their shopping experience

Shopping while traveling is not only about buying things; in fact, it is more about the excitement associated with the process (Yüksel, 2007). Tourist shopping is seen as a social phenomenon and a cultural experience in which case it is not just the quality and price of the product or service that matters but also interaction with salespeople and fellow shoppers, as well as the location, convenience, size, and attractiveness of the shopping venue (Le Hew & Wesley, 2007; Murphy, Moscardo, Benckendorf & Pearce, 2011; Yüksel, 2007).

The tourist shopping satisfaction is derived from how tourists perceive their shopping experience compared to their expectations (Wong & Wan, 2013). This overall perception is based on a mixed evaluation of places, products and services which together shape tourists' feelings towards a certain destination or tourism product (Murphy et al., 2011; Tosun et al., 2007).

A number of studies have tried to understand the main factors determining satisfaction of tourists with their shopping experience. The findings of some of these studies are summarized/synthesized in Table 1.

Table 1

Factors determining satisfaction with shopping experience at a shopping center

Study	Factors
Timothy (2005)	Location, good value, range and quality of merchandise and physical design
Bodkin & Lord (1997)	Convenience, presence of a specific store in the mall, the quality of the services, and prices
Ahmad (2012)	Product variety (the most important), aesthetic, convenience, accessibility, presence of entertainment, and service quality
Yüksel (2004)	Personal attention, service quality, product quality, staff knowledge, shop appearance, cleanliness of shops, exhibition/design, product/service variety, prices, respect, safe shopping and ease of communication
Tosun, Temizkan, Timothy & Fyall (2007)	Local shopping culture, staff service quality, product value and reliability, physical features of shops, payment methods + other shopping and shop attributes
Wong & Wan (2013)	Merchandise value, service product and environment, staff service quality, service differentiation
Craig & Turley (2004)	Ambiance, architecture, ergonomics, variety and excitement
Choi, Liu, Pang & Chow (2008)	Personal interaction, merchandise value, internal store environment, merchandise variety and assortment and complaint handling
Wong (2013)	Service quality, service environment, service convenience, shopping experience, the ease of locating stores
Anselmsson (2006)	Selection, atmosphere, convenience, sales people, refreshments, location, promotional activities and merchandising policy
Murphy, Moscardo, Benckendorf & Pearce (2011)	Accessibility to the shopping center, accessibility within the shopping center, parking facilities, pleasant landscaping, pedestrian friendly, variety of shops, visually appealing architecture, attractions, not too crowded, well preserved heritage buildings, conveniently located public toilets, free entertainment, information about the place, variety of places to eat, safe places for kids to play, places to rest, festivals and markets (in the context of a shopping village)
Le Hew & Wesley (2007)	Ease of locating stores, number of retail stores, number of food retailers, number of entertainment facilities, prices offered by retailers, fashionability of merchandize and overall convenience.
Rajagopal (2008)	Ambiance, assortment of stores, sales promotions and lower prices, confort, entertainment, convenience and luxury
Leo & Phillipe (2002)	Shopping possibilities, pricing practices and general environment
Andreu, Bigne & Chumpitaz (2003)	Perceived retail environment (lighting, temperature, sales person's friendliness, decoration and cleanliness) has a great influence on emotions and positive emotions have an influence on satisfaction

The perception may also be influenced by the tourists' background, such as country of origin, ethnicity, religion, or other socio-demographic characteristics. (Tosun et al., 2007; Kozak, 2001). For example, Wong and Law (2003) found statistically significant differences in shopping satisfaction levels between Asian and Western tourists visiting shopping destinations in Hong Kong. Also, studies examining patterns among travelers' ratings on TripAdvisor, found that these ratings and comments differed across travelers' profiles and their country or region of origin (Banerjee & Chua, 2016). Similarly, Keates (2007) has shown that Americans and Europeans have different standards when evaluating their travel and hospitality experiences. What may be acceptable to a European may be perceived as very low quality by an American.

Other studies have pointed out that demographic characteristics, such as gender or age, could also be used as predictors for tourists' satisfaction with their shopping experience. In general, most studies found that women were more enthusiastic shoppers (Murphy et al., 2011) and were more satisfied with their shopping experience (Egresi & Polat, 2016; Timothy, 2005). However, interviewing Chinese tourists visiting the United States, Xu and Gard McGehee (2012) found that male tourists were, in

general, more satisfied with their shopping experiences. Similarly, in a study of foreign tourists visiting Beijing's Silk Market, Wu et al. (2014) found that male tourists were more satisfied than their female counterparts with their shopping experience.

In terms of the influence of age on shopping satisfaction, previous studies determined that younger tourists tend to be more enthusiastic about shopping (Murphy et al., 2011). Jansen-Verbeke (1987) and Rosenbaum and Spears (2006) also found that younger travelers were more likely to display positive attitudes towards shopping while older tourists exhibited much less interest in shopping.

Another attribute that was found in the literature to influence satisfaction with shopping experience is shopping involvement (Josiam, Kinley & Kim, 2005). By shopping involvement we understand the importance a person places on shopping as leisure and tourist activity as well as the state of energy that a person experiences with regards to this activity (Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003). High involvement means that the activity is considered important to the tourist. Consequently, people who enjoy shopping tend to get more excited about shopping tourism (Mattila & Wirtz, 2004).

Malls as centers for shopping tourism and the study malls

Malls have become attractive tourist destinations due to their convenience, familiarity, safety and a sense of escapism (Butler, 1991). Other researchers have shown that the appeal of shopping malls on tourists comes, most likely, from their combination of retail with entertainment (Timothy, 2005). In fact, tourists, more than local residents see shopping malls as centers for entertainment and socializing (Le Hew & Wesley, 2007).

Owing to its position and historical evolution, Istanbul is one of the biggest shopping destinations in Europe and the Middle East (Egresi & Arslan, 2016). Although many still perceive the bazaars as the main shopping venues of Istanbul, the city also has almost one hundred modern malls and shopping centers, with many others being in different stages of construction or planning. For this study, we investigated three of the largest malls of Istanbul, situated not very far from the city's historical center: Cevahir, İstinye Park and Forum Istanbul.

Cevahir Mall is situated in the Şişli District of Istanbul, about 2 km from Taksim Square, the city's civic center. This mall, built in 2005, is one of the largest in Europe and in the world (www.touropia.com). The 343 shops and 48 restaurants are distributed across 6 floors. The entertainment section includes 12 cinema halls (including an IMAX 3D cinema and cinema for children), a bowling hall, a small roller coaster, a large stage for events, as well as other entertainment facilities for the entire family (www.istanbulcevahir.com).

Istinye Park opened in 2007 in the Istinye neighborhood. The mall includes nearly 300 modern stores and a traditional Turkish food bazaar with 20 little outlets. There are also numerous restaurants and coffee houses. For entertainment it has a cinema complex with 12 halls (including IMAX 3D screen), a kids' entertainment center and a large gym (www.istinyepark.com).

Forum Istanbul, situated in the Bayrampaşa District, on the Atatürk Airport – Yenikapı metro line, was completed in 2009. It hosts 270 domestic and international brands and includes a very large (30,000 m²) entertainment area with unique concepts such as a very large aquarium and Europe's largest themed park (Jurassic Land). Other attractions include a cinema complex with 10 halls, Funlab entertainment center, a bowling alley, a children's club, an ice rink, a mirror maze and a helicopter tour simulation (www.forumistanbul.com.tr).

User-generated content and eWOM

Interpersonal relationships and word-of-mouth (WOM) were found to be the most influential factors in determining a person to make a purchase especially when dealing with intangible products which are difficult to evaluate prior to their consumptions, as is the case in tourism and hospitality (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009).

The importance of WOM in the tourism and hospitality marketing and management has increased recently with the arrival of electronic media, in the form of user-generated content (UGC) (Buttle, 1998). Comments posted as UGC are often perceived as similar to recommendations coming from friends or family members (Wang, Yu & Fesenmeier, 2002) and were often likened to electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Tham, Croy & Mair, 2013). The rising importance and use of UGC is associated with the development of Web 2.0 which encourages users to take a more active role by sharing their information, opinions, ideas and experiences within the virtual communities (Munar, 2010).

A number of studies have documented the growing role of social media in tourism (see, for example, Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Internet has had a fundamental impact on independent travel planning (Jeacle & Carter, 2011; Xiang, Magnini & Fesenmeier, 2015) and has created both new possibilities and challenges for marketers (Dellarocas, 2003). With the development of social networking platforms, UGC has become the main source of travel research completely changing travel consumption patterns (Vinod, 2011). Online travel-related UGC is perceived to be easier to understand (Zhang & Sun, 2017) and more reliable than similar material posted by providers of tourism and hospitality products and services (Albarq, 2014; Gretzel, Yoo & Purifoy, 2007; Miguens, Baggio & Costa, 2008). Consumer reviews are also perceived as the most influential source when making tourism decisions (Zhang & Sun, 2017).

Also, while classical WOM may, in time, disappear, eWOM remains posted and can influence the intentions of many more tourists (Yang, Mai & Ben-Ur, 2012). Many travelers select their destination based on feedback and advice from other travelers (Shanka, Ali-Knight & Pope, 2002). Positive reviews may significantly increase visitation of a destination (Albarq, 2014; O'Neill, Palmer & Charters, 2002) by enhancing its image (Kladou & Mavragani, 2015) while negative reviews could crush the image of the destination (Morgan, Pritchard & Piggot, 2003). For this reason, due to the popularity of UGC websites, such as TripAdvisor, Schegg, Liebrich, Scaglione & Ahmad (2008) opined that the power of eWOM has multiplied at exponential pace.

Although, more recently, credibility of tourism-related online reviews has been called into question (Schuckert, Liu & Law, 2015b), O'Connor (2008) found little evidence of false or fake reviews on TripAdvisor and concluded that the reviews were largely reliable while Bronner and de Hog (2016) have determined that the quality of information posted (based on its extensiveness, novelty and usefulness) improved significantly between 2007 and 2014. Moreover, users have learned to distinguish between real and fake reviews. Filieri (2016) found that readers assess trustworthiness of a review based on message content and style as well as on review extremity and valence (positive/negative). Some studies have found that those reviewers who give lower hotel ratings are more trustworthy (Lee, Law & Murphy, 2011) – and consider that bad reviews are more helpful to readers (Casalo, Flavian, Guinalin & Ekina, 2015; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006) – while others have argued that reviewers who tend to post excellent ratings are more reliable (Schuckert et al., 2015b). Whether positive or negative, the effects of these reviews are stronger on high risk-averse travelers (Casalo et al., 2015) and for lesser known tourism objectives or infrastructure (Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009).

Another way for users to assess the credibility of a rating or review is by checking out the profile of the reviewer (Park, Xiang, Josiam & Kim, 2014). Travelers are more likely to make use of online reviews if they feel they were posted by credible peers (Ayeh, Au & Law, 2013; Xie, Miao, Kuo & Lee, 2011). Users from different socio-demographic backgrounds tend to emphasize different attributes when reviewing a tourism product (Rhee, Yang, Koo & Cung, 2015). Readers of online reviews trust more those reviews coming from reviewers with similar profiles (Ayeh et al., 2013). For example, when examining the usefulness of the reviews, similarity in terms of age, gender and marital status is taken in consideration by more than 53% of the survey participants (Gretzel et al., 2007). Also travel and posting experience of the reviewer are considered important pointers in assessing credibility of a review. Helpful reviewers are those who travel more and post more (Lee et al., 2011). Finally, reviewer activity involvement is also important when review readers assess trustworthiness of reviews (Filiari, 2016).

Methods

The study is based on the quantitative and qualitative analysis of reviews posted on TripAdvisor by tourists visiting the three malls in Istanbul from abroad. According to their website, TripAdvisor is the largest online network of travelers in the world, with operations in 45 countries, 315 million unique visitors per month and more than 200 million reviews and opinions. TripAdvisor is probably the most popular website with travel-related UGC; hence its consumer reviews can greatly influence the image of a destination (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Between the three malls selected, we found a total 1,144 reviews posted on TripAdvisor before 1 March 2017. After discarding the reviews posted by contributors with less than three reviews, the reviews from Turkey and those from tourists of unspecified countries, the number of reviews considered for this study dropped to 655. Of these 340 (51.9%) were for Cevahir Mall, 207 (31.6%) for Istinye Park and 108 (16.5%) for Forum Istanbul. In the first part, we used frequency statistics to present demographic data and basic results. We then used the Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis H test to test for statistically significant differences among data sets.

The second part of the study is based on a qualitative content analysis of the reviews posted in English, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. This method, known as netnography (Kono & Markwell, 2014), enables researchers to understand which part of their travel and hospitality experience they consider important (Kono & Markwell, 2014). Although not yet part of mainstream research methods, the study of virtual communities has recently become an important research tool in tourism and hospitality (Kono & Markwell, 2014; Schuckert et al., 2015a) as UGC can often provide rich information and insights into tourists' experiences that cannot be obtained through other methods (Law, 2006; Pullman, McGuire & Cleveland, 2005). The main advantage of this method is that the responses of the participants are not led by the researcher's questions and, being even unaware of the researcher's presence, subjects can post and interact with other online community members in a relatively uninhibited manner (Banyai & Glover, 2012; Kladou & Mavragani, 2016; Kono & Markwell, 2014; Rhee et al., 2015).

Qualitative analysis of these reviews can be done either after manual transcription or using an automated web-harvesting machine (Johnson, Sieber, Magnien & Ariwi, 2012). Manual transcription and analysis can be very time-consuming. Given the huge number of reviews available for analysis, most often, researchers rely on computer processing programs (Akehurst, 2009). These programs based on algorithms focus on keywords to catch the main meaning of a review and are generally able to understand whether a review is positive or negative in nature (Schuckert et al., 2015a). However, critics pointed out that the technique faces numerous limitations. The system is not always able to catch the real meaning of the

keywords (and, thus, of the reviews) and the classification into positive and negative reviews has been proven to be only 70% accurate (Schuckert et al., 2015a). Meaning is sometimes also lost in the process as words and phrases are taken out of context and misinterpreted (Banyai & Glover, 2012; Gattens, 2013). Krippendorf (2004) has rightly pointed out that the meaning of a word or a text is dependent on the surrounding environment so the researcher must be aware of the context in which the word is used. Often, substantial manual editing is required so the technique could be also time-consuming (Johnson et al., 2012). Moreover, this type of computer software is generally not equipped to handle multiple languages; consequently, most tourism studies analyze only reviews in English (including the study by Wu et al., 2014). However, an increasing number of reviews are written in languages other than English and we have shown earlier that nationality is an important predictor of satisfaction with certain tourism products and services. By only focusing on reviews written in English, the results of these studies are quite limited (Schuckert et al., 2015a).

For this reason, we decided to employ a classical content analysis of reviews based on manual transcription. Relatively few of the more recent studies follow this method (see, for example, Lei and Law, 2015); however, we believe that, in the case of smaller data, manual analysis could lead to more accurate interpretation. We found that reviews posted did not follow any pattern, varied in length and information provided making generalizations quite difficult. One way to overcome this issue, as suggested by Johnson et al. (2012), was through content analysis where the researcher defines a series of attributes that identify both positive and negative aspects of the shopping experience. We followed several steps. First, we thoroughly read the entire text highlighting key concepts or variables which we, then, coded. Some of the codes were pre-determined based on a very thorough literature review on tourist shopping. Other code categories and subcategories were added as reading was progressing. After the text was entirely analyzed, coding categories and subcategories were revisited and some categories or subcategories were deleted or merged. A frequency distribution was then performed for each of these attributes. Finally, the reviews were revisited to mine for useful quotes that could best illustrate the main satisfaction attributes identified.

Results

Not all reviewers of the three studied malls on TripAdvisor stated their gender and age but of those who did there were more men than women and the great majority (78.7%) were between 25 and 49 years of age (see Table 2). The reviewers were from a total of 64 countries with the greatest numbers coming from Russia (67), Iran (57), Saudi Arabia (43), United Kingdom (29), Italy (25), USA (24), Greece (22), Egypt (21) and Lebanon (20). From the list we can see that the majority of the reviewers were from countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) with the European countries coming in second. A very interesting finding is that the great majority of reviewers are not from the most developed countries, or "The West" (which included countries from the European Union, North America, Australia, New Zealand and Japan) but rather from "The Rest" (65.5%; see Table 2).

Table 2
Demographic characteristics of reviewers

Attribute	N	Percent	Valid percent
Gender			
Male	265	40.5	58.4
Female	189	28.9	41.6
Total valid	454	69.3	100.0
Missing	201	30.7	

Table 2 Continued

Attribute	N	Percent	Valid percent
Age			
18-24	21	3.2	5.3
25-34	147	22.4	36.8
35-49	167	25.5	41.9
50-64	56	8.5	14.0
65+	8	1.2	2.0
Total valid	339	60.9	100.0
Missing	256	39.1	
"Shopping fanatic" (shopping involvement)			
Yes	118	18.0	
No	537	82.0	
Origin			
Europe	186	28.4	
Former USSR countries	107	16.3	
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	244	37.3	
East and SE Asia	21	3.2	
South Asia	18	2.7	
North America	33	5.0	
Latin America	27	4.1	
Subsaharan Africa	10	1.5	
Oceania	9	1.4	
Origin - group of countries			
"The West"	226	34.5	
"The Rest"	429	65.5	
Experience as reviewer			
Reviewer (3-5 reviews posted on Trip Advisor)	85	9.9	
Senior reviewer (6-10 reviews)	95	14.5	
Contributor (11-20 reviews)	116	17.7	
Senior contributor (20-49 reviews)	161	24.6	
Top contributor (50+ reviews)	218	33.3	

About 18% of the reviewers labeled themselves as "shopping fanatic" meaning that they enjoy to shop whenever they travel. Analyzing the contributors' online review activity on TripAdvisor we found that almost 58% of the reviewers of the three malls under study were very experienced reviewers having contributed more than 20 online reviews each (Table 2).

Overall, the results of the quantitative part of our study show that the reviewers were happy with their shopping experience at the three malls, with more than half rating their experience as very good (see Table 3). Only 2.0% of the reviewers thought their experience was bad or very bad.

Table 3
Quantitative evaluation of overall shopping experience

Evaluation of experience	Very bad (1)	Bad (2)	OK (3)	Good (4)	Very good (5)
Frequency	3	10	80	228	334
Percent	0.5	1.5	12.2	34.8	51.4

We also found that tourists from non-Western countries ("The Rest") were more pleased with their shopping experiences (mean rank = 339.69) than tourists from the Western countries (mean rank = 305.80) with the differences shown to be statistically significant ($p = 0.016$) (Table 4). We could not find statistically significant differences between groups based on gender and shopping involvement.

Table 4
Differences in shopping experience evaluation based on demographic, geographic and social attributes of respondents

Attributes		N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Gender	Male	265	226.92	60,133.50	24,888.500	60,133.50	-0.123	0.902
	Female	189	228.31	43,151.50				
Shopping fanatic	Yes	118	347.96	41,059.50	29,327.500	173,780.50	-1.395	0.163
	No	537	323.61	173,780.50				
Group of countries	"The West"	226	305.80	69,111.50	43,460.500	69,111.50	-2.401	0.016*
	"The Rest"	429	339.69	145,728.50				

* 5% significance level.

A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in satisfaction between the tourists from different world regions, $\chi^2(8) = 25.389$, $p = 0.001$, with a higher mean rank satisfaction score for tourists from Latin America (372.02), former USSR (347.99), MENA (347.94) and Oceania (346.50) and lower mean rank satisfaction scores for East and Southeast Asia (201.50), Subsaharan Africa (245.60), South Asia (274.50) and North America (283.35), while mean rank satisfaction score for tourists from Europe was somewhere in the middle (314.87) (Table 5). We also found that tourists were most satisfied with their shopping experience at Istinye Park (mean rank = 369.01) and least satisfied at Cevahir (mean rank = 297.76) with the differences being statistically significant ($\chi^2(2) = 23.360$, $p = 0.000$). Our study, however, could not find statistically significant differences in shopping satisfaction mean rank scores based on age and experience with reviews (Table 5).

Table 5
Differences in shopping experience evaluations based on group attributes

Attributes		N	Mean rank	Chi-square	df	Asymp. sig
Mall	Istanbul Forum	108	344.60	23.360	2	0.000**
	Istinye Park	207	369.01			
	Cevahir	340	297.76			
Age	18-24	21	229.93	5.962	4	0.202
	25-34	147	209.26			
	35-49	167	187.94			
	50-64	56	195.93			
	65+	8	231.50			
Experience with reviews	Reviewer	65	300.21	7.230	4	0.124
	Senior reviewer	95	346.44			
	Contributor	116	339.66			
	Senior contributor	161	344.44			
	Top contributor	218	309.91			
World regions	MENA	244	347.94	25.389	8	0.001**
	Europe	186	314.87			
	Former USSR	107	347.99			
	North America	33	283.35			
	Latin America	27	372.02			
	East and Southeast Asia	21	201.50			
	South Asia	18	274.50			
	Subsaharan Africa	10	245.60			
Oceania	9	346.50				

** 1% significance level.

Of the 655 reviews considered for this study, a number of 495 were in one of the languages understood by the author (with the help of a dictionary) – English, Spanish, Portuguese, French and Italian – and will be further analyzed for perception attributes of the three malls. The main findings are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6
Main attributes of tourists' shopping experience perception in the three malls

Perception attributes	Forum Istanbul (N = 84)		İstinye Park (N = 149)		Cevahir Mall (N = 262)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
The mall is very big/ The mall is relatively small	33/0	39.3/0	32/0	21.5/0	92/1	56.8/0.4
Great diversity of shopping outlets/ The stores in the mall lacked diversity	57/0	67.9/0	82/0	55.0/0	164/1	62.6/0.4
Good entertainment for the entire family/ Lack or shortage of entertainment facilities	52/0	61.9/0	13/0	8.7/0	54/0	20.6/0
Good and diverse restaurants and coffee shops/ Few or not so good restaurants and coffee shops	36/3	42.9/3.6	88/0	59.1/0	135/2	51.5/0.8
Good location and/or accessibility/ Far or not easily accessible	27/9	32.1/10.7	5/34	3.4/22.8	103/4	39.3/1.5
Great atmosphere – good shopping environment/ Not unique – just another shopping mall	17/4	20.2/4.8	31/4	20.8/2.7	35/17	13.4/6.5
Crowded/ Not crowded	1/1	1.2/1.2	2/7	1.3/4.7	16/0	6.1/0
Expensive/ Affordable prices	6/14	7.1/16.7	11/11	7.4/7.4	21/31	8.0/11.8
Good design of the mall, clean, spacious, well-organized/ Design a little outdated – needs renovation	4/2	4.8/2.4	51/0	34.2/0	24/8	9.2/3.1
Luxurious/ Average	0/0	0/0	60/0	40.3/0	0/14	0/5.3
Good facilities/ Lacking facilities	4/0	4.8/0	5/1	3.4/0.7	18/1	6.9/0.4

All three malls were characterized as "very big". This is hardly surprising as these are, indeed, three of the largest malls in Istanbul. Many reviewers of Cevahir Mall explained that their main reason for visiting this mall was because they had heard that this was Europe's biggest mall. However, the huge size was not considered as an advantage by everyone as some complained that the mall was "too large to be convenient".

Given the number of shops in each of these malls, it is understandable why these malls are able to offer a great diversity of world and Turkish brands. There is also a general perception that the three malls are good places to eat as they offer a great diversity of restaurants and coffee shops, with a plus for İstinye Park which caters for a more elite clientele.

While all three malls are trying to attract customers with their entertainment facilities, these are particularly important for the attractiveness of Forum Istanbul Mall (almost 62% of all reviews for this mall included references to the uniqueness of the entertainment sector in this mall). As a matter of fact, this is the only mall of the three which reviewers declared to visit mainly for entertainment and not for shopping:

"My daughter and I are huge dino[saur] fans (pun intended), so our main reason for visiting this mall was Jurassic Land. Extremely informative, and if you have a spark of imagination, great fun!"

Senior contributor from Oman

On the other hand, entertainment facilities were rated the lowest at İstinye Park. A number of contributors even complained about the kids' playground/arcade where many games were apparently not working properly.

In terms of location, Cevahir Mall is situated closest to the Taksim Square and to the hotels where most tourists are staying. The mall is also easy to reach by metro and by buses. Forum Istanbul is situated relatively far from the touristy areas but it is easy to reach because it is situated on the metro line. İstinye Park is outside the tourist areas and relatively far from the metro station. Many reviewers complained about having to take a taxi and having to deal with unscrupulous drivers.

In terms of the brands and the prices, İstinye Park is the most elitist, with more than 40% of the reviewers describing it as luxurious. Prices reflect this trend, many contributors opining that shopping at this mall is expensive, although visitors could also find more affordable stores. The other two malls were not considered cheap either, especially when prices were compared with smaller stores in the historical center; however, prices were considered more affordable especially when they had promotions.

Due to the above discussed reasons, being the most accessible and having the lowest prices of the three, Cevahir was found to be the most crowded whereas, İstinye Park, being least accessible and having the highest prices as it caters for an elite, was the least crowded.

When looking at organization, design, and cleanliness, İstinye Park has been positively reviewed by more than one-third of the contributors. While a number of contributors also lauded Cevahir Mall for organization and design, some remarked that the building was dated and needed renovation. As a matter of fact, although very big and with a great diversity of shops, restaurants and entertainment, many contributors believed that there was nothing special or unique about this mall and it was just one of the many big shopping malls in Istanbul. Forum Istanbul may be considered unique because of its entertainment facilities and İstinye Park is more elitist, with many high end international brands, a nice design and with a traditional Turkish food bazaar that replaced the usual supermarket or hypermarket anchor.

In general, the reviewers agreed that they had a good time shopping at the three malls, with a special remark for İstinye Park. While most reviewers described their experiences at the three malls as superlative, some tourists from "The West" and from East and Southeast Asia seemed much less impressed. This is how a tourist from the USA described his or her experience at İstinye Park:

"The mall was nice and all, but had regular European and American shopping... They had Starbucks, the Shake Shack, but if you're tourist, what's the point of going thirty minutes outside Istanbul to see this place?"

Tourists from East and Southeast Asia were not impressed either by the "grandeur" of the malls from Istanbul. The main reason is that this part of the world has seen the building of some of the largest and most impressive malls in the world (see for example: www.touropia.com/largest-mall-in-the-world).

"We were spending quite some time in Sultanahmet area and needed some kind of modern vibe. So we went to İstinye Park Mall.[...]. Unfortunately, the mall was not really up to our expectations. Please, don't get me wrong, the mall itself boasted international brands, many restaurants, cafes and entertainments. But coming from Asia, I am very used to the glitzy malls in Jakarta, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong; thus, I found this mall as a bit of a disappointment. My advice? Just stay in the Old City and enjoy every minute you spend there."

A 35-49-year-old woman from Indonesia ("shopping fanatic")

Conclusion

In this quantitative and qualitative study, we examined the experiences of foreign tourists visiting three modern shopping malls in Istanbul, Turkey. We found that international tourists were, in general, satisfied with their shopping experience; nevertheless, we found statistically significant differences between tourist shoppers visiting the three shopping malls. Although all three malls received good evaluations, İstinye Park, the most luxurious of the three, with a great design and great restaurants was ranked the highest of the three. Cevahir Mall, although very popular with locals and tourists alike was ranked the lowest of the three, perhaps because the building is a bit old and dated or because the mall is crowded most of the time. Forum Istanbul is also very crowded, but the place is very attractive due to its unique entertainment facilities.

Although many previous studies have emphasized the importance of identifying and including the socio-demographic characteristics into the analysis (Wu et al., 2014), we could not document any statistically significant differences between groups based on socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age, shopping involvement or experience with online reviews.

Only world region of origin and the grouping into western and non-western countries were found to be influential in determining statistically significant differences, with tourists from developing countries being more satisfied than their counterparts from western countries. This is unlike visitors of traditional markets in Istanbul which tend to be mainly from the Western, developed countries (Egresi, 2015; Egresi & Kara, 2015). The reason, perhaps, is that the first malls were built in the West, so malls have for decades been part of the general urban landscape there whereas in the developing and emerging countries they are a newer phenomenon. Visitors from developing countries are still in the discovery phase and are, therefore, very excited about visiting these types of modern retail forms, associated with the West. Our results support previous findings stating that up to certain, optimal, point, familiarity of a destination contributes to its attractiveness – this is what Spiering and van der Velde (2013) call "comfortable familiarity". After a while, however, familiarity could become unattractive as tourists seek exotic or different places (Mackay & Fesenmeier, 1997), which, we believe, is the case with western tourists.

It would be interesting to note that two previous studies failed to capture the significance of the tourists' region of origin in influencing the level of satisfaction with the shopping experience. Wu et al. (2014) examined rates and reviews posted on TripAdvisor by international tourists visiting a traditional market in Beijing (China). The authors explained this by the small sample size and by not incorporating reviews posted in languages other than English, which excluded many reviews posted by tourists from European and Asian countries. Egresi and Polat (2016) also reported no difference in the tourist shoppers' level of satisfaction. However, in this case, the authors surveyed tourists at both traditional and modern shopping outlets. By eliminating the shortcomings identified in the two previous studies we demonstrated that tourists' country of origin is indeed an important determinant of shopping satisfaction.

The findings of our study also have some practical and managerial implications. Firstly, the study has shown that the use of online reviews posted by peers on websites such as TripAdvisor could be a reliable tool for measuring tourist satisfaction with the service they receive. Secondly, this study confirms that malls can be marketed as tourism destinations, especially to travelers from non-Western countries. Thirdly, the high rating scores and the positive reviews posted on TripAdvisor demonstrate that Istanbul's malls are well-equipped to cater for an international clientele. Fourthly, reviews and ratings posted on user-generated content sites not only help tourists to better design their travel plans but also may push

tourism and hospitality administrators to make adjustments to their operations in order to satisfy the needs of tourists. This conclusion is consistent with the findings of a number of previous studies (Baka, 2016; Buhalis 1998; Miguens, Baggio & Costa, 2008; Vinod, 2011). The reviewers clearly highlighted what they perceived to be each mall's main sources of attractiveness while also pointing out a number of shortcomings which need to be carefully analyzed and fixed if the authorities intend to transform the city into a global shopping center. Tourism planners and managers of shopping centers could act together to eliminate or minimize the objects of tourists' dissatisfaction with their shopping experience, while marketers could use the results of this study to better target their customers.

As all research, this study is not without limitations. The main limitation in our case lies in the research method we chose for our investigation. While a study based on the quantitative and content examination of reviews posted on a UGC-site, such as TripAdvisor has its merits, as highlighted earlier and while we made every effort to include as many reviews as possible in our analysis (including reviews that are in some languages other than English), we are well aware of the fact that, usually, only a small segment of those who visit a destination post reviews (Bronner & de Hoog, 2016). Furthermore, research has shown that most of those who post reviews tend to have very strong opinions about the product or service (either favorable or unfavorable). Meanwhile, majority of consumers (whose opinion generally hovers in between), do not post their opinion, thus altering the ratings (Bansal & Voyer, 2000).

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