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Cover Page Footnote

This paper is derived from the work undertaken for a master thesis.

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Young tourists represent over 20% of the tourism market and are an important element in current tourism activities. Cultural tourism, encompassing religious tourism, has increased in recent times, however, young tourists exhibit less preference for religious destinations, particularly within their own religions, compared to other options. Their preferences generally lean towards non-spiritual or secular motivations rather than religious based travel motivations. Within this context, this study aims to determine religious tourism motivations, perceptions and related behaviours of young tourists by evaluating their preferences and consumption patterns at religious sites. The study is undertaken on the basis of secondary research supported by primary surveys (n: 387) conducted with young Turkish tourists in Konya, an important religious destination in the central part of Turkey. According to the results, religious tourism attitudes and young tourists' related behaviours have a high value and have an effect on their motivations and perceptions. Their consumption patterns are focused on religious and entertainment purposes and their preferences are generally based on resting and self-actualisation. Based on these findings, evaluations and suggestions about what needs to be oriented towards young tourists and how to draw more young tourists are presented. For religious tourism destination planners, this study offers some basic profiles and outputs to build useful strategies and to attract more active young tourists and provide useful marketing knowledge about young tourists for the purpose of making religious destinations more attractive to them.

Key Words: Young tourists, religious tourism, behaviour, motivation, perception

Introduction

Young tourists take part in a majority of tourism activities worldwide. According to Han, Kim, and Kiatkawsin (2017:906), 'young people are one of the fastest-growing tourism groups throughout the world'. It is estimated that they represent over 20% of the entire tourism market. Young tourists participate in different consumption activities, are formed of many different tourism types and thus, form a unique market. Furthermore, young tourists with their unique consumption dimensions have different characteristics than traditional tourism markets, despite the perceived hegemony of mass tourism and adult tourism market (Prayag & Hosany, 2014; Demeter & Bratucu, 2014; WTO, 2016; Buffa, 2015; Han *et al.*, 2017).

Education, experiencing other cultures or cultural change, self-actualisation, and particular fundamental motivations such as curiosity, building life experience,

and/or to benefit from formal and informal learning opportunities have been the central focal points highlighted for youth tourism in recent research (Horak & Weber, 2000; Chhabra, 2011; Demeter & Bratucu, 2014; Cavagnaro *et al.*, 2018). With regard to the importance of young tourists, Buffa (2015) places an emphasis on sustainability, indicating that the higher consciousness, willingness to learn, and sensitive disposition of the younger generation will be effective in shaping the future of tourism. With that being said, the general observation of these scholars reflects that there are not enough studies in the literature on young tourists. This is particularly the case in relation to their religious tourism tendencies. The possibility that young tourists have budget issues and income problems is a potential reason for the limited number of studies in this area (Han *et al.*, 2017).

According to WYSE (World Youth Student and Educational Travel Confederation) (2021), young tourists' purposes have shifted from leisure travel

towards purpose driven travel. These purposes generally have a focus on personal development, based on internal motivations. Another report from WYSE (2014) says that the most important motivation for young tourists is to interact with local people and to experience different daily life in another country. Cultural experiences and the desire to learn are motivational roots for young tourists. Although young tourists' participation in cultural tourism has increased, the scale of their participation has not been examined enough to build a valid and reliable profile.

Religious tourism has been considered in recent times as a special market of tourism activity, under the umbrella of cultural tourism (Irimias *et al.*, 2016; Bilim & Düzgüner, 2015). It is quite difficult to determine the prevalence and establish a profile of religious tourism as a special area, as well as to distinguish it accurately, because it resides within the boundaries of cultural tourism. We are told that more than 350 million people travel for religious purposes in general. Therefore, in order for this number to be understood, the attitudes, behaviours, preferences, and demographics of the religious tourism market need to be examined (Irimias *et al.*, 2016).

When viewed together, young tourists exhibit intensive activity on one hand, and an increasing trend toward religious tourism on the other, and this creates significant opportunities in the tourism market. According to certain findings and observations, although young tourists' preferences for cultural destinations have increased, their tendencies to seek out religious destinations are lower and their consumption at these destinations has not been specifically determined (Li *et al.*, 2006; Irimias *et al.*, 2016). However, certain studies (McIntosh & Zahra, 2013) express that young peoples' religious destination preferences can be higher. In general and in a different topic of discussion, elderly people are seen to make a higher number of visits to religious sites. Within this context, there are different ideas about young tourists' visitation and participation in religious tourism (Irimias *et al.*, 2016). In the context of this lack of clarity, our study aims to elucidate the attitudes and behaviours, motivations, perceptions, preferences, consumption and expectation patterns of young tourists at religious destinations.

In particular, the objective of this paper is to make determinations based on our findings in regard to young religious tourists, who are considered to be a declining segment, to eliminate the above-mentioned deficiencies,

and to enhance the understanding of this market. The fact that there are not many studies conducted in this area and that the results could guide the way to increase the potential of this group, add to the significance of the study. For religious tourism marketers and related parties, understanding young tourists' behavioural influences and intentions provides important details for developing marketing strategies.

Young Tourists and Youth Tourism

Although different age ranges are used in different sources, the type of tourism participated in by people between the ages of 15-18 and 24-29 that emerge as a result of different motivations and activities is defined as youth tourism and its participants as young tourists. The term youth tourism is not directly related to their aim for travel, instead this age range is considered to be youth tourism because it leads to different dimensions of consumption and preferences. In this distinction according to the age group nomenclature, it is classified alongside adult and elderly tourism (WTO, 2008; Çakar & Seyitoğlu, 2016; Han *et al.*, 2017). Young people's higher participation than other age groups in certain tourism activities is revealed by many studies. Young people's psychological characteristics are considered to be a reason for this. Young populations tend to have more open personalities for activity, adventure and change due to their psychological makeup. In addition, young people have fewer family ties and responsibilities and they act very meticulously in the selection of their accommodation places. This influences the travel trends of those in this age group. Along with these characteristics, young people have the tendency to be easily pleased and typically are not seeking too much comfort. Youth tourism is addressed within the scope of 'social tourism' in many countries, because most of the participants are dependent on family income or are travelling with a limited student budget (Çakar & Seyitoğlu, 2016; Bicikova, 2014).

According to the World Youth & Student Educational Travel Confederation's (WYSE, 2019) data, 23% (304 Million) of the entire world's traveling population is made up of young tourists, an economic magnitude of approximately 308 billion dollars, with 3000 euros spent on average per traveller. Within this context, young tourists are becoming increasingly more valuable and influence development due to their economic effects. In addition, young peoples' tourism activities are spread over a very wide geographical area. Their ability to travel

independently, their desire for more pleasure-oriented travel, active participation, adventure seeking, and active lifestyles alongside their physical competence, lower non-luxury consumption expectations, communicative and interactive competence, and acquaintance with information and technology cause young tourists to gravitate towards a much more varied set of places and products (Prayag & Hosany, 2014; Pizam *et al.*, 2004; Carr, 2002). The potential of young tourists is striking in that they have substantial consumption spread across different tourism types, some being comprised of only young people. Carr (1998) emphasises that the tourism sub-categories in which young tourists participate and make up the majority are international tourism, educational tourism, adventure tourism, and alternative tourism. Demeter and Bratucu (2014) propose the travel types in which young tourists participate frequently as being educational tourism, volunteer tourism, work and travel programs, cultural exchanges, sports and adventure tourism, holiday travel, and recreational programs. Furthermore, the technological developments and changes in the area of communication in our day and time have increased young tourists' participation in travel and similar individual activities. Popular culture trends in social media, rapid developments in transportation, and information acquisition are interesting to young people and these lead them to be more active in their use, compared to other age groups, rendering their participation in these trends higher (Bizirgianni & Dionysopoulou, 2013).

Culture-oriented travel is preferred to a considerable extent among the youth. It can be seen that the desire to learn, discover, and self-actualise are important motivations that direct young tourists (King & Gardiner, 2015; Bicikova, 2014). Culture-oriented travel is directed towards cultural or authentic areas that reflect different characteristics than tourists are familiar with. In addition to cultural travel, there is an intensely growing trend with Erasmus programs in Europe in recent times, and cultural travel can be undertaken through this program (Çakır & Seyitoğlu, 2016). Another emphasis for young people is the importance of culture-seeking and their interest in authentic experiences. From these areas, religious tourism emerges as an area in which young people are interested (Buffa, 2015; Irimias *et al.*, 2016).

Religious Tourism

The term religious tourism can be defined as tourism or travel by people from different religions to religious attractions and events, in order to fulfil their religious needs and spiritual and/or secular purposes (Irimias *et al.*, 2016). Sacred places are at the heart of religious life in societies; these places are those in which the spiritual realm is overarching, in which humans meet God. In the spiritual atmosphere of these places, visitors seek spiritual healing and in this way, religious tourism is both the oldest and an affective tourism movement (Olsen & Timothy, 2006; Trono, 2015). The foundations of religious based traveling are visits to religious places, cities, sanctuaries and temples (Olsen & Timothy, 2006: Raj & Morpeth, 2007). In this sense, along with being a special type of tourism, religious tourism is a travel concept that has existed since the beginning of humanity and is a religion phenomenon. Although religious tourism is evaluated within cultural tourism, certain types of travel have religious dimensions, beyond culture, and create a distinct conceptual framework. The reflections of constantly changing human nature and needs pull the religion dimension in different directions. Meeting spiritual needs is one of the activities in which people need to exert extra effort. Muslims meet their needs in this regard by participating in religious activities while also participating in tourism activities during their pilgrimage. Studies conducted within this context show that religious objects occupy an important place as a fundamental motivation behind individual travel. People gravitate towards religious tourism within the framework of the richness of religious supply sources, their desire to fulfil their religious duties, and religious propagation activities (Ramirez & Portillo, 2020).

Huang and Pearce (2019) emphasise that the motivational roots of religious tourists are both internal and external religious orientations. Inner orientation focuses on the presence of god(s) and appears to positively influence visitors mental health. Those with strong religious beliefs obtain greater life satisfaction from the experience and have less anxiety, loneliness, depression, and physical illnesses compared to those with low or no religious conviction. External orientation is about utilitarian values, such as status, comfort, and social interaction. One of the general approaches to understanding religious tourism motivation is to consider religiosity and spiritual dimensions. Religiosity is commonly used for pilgrimage based movements. The spiritual dimension focuses on

the meaning of religious sites and is associated with mental health and relaxation, as well as other secular motivations (Irimias *et al.*, 2016; Jiang *et al.*, 2018; Kim *et al.*, 2019). Kim, Kim and King (2020) classify religious tourists' motivations based on different studies. These include: culture based experiences, self-construal heritage experiences, architecture, curiosity, the need for discovery, socialisation, the willingness to accept new ideas and others' values, experiences of spirituality and social unity, recreational motivations, learning about diverse cultures and lifestyles, as an opportunity for quiet time away from the city noise, contemplation, relaxation from everyday responsibilities and burdens, spiritual fulfilment, inner peace, inner healing, faith exploration, congregational togetherness, personal fulfilment, and religious participation.

Table 1 outlines the properties of religious tourism, in which spirituality plays an important role, and involves social, economic, religious, and cultural effects.

Table 1: Properties of Spirituality & Religious Tourism
A - Religious tourism is a type of tourism where people feel more at ease by fulfilling their spiritual duties. For this reason, religious tourism enables people to draw comfort mentally, spiritually, and socially.
B - Since people's feeling of spiritual fulfilment increases as they age, religious tourism is closely related to third age tourism.
C - Religious tourism enables cultural exchanges in the region in which it takes place and enables people from different religions to socialise at the same time. In this sense, except for its spiritual dimension, it has a secular attraction, which is neither cultural nor spiritual.
D - Religious tourism enables spiritual values to turn into material values. Therefore, it has the property of generating income for the tourism economy in the area and country in which it takes place.
E - Religious tourism products are special due their unique attraction. Since certain areas are visited because of pilgrimage, they create an important potential in this sense.
F - Religious tourism activity plays a role that is a bridge between cultures, societies, and religions and whose positive effects cannot be ignored.
(Li <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Bilim, 2013; Albayrak, 2013; Bilim & Düzgüner, 2015; Ramirez & Portillo, 2020)

Related to age related participation in religious tourism, some studies compare the differences between older and younger tourists. The case of Singh (2006) on Hindu pilgrimage implies that most of the pilgrim tourists are older, while younger participants generally come to accompany their older family members. However, they also enjoy the fun of leisure pursuits and sightseeing in addition to the religious rituals of the pilgrimage. As it is seen in this case, pilgrimage travellers are generally older. Studies by Albayrak (2013) and Inbari (2017) also point out that religious tourism seems to be particularly important for older pilgrimage travellers. Chang, Wang, and Shen (2012) offer accessibility strategies for pilgrimage tourism based on older attendance. Thus, in many cases, religious tourism is seen to be for more religious people who are older - the suggestion being that modern, young tourists are more secular and looking for different alternatives in their cultural and religious travel. Although pilgrimage is a very common component in religious tourism, there is an increasing trend towards rich historic and artistic heritage in spiritual and religious destinations. Additionally, different activities and experiences like trekking, cycling, natural beauty, and adventurous trails that lead to religious pilgrimage sights exist as a way to attract the secular and spiritual tourists (Galzacorta *et al.*, 2016). These explanations mean that today different age groups can partake in the religious tourism market in addition to widespread pilgrimage travel for older religious tourists. Based on secular and spiritual religious motivations and adventure based novelty movements, young tourists present a strong potential in the religious tourism market.

Young Tourists and Religious Tourism

As expressed earlier, studies conducted about young tourists are not very extensive. Additionally, not many studies have been performed about both religious tourism and young tourists. However, there are many indicators for the necessity of such a study. As Albayrak (2013) emphasises, as a result of spiritual aspects and people's religious sensitivity increasing with advanced age, religious sites are mostly visited by elderly tourists. This means that while culture-oriented travel is becoming prevalent for young tourists, the preference for religious destinations is not as high. Furthermore, the fact that motivations regarding religious destinations become preferences of a non-spiritual nature rather than that of spiritual nature can be an explanation for this state of affairs (Jiang *et al.*, 2018; Irimias *et al.*, 2016; Bilim &

Düzgüner, 2015). According to Irimias *et al.*'s (2016) research results, young tourists' interest in religious attractions is lower in comparison to those of elderly tourists. While elderly tourists are willing to show the historic and religious value of religious sites to family members, young tourists' gravitation to these places is lower. According to another finding in the study, elderly tourists have higher tendency to support religious sites through expenditure at the location. Demeter and Bracutu (2014) indicate that the religious based experiential activities of young people through work and travel organisations and corresponding cultural experiences are important.

Cultural based characteristics and spiritual (inner) based manners are strongly associated with young tourist preferences and behavioural intentions (Li *et al.*, 2006; Demeter & Bracutu, 2014; Irimias *et al.*, 2016). Chiu *et al.* (2015) examine young Malaysians' travel behaviours. Their study focuses on domestic Muslim tourists and is closely related to this study. As seen in previous studies, they emphasise that historical and cultural destinations are the most preferred destinations for young Muslim Malaysian tourists. Cavagnaro *et al.* (2018) mention that young tourists are motivated, in part or in full, by a desire to experience other cultures, build life experiences and/or benefit from formal and informal learning opportunities. According to research, experiencing new cultures and people is highly important for young tourists. Related to religious and spiritual motivations and destination preferences, Staffieri and Cavagnaro (2018) also note the importance of cultural and personal based motivations, like advancing education, cultural exchange, socialisation, openness to new experiences, developing fundamental principles, (re)creating one's own personality, growing life skills, and experiencing individual transformation. Reflecting on these studies, it is not easy to determine and discriminate the religious motivations and tendencies of young tourists. At the same time, their motivations focus on cultural preferences, desire to learn about different societies, and developing personal principles which could inherently be associated with young tourists' religious tourism activities.

There are not many studies on the interest in and propensity for young tourists to visit religious destinations. The ones that are available point to cultural and social aspects as the top concepts. Buffa (2015) emphasises the importance for studies to be conducted with young tourists and especially for efforts to raise their

consciousness with regard to tourism and sustainability. Accordingly, it should be possible to direct the consumption behaviours of young tourists. It is proposed that young tourists directed in the right way will make increased contributions to sustainability in the future. Accordingly, encouraging young tourists to visit religious destinations should be taken into consideration in terms of protecting and maintaining these areas. In Pizam *et al.*'s (2004) examination of tourist motivations by age group, the willingness of young people to participate in art activities, and religious travel and visitations are at the lowest level. From this aspect, young peoples' religious attitudes, behaviours, motivations, perceptions, and visitation intentions at religious destinations are observed to be low. However, as stated, very few studies have been conducted on the consumption dimensions of young tourists.

Turkey, Konya, and Religious Tourism

Turkey is a sought after tourism destination. According to WTO (2020) data (before the COVID-19 pandemic), globally, Turkey was in sixth place in 2019 with 51.7 million arrivals and had a 12% increase from 2018. Turkey's focus has been on mass tourism (sea-sand-sun) for many decades. However, recent years show that Turkey has begun to offer alternative products and tourism types, including health, culture, and education (Duman & Tosun, 2010; Okumus *et al.*, 2012; Egresi, 2016). The southern and western destinations commonly have coastal tourism (Kusadası, Antalya, Alanya, Bodrum). The north Black Sea coast is based on eco-tourism and rural tourism. The central part of Turkey and the Marmara region have culture based tourism destinations. Istanbul, the Capadocia region, and Konya, among others are famous for their cultural assets. However, many coastal areas also have cultural and historical value (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2021). In a comparative study, Baloğlu and Mangaloğlu (2001) determined the basics of Turkish tourism destination image as:

interesting cultural attractions, interesting historical attractions, good value for money, beautiful scenery and natural attractions, appealing local food (cuisine), and others.

Antalya and Istanbul are the best known in the international tourism market. Antalya is mainly a coastal tourism destination and cultural tourism is also very popular. Istanbul is a cultural and historical centre merging both eastern and western culture (Demir & Gozgor, 2017). In

Figure 1: Mevlâna Museum in Konya

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mausoleo_Mevlana.jpg

relation to religious tourism potential, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (2021) determines some Christian religious destination in Turkey, such as Hatay (Antiochia and St. Pierre church), Mersin and Tarsus (St. Paul Museum), Izmir and Selçuk (House of the Virgin Mary), and Nevşehir and Capadocia to be important. Also, many valuable Islamic attractions are located parts of Turkey, mainly tombs, mosques, madrasa, and other religious assets. Konya, Istanbul, Ankara are famous for their Islamic attractions.

Despite the rich religious potential in Turkey, there are limited studies on religious tourism, especially lacking are those which consider young tourists and students. The studies that are available are not about specific approaches to religion, religious motivations, or young tourists. Many of them are about cultural tourism, but not specifically about religious tourism (Okumus *et al.*, 2012; TURSAB, 2015; Karataş & Altun, 2020). According to a TURSAB (Association of Turkish Travel Agencies) (2016) report, young Turkish tourists comprise 25%

of domestic tourism. Nature based (camping, outdoor sports, etc.) and educational travel are very popular for young tourists. Sports tourism, festival travel, and volunteer tourism movements are other alternative types of travel preferred by young tourists (TURSAB, 2016; Karataş & Altun, 2020).

Konya

The province of Konya has a large potential for religious tourism. The god and goddess figures revealed during the Çatalhöyük (listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site) excavations show that religion in the area began prior to monotheistic religions in the province of Konya. The excavations also revealed that in the first age, civilizations were established in Konya and its vicinity, and that the disciples took refuge in the Konya area in order to spread Christianity and were supported in this area. The Turkish peoples' acceptance of Islam and the presence of Turkish states in the region played an important role in Konya becoming Muslim. The Selçuk Empire was a Muslim

Figure 2: The former Greek Orthodox church of Archangelos Michael in Sille near Konya

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sille,_Konya#/media/File:Agia_Eleni_Sille.jpg

state and allowed Islam to spread rapidly in Konya. Mevlana Celaleddini Rumi (known to the western world as ‘Rumi’) was a very impressive Muslim philosopher and poet with universal spiritual messages. He lived in the province of Konya and served Islam which caused Konya to gain the position of a religious-focused city. The tombs of Selçuk Sultans, Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, Shams Tabrizi, and Nasreddin Hodja are in the province of Konya and are important places for Muslims and international tourists. The Mevlana Museum (tomb) is the most important tourism site in Konya (Figure 1). According to data from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (2020), the museum is one of the most visited museums in Turkey. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the museum was visited by 3.4 million tourists annually. The latest data from 2021 sets the number of visitors at nearly one million (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2021). The whirling dervish (Mevlevi) ceremony known as a *Sema*, is a devotional ritual for Sufis of the Mevlevi order. This is another important religious attraction in Konya. It was inscribed in 2008 on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Whirling is a form of prayer and meditation that dervishes believe

brings them closer to God. The commemoration of Seb-i Arus, Mevlana, and cultural events related to the dervishes are organised between December 7 and 17 every year. Based on the latest indicators before the pandemic in 2019, nearly 200,000 tourists visited Konya and attended a *Sema* ceremony during this time (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2020).

The village of Sille is another historic, touristic, and religious place in Konya. Aya Eleni Church (dated to the early Christian period - Figure 2) attracts many local and international tourists along with other cultural attractions, including an old mosque, a bridge, and authentic local architecture. There are no formal statistics about the number of tourist visits to Sille, because there is no entrance fee to provide information about the number of visitors. But, there are very many visits by both locals and domestic tourists (Tapur, 2009). In the period before the pandemic, many foreign tour operators included Sille in their itineraries and at the present time Sille still attracts international tourists.

Konya is a crossroads for cultural tourism tours, including those which are exploring religious destinations. For secular foreign and local cultural tourists, the line between Ankara, Capadocia, Konya, and Antalya is very popular and many tour operators use this route in their cultural tours.

However, there are no exact research articles or formal data about young tourists' religious travels in Turkey in general and specifically in Konya. TURSAB (2015; 2016) has published reports about religious tourism and youth tourism separately. In the reports, there is no explanation of young tourists' religious based travel. Karataş and Altun (2020) investigated young tourists' preferences and behavioural intentions in Istanbul, Turkey. They emphasise that young tourists' cultural preferences were high, but they didn't point to any specific religious motivations or preferences. Similarly, Polat (2017) notes that young travellers are focused on culture, entertainment, and adventure. But none of these studies go into further detail on culture based preferences. In Konya and in the whole of Turkey, young tourists' movements and cultural motivations can be used as a reference for religious motivations, which forms a part of culture based preferences or motivations. This is important since most of the sparse studies about young tourists lack details about the religious elements of their travel.

Research Method

This study aims to determine the intentions of young people regarding religious tourism and their opinions about the consumption dimensions of their travel preferences. The research methodology is described as exploratory research and aims to test relationships between variables and to explain the studied phenomena (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2008). Relational surveys are based on a quantitative data collection methodology, and following this approach, a self-reply questionnaire form was designed as the data collection tool. The questionnaire has four parts. The first part asks demographic questions. The second part included three descriptive questions about tourists' tour preferences, spending, and shopping items. The third part deploys three measurement scales, using five-point Likert type scales where participants strongly disagree (1) up to strongly agree (5), about attitudes and related behaviours in religious tourism - with 11 items (Irimias *et al.*, 2016); motivations for traveling to a destination with 22 items, including aspects of both 'internal' and

'external' motivations (Hsu *et al.*, 2009), and; tourists' perceptions about a destination with 16 items (two items are about behavioural intentions, including 'intention to return' and 'intention to return to other religious destinations') (Murphy *et al.*, 2000). These scales were specifically adapted to the research area.

For the visitor population, it was not possible to obtain a probability sampling method because of an availability problem for a complete sample. Young domestic tourists, with an age range from 18 to 25 years old, visiting Konya within the scope of cultural tourism were selected as the sample. A target sample of n=387 was identified, using a convenient sampling method, and considering the type of analysis that was to be undertaken, a minimum sample of 200 was deemed sufficient (De Vaus, 2002). Although Konya has international tourism potential, the study was conducted with young domestic tourists because of the different religious approaches of young travellers and their difficulties with religious travel or destination description. The questionnaire was given to young tourist over a four week period during a popular time of the year that included December 7-17 Mevlana (Rumi) Week Events. Nearly 200,000 tourists attend these events every year and this period is the peak season for this destination. Also, the Mevlana (Rumi) Museum is the second most popular museum in Turkey with 3,464,155 visitors in 2019 (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2020).

The evaluation was performed using a statistical package program. Frequency analysis was used as descriptive analysis to show the respondents' demographic indicators, religious attitudes, travel preferences, and motivations about religious destinations. Following this, a correlation analysis was processed to examine the relationships between the three main variables. Regression analysis was then performed as an explanatory analysis to examine the effects of religious attitudes and behaviours on other variables. Then, a simple content analysis was undertaken for the open-ended question (Patton, 2002).

Before going to the main analysis, the research data set was first checked for distribution, outliers, and extreme values. Skewness and kurtosis results were in the accepted range, (-1 to 1) supporting the nearly normal distribution of data (Hair *et al.*, 1995). Next the three scales (with sub-scales) were examined with a reliability test to check for internal consistency and usefulness of the scale items. According to the test results, Cronbach's Alpha Value scales were fulfilled by exceeding the minimum value of

0.7 (Hair *et al.*, 1995); this included attitudes and related behaviours in religious tourism at 0.95, travel motivation to the destination at 0.95, and tourists' destination perceptions at 0.93. Factor analysis was performed to evaluate the validity of the scales and to underline the structure of the study scales (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). Because the motivation and perception scales had sub-dimensions, only these two scales were tested by factor analysis and both scales had enough extracted values compared to the original scale dimensions.

Findings and Discussion

Holiday type and religious destinations

In the study findings, first, the demographic distribution examined the types of tours that are being participated in, the effects of religious approaches to their preferences, and the motivations for and perceptions of visiting religious destinations were measured.

The participants' demographic distribution is shown in Table 1. While the gender distribution is well balanced, the marital status of the participants is mainly 'single', as expected. Educational background is observed to be most at the level of university graduate. The age was not evaluated since only tourists between the ages of 18-25 were surveyed in the study.

The participants were asked which types of tours they mostly participated in during their travels and the

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	200	51.7
Female	187	48.3
Marital Status		
Married	147	38.0
Single	240	62.0
Level of Education		
Primary Education	53	13.7
Secondary Education	116	30.0
Bachelor level	187	48.3
Postgraduate	31	8.0

following were the suggested answers: city and culture tours, religion centred tours, entertainment, shopping tours, and other options. They were told they could make more than one choice. In the results, the most preferred option was entertainment based tours (74.2%), the second was religion based tours (71.3%), which was followed by city and culture tours (65.1%), and shopping tours (39%), respectively. This outcome shows that although young people selected religious destinations in their current trip, they prefer entertainment-based tours to a higher extent. The result is as expected due to the age range under investigation. However, with the second most preferred option being religion centred tours, it

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
	1-strongly disagree / 5-strongly agree					
The visitation of one or more religious site generally comprises a part of our journey	4.7	2.3	0.8	27.4	64.9	4.45
I consider religious places primarily for architectural and historical value	4.4	2.3	1.3	37.2	54.8	4.35
I prefer to visit religious sites when I travel abroad	4.4	2.3	1.8	33.6	57.9	4.38
I usually travel to destinations where I can visit religious attractions	4.4	2.3	-	33.3	59.9	4.42
Through a donation, I support religious places that I visit as a tourist	4.4	2.3	0.8	25.1	67.4	4.48
When traveling I am interested in visiting other (not belong to my religion) religious sites as well	4.4	2.3	3.1	55.6	34.6	4.13
I usually buy some souvenirs when attending religious events or visiting a sacred site	8.5	4.9	1.3	32.0	53.2	4.17
I consider it important that my family and friends know the significant historical places of religion.	4.4	2.6	19	37	37	3.99

can be stated that there is a high level of motivation for participation in these types of tours.

Another question asked about spending during touristic trips. Food and beverage, entertainment, guided tours, and shopping alternatives were proposed. Respondents reflected their choices in order; entertainment (32%), guided tours (30%), food and beverage (20.2%), and shopping (17.8%). This result supports the previous question's result. It can be said that young tourist preferences are generally for entertainment based alternatives. Although the study was performed at a religious site and religious based activities are more popular at this site, young tourist preferences focus on the more dynamic parts. According to Prayag and Hosany's (2014) findings about young tourist travel motivations, shopping is an important motivation for potential young outbound UAE tourists and is supported by push (internal) motivational factors as well.

Table 2, contains propositions regarding participant attitude and behaviour related to visiting religious destinations and the frequency distributions of the responses are given. According to these results, the participants identified the financial support option to the highest level, they also state that they generally prefer visiting religious destinations in their travel. In general, positive responses are seen for religiously oriented motivations. The values for 'I consider it important that my family and friends know the significant historical places of religious sites' is lower than others. As a general observation, young tourists' attitudes and related behaviours about religious tourism are very positive and this propensity to visit and engage with religious sites shows the importance of young tourists' perceptions.

Examining the tourist's motivations for traveling to Konya, the results can be evaluated in two ways, focusing on either internal or external motivation factors based on related scales. According to the analysis results, respondent's internal physiological and physical

motivations are higher than other motivational factors (social interaction, seeking, and exploration) with mean scores between 4.14 (health and fitness) to 4.53 (rest and relaxation). The respondent's external tangible and intangible motivations are under 3.00 (2.47 for personal safety and 2.63 for culture and historical resources). This means that respondents' internal motivational choices are stronger than external factors. It can be inferred that being at a religious site can be explained by internal factors. Interestingly, this is despite including image, cultural resources and shopping choice factors as external motivational values - this is contrary to our initial expectations. On the one hand, the most important motivational factor was 'rest and relaxation' (with related high scores for 'escape' and 'self-actualisation'), this explains that religious sites offer inner opportunities for active young travellers.

According to these analyses, based on Rumi philosophy, visiting the Museum (tomb), and attending the Sema ceremony, young tourists' religious motivations are very high. With entertainment motivations, visiting religious sites (in this study, Rumi's tomb) and probably religious based inner, psychological (rest and relaxation, escape, and self-actualisation) motivations are the strongest part of young tourists' reason to travel to Konya. As stated earlier, culture based destinations are very popular for young tourists. From this viewpoint, religious sites are a very important part of their preferences. The shrine of Rumi and his religious characteristics are also instructive for them.

Perceptions and behaviour

Young tourists' perceptions of Konya are evaluated in the following four sub-dimensions:

- environment,
- infrastructure,
- quality and
- value.

Additionally, behavioural intention variables based on perception are used to measure preferences about religious destinations in this section. The results show that except for the 'value' dimension, the other dimensions have no positive perceptions. 'Environment' mean scores are around 2.60. 'Infrastructure' scores range between 2.44 to 2.60. 'Quality' scores are also around 2.60. Despite not being a strong indicator, the 'value' dimension has

Table 3: Correlation Analysis Results

	MOT	PER	B. Intention
Attitude / behavior in religious tourism	.930	.881	.746
Motivations		.952	.708
Perceptions			.697

Table 4: Regression Analysis of Research Variables on Behavioral Intention

	Attitudes and Behaviors		Motivation		Destination Perception	
	R ²	P	R ²	P	R ²	P
Behavioral Intention	0.746	0.00	0.708	0.00	0.697	0.00

a mean score of 3.12, being the only one reaching over 3.00. Murphy *et al.* (2000) use two behavioural intention items in their perception scales. Respondents' answers about intention are very high (mean: 4.00). According to the general evaluation, young tourists' perceptual viewpoints do not show distinctive and strong characteristics. But, probably because of their economic conditions, relatively speaking, the value perception is slightly different than other factors.

Before evaluating the explanatory analysis, correlation analysis was performed to find out about the relationships between the concepts

- Attitudes and Behaviours
- Motivation
- Destination Perception

The results show that there are very high and strong relationships between all concepts. The motivation and perception relationship has the highest value. This is followed by attitudes / behaviours in religious tourism and travel motivation; attitudes / behaviours in religious tourism and destination perception; behavioural intention and attitude, and; motivation and perception. Behavioural intention has lower relationships compared to the other three (attitude, motivation, perception).

To explain the relationships in detail, regression analysis was performed. The variable 'attitudes and related behaviour in religious tourism' is defined as an independent variable because some researchers (Vukonic, 1996; Shackley, 2001; Olsen & Timothy, 2006; Poria *et al.*, 2006; Li *et al.*, 2006; Haque *et al.*, 2011; Taheri, 2016) emphasise that travellers' religious feelings or approaches to religious sites drive their behavioural outputs and nearly all types of preferences. The 'motivation' and 'perception' variables and sub-dimensions of these variables were tested as the dependants. According to the general results of the regression analysis, 'attitudes and related behaviour in religious tourism' have an important and meaningful ($p \leq 0.05$ - Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012) effect on motivation and perception. The R Square values of the regression analysis range from 0.49

to 0.88. 'Attitudes and related behaviour' has a stronger effect on motivation (0.86) than 'perception' (0.77), supporting the correlation analysis results. In the sub-dimensions' differences, 'attitudes and related behaviour' have stronger effects on internal motivations (0.88) than external motivations (0.65). According to Irimias *et al.* (2016), motivations for traveling to sacred sites and religious tourism are constructed on personal fulfilment, feelings about prayer, and vows related to internal roots. Also, Olsen and Timothy (2006) define religious travel as an internal journey of self-change and a search for personal authenticity. The impacts of modern life push people to religious sites for personal improvement and internal performance by positively affecting their internal motivations (Ramirez & Potillo, 2020). Findings from Li *et al.* (2006) about young religious travellers' motivations show that the internal phrases, 'to be close to the truth', 'to have personal communion with God', 'to gain inner peace', and 'to have spiritual renewal' are their main goals.

According to the test for 'attitudes and related behaviour for religious tourism' effects on perceptual dimensions, 'value perception' has the highest value (0.74) and is followed by environment (0.63), infrastructure (0.58), and quality (0.49). Similar to these results, Bicikova (2014) and Han *et al.* (2017) emphasise that money issues are the most influential factors in young tourists' travel movements while physical environment also an important factor. A large portion of the young population (18-25 years old) are either completing their education or are newly graduated, so it can be said that most young tourists have limited economic freedom and naturally will care about money issues. Normally, with sensitivity to economic issues, young tourists' quality perceptions will be relatively lower.

Another important variable tested is 'behavioural intention'. Behavioural intention is one of the most analysed issues in tourism studies and is based on loyalty. In this study, behavioural intention is evaluated as intention to re-visit a destination and intention to visit other religious destinations after this experience. The effects of the research variables (attitude and related

behaviour in religious tourism, motivation, destination perceptions) on behavioural intention was analysed with regression analysis (see Table 4). According to the results, all three main variables have a strong effect on behavioural intention. 'Attitudes and related behaviour in religious tourism' has the highest effect, then 'motivation', followed by 'destination perception.' This means that 'attitudes and behavioural approaches to religious tourism' cause more intentions to re-visit. Based on a detailed separate analysis of motivations, internal factors have a higher effect ($R^2: 0.719 - P: 0.00$) compared to external factors ($R^2: 0.608 - P: 0.00$). This result is supported by the previous findings about attitude and behavioural effects on motivations.

The internal factors of young tourists' motivations are more dominant than external factors. For both motivation and behavioural intentions, focusing on religious beliefs and attitudes is associated with emotional connection, which is accepted as a strong inner source or intrinsic desire (Bicikova, 2014; Taheri, 2016).

Conclusion

This study uses both descriptive and explanatory structures to explore young tourists' religious destination visits. As emphasised in the literature, in addition to young tourists' potential being quite high, their interests gravitate towards educational and cultural travel. However, as noted in the starting point of the study, literature on young tourists' gravitation towards religious tourism within cultural tourism is at a relatively low level. In this study, explanatory data were sought in order to increase understanding of young people's visitations to religious destinations. However, the literature does not examine this closely and contains very few relevant studies.

It was emphasised, not only internationally, but also at a national level, that there are not enough studies which examine young tourists' religious tourism motivations and related behaviour. This study was performed with young domestic tourists and the findings maybe applicable to young international tourists as well, but it is not easy to generalise different religious beliefs and approaches. However, it is possible that the results may be valid for international tourists because current global developments cause more similarity among people, especially young technology users. According to the results, young tourists' religious tourism and

related religious based motivations are relatively high. However, on the other hand, their tour preferences are shaped by entertainment based activities. The literature supports this idea, but it is not easy to define what kind of entertainment is preferred.

Different dimensions are addressed in the field study results. In general, the youth participants prefer entertainment focused tours. Religious sentiments are clearly evident in their travel in different ways, and they have retreats and rest as their most pressing motivations. However, a contradiction emerged that their desire to participate in entertainment-oriented tours is high, but their motivations in Konya transform into that of retreat and rest. In the interpretation, we emphasised that young people, who are seeking entertainment in general, focus more on internal and spiritual serenity motivations in their visits to religious destinations. Although research participants are domestic tourists, who are supposed to have the same cultural roots, cultural motivations based on Rumi's creations, are very high. This approach is associated with their internal motivations. Also, being from same religious background can influence this result. As some studies have pointed out, the educational side and especially the internal or self conditions are affected by the name of Rumi based on philosophical dimensions. Rumi is not only a worldwide philosopher, but also a very attractive person for Muslim with his religious messages. So, it is not surprising about the religious motivations of young domestic tourists when visiting Konya.

Perceptual dimensions provide important points as well. The literature and statistical indicators say that young tourists have a high sensitivity toward monetary and environmental issues. These two issues are associated with attitude and behavioural aspects, as well as motivational. A youth's environmental sense also plays an important part. The study shows that religious based preferences support environmental behaviour. This means that young religious tourists follow sustainable viewpoints, probably contrary to classical (sea-sand-sun) tourism activities.

Suggestions

Based on these results, some suggestions can be developed. First, although young tourists are in a religious and cultural destination generally accepted as a quiet place, additional entertainment activities should be added to satisfy them. WYSE (2016) and TURSAB (2015) reports emphasise that local cultural activities are very popular for young tourists. As a part of these activities, some entertainment, such as local music shows, gastronomy based activities or food shows, folk dance shows, and traditional shopping tours can be organised. Additionally, camping is another alternative for entertaining young tourist. Organising camping areas to facilitate socialising with local people can provide both a cultural and entertainment based atmosphere. These kinds of cultural based entertainment activities can be harmonised and augmented with religious activities that consider the locals' cultural and religious sensibility. Besides entertainment based motivations, as an internal motivation, self-actualisation and rest (the spiritual part) should be considered in a religious destination as well. It is important that this kind of entertainment should not overreach the young tourists' religious or cultural motivations. With local cultural entertainment it can be best to bear in mind religious based motivations.

Second, these results can be related to marketing. Local authorities should evaluate the main roots of attitudes, behaviours, motivation, perception, and preferences and then should build marketing strategies based on entertainment and internal motivations.

Third, young tourists' consumption tendency is lower because of economic conditions but, there is a good demand for sustainability based travel. Authorities should seek to attract more young tourists.

A final suggestion is that while demand from youths for religious tourism is seen to be lower and young tourists have relatively more reluctance toward religious destinations, tourism researchers should consider new directions for this segment, which forms the foundations for future generations.

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