



DETERMINING THE FACTORS INFLUENCING TOURIST SOUVENIR EXPENDITURE THE CASE OF TURKEY

Onur Kızılcık^a , Kemal Birdir^b 

^a Gumushane University (Turkey), Vocational School of Social Sciences; <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2339-8720>;
e-mail: onur.kizilcik@gumushane.edu.tr

^b Mersin University (Turkey), Tourism Faculty; <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1353-3618>; e-mail: kemalbirdir@mersin.edu.tr

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ABSTRACT

In this study, information will be explored that will contribute to increasing tourism income in destinations with low tourist expenditure per person. For this purpose, the souvenir expenditure of tourists in Turkey is examined. Souvenir stores in Sultanahmet and the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul were investigated using a qualitative case study research design. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 souvenir sellers and 778 online comments of tourists shopping in souvenir stores were analyzed by netnography. As a result of the research, it has been determined that the efforts made to transform products based on the natural, historical and cultural richness of Turkey into brands, and thus increase local product diversity, play a critical role in increasing souvenir expenditure. On the other hand, the importance of the selection of high spending tourists as the target market and increasing the employment of qualified workers in the tourism sector has emerged.

KEYWORDS

souvenirs, shopping, tourism income, destination management, Turkey

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ten percent of the world's GDP is provided by the tourism sector. It constitutes the third largest export category, with 30% of service exports. Worldwide, 1460 million tourists traveled internationally in 2019, and 1481 billion dollars were spent on these trips (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2020). These numbers reveal the magnitude of the economic dimension of tourism and how important it is for the world economy. Since tourism is an expenditure-driven economic activity, tourist expenditure needs to be extensively studied and understood (Wang

& Davidson, 2010). According to Pulido-Fernandez et al. (2019), tourist expenditure is a determining factor in the economic viability of tourism in a destination. Turkey ranked 10th in 2016, 8th in 2017 and 6th in 2018 in the list of countries hosting the most international tourists. However, tourist expenditure per person in the other top ten countries is higher than the average for Turkey. For example, according to UNWTO data, the average expenditure per international tourist in 2018 was \$2675 in the USA, \$1650 in Thailand, \$1450 in the UK, \$1100 in Germany, \$900 in Spain, \$800 in Italy and \$750 in France. In Turkey, it was approximately \$550 (UNWTO, 2019). In addition, the primary effort of developed destinations

is to encourage high-spending tourists to travel (Alegre et al., 2011). According to Pulido-Fernandez et al. (2016), a tourism policy suitable for sustainable tourism should include daily expenditure per tourist as a marketing objective, rather than trying to get the maximum number of tourists. The results from this study will facilitate the implementation of tourism strategies aimed at achieving an increase in per person expenditure.

Fu et al. (2018) stated that postmodernism, which emerged as an important 20th century movement in Western societies, and spread to other parts of the world with globalization, changed tourist behavior in many ways. In this context, postmodern tourists prefer a more flexible and personalized experience, take shorter trips and are more interested in local experiences. Souvenir purchases made with experiential consumption have become a valuable part of postmodern tourism (Fu et al., 2018). Today, shopping while traveling for leisure is not seen as a purely incidental activity. Shopping represents the main motivation (or one of the main motivations) for millions of tourists (UNWTO, 2014). Souvenirs enable people to collect positive memories from their travel experiences. Many tourists think that a trip is not complete if they do not buy souvenirs (Sthapit & Björk, 2019). On the other hand, souvenirs contribute to the development of local economies and represent the tourism image of the destination. They can raise awareness of a destination's attractiveness, landscape and history (Dumbrovská & Fialová, 2020).

Considering the importance of souvenirs for tourist destinations and tourists, research on souvenirs is increasing. Previous studies have made significant contributions to the understanding of the role of souvenir shopping on consumer behavior in travel and tourism (Anderson & Littrell, 1996; Lin & Wang, 2012; Park, 2000; Yu & Littrell, 2005). The literature shows that research on souvenirs in different regions of the world mostly focuses on authenticity (Asplet & Cooper, 2000; Chang et al., 2012; Elomba & Yun, 2018; Xie et al., 2012). Apart from authenticity, souvenir shopping has been investigated from various perspectives. In this context, research has been conducted on various topics such as travel motivation (Swanson & Horridge, 2006), tourist satisfaction (Suhartanto, 2016; Vega-Vazquez et al., 2017), tourist attitudes and behaviors (Swanson & Timothy, 2012), tourist experiences (Fangxuan & Ryan, 2018; Sthapit et al., 2018), destination image (Wong & Cheng, 2014), and the perceived value of souvenirs (Paraskevaidis & Andriotis, 2015). On the other hand, no research has been found on the factors affecting the increase in souvenir expenditure of international tourists at destinations (especially developing). In this study, why souvenir expenditure is low in Turkey has been investigated, and what tourism policy makers and souvenir sellers can do to increase this. In this context, souvenir stores in the Sultanahmet and the Grand Bazaar,

two of the most important tourist sites of Istanbul (UNWTO, 2014) were included in the research within the framework of a qualitative case study research method. Many studies have been carried out with quantitative methods in the literature on souvenirs in tourism, and considering this, the value of qualitative research has been emphasized (Sthapit & Björk, 2019; Vega-Vazquez et al., 2017).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. THE CONCEPT AND SCOPE OF TOURIST SOUVENIRS

Souvenir comes from the Latin word 'subvenire' meaning to 'come to mind' (Elomba & Yun, 2018). Souvenirs are defined as "tangible products that remind tourists of their travel experiences and are symbols of cultural interaction" (Fangxuan & Ryan, 2018, p. 143). Souvenirs consist of a wide variety of products usually with the name of the tourist city or region and offered for sale by local or travelling sellers, such as key chains, pen holders, designer clothes (e.g. 'I Love Istanbul' t-shirts), jewelry, scarves and handbags (Anastasiadou & Vettese, 2019). On the other hand, souvenirs also include items that are not always traded but still remind travelers of their experience. A stamp in a passport or visa, an account receipt from a memorable restaurant, or a museum entrance ticket are often kept as memories of a unique place and time (Swanson & Timothy, 2012). Swanson and Timothy (2012) classified souvenirs under four categories: (a) objects with logos that represent visitors' feelings about the destination; (b) functional household items such as kitchen utensils, rugs or clothing; (c) food products that evoke nostalgic feelings; and (d) souvenirs that represent a center of faith or religious symbol. In a study conducted in Macau, it was determined that tourists were mostly interested in local food products, handicraft items and collectibles, while antique items, toys and artistic or authentic clothing were chosen less (Kong & Chang, 2012).

Apart from souvenir stores, souvenirs can be sold in many different areas such as airports, bus stations, railway stations, museums and galleries, antique stores and stands set up in various places. Deciding what kinds of item to sell in souvenir stores is a costly and lengthy process. There are also environmental costs associated with the production, transportation and storage of souvenirs (Anastasiadou & Vettese, 2019).

2.2. SOUVENIR SHOPPING AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Shopping is one of the most common travel activities (Kong & Chang, 2012) and an extremely important leisure activity (Collins-Kreiner & Zins, 2011). The need

and desire to shop can be a motivation for tourist travel, just like the need or desire to sunbathe. Although many tourists do not travel for shopping purposes, they shop while traveling and their shopping decisions affect their travel planning (Sthapit & Björk, 2019). Tourists shop during their trips because they need to bring back something from the time or place they experienced during their vacation or to keep a tangible memory (Li & Cai, 2008; Vega-Vazquez et al., 2017). This type of buying behavior can be defined as ‘experience intensification’ (Sthapit & Björk, 2019). Apart from saving their experiences, tourists also shop for souvenirs as gifts for their relatives and friends. In a study conducted on Chinese tourists, the desire to give gifts to relatives and friends was determined as an effective motivation factor on the shopping behavior of tourists (Fangxuan & Ryan, 2018). Similarly, Littrell et al. (1993) found that the vast majority of US tourists (about 70%) purchase souvenirs for family and friends during a trip. Women, honeymooners, those who have a longer than average stay, smaller groups or those who travel individually are among tourists who spend highly during their holidays (Anderson & Littrell, 1996; Littrell et al., 1993; Mok & Iverson, 2000).

Souvenirs enable people to take positive memories from their trips and can strengthen the cultural identity of tourist attractions (Deng et al., 2021). These are events, destinations or features that attract visitors from near and far. An attraction should be interesting and enjoyable enough to motivate people to travel to experience it. For example, the Louvre Museum (Paris) may satisfy the needs of art enthusiasts, while a trip to Hawaii can be satisfying for those who enjoy beaches, warm climates and cultural experiences. If the shopping opportunity can motivate people to travel by satisfying needs and giving pleasure, then it can be considered a tourist attraction (Timothy & Butler, 1995). Souvenir shopping is an integral component of a tourist’s travel experience and can represent a significant proportion of overall travel spending (Kong & Chang, 2012). Tourists’ shopping expenditure constitutes approximately 33% of total travel expenditure (Littrell et al., 1994). For example, in a study conducted in the USA in 1990, it was found that annual shopping expenditure exceeded transportation and accommodation, and constituted 31% of total holiday expenditure (Anderson & Littrell, 1996). Tourist shopping has become an important source of income for countries such as Australia, Hong Kong (almost half of total income from tourism) and Thailand (Heung & Cheng, 2000; Li & Cai, 2008). In Turkey, it has been estimated that total shopping revenue in recent years (2014–2020) constitutes an average of 16% of total tourism income. On the other hand, the share of ‘souvenir expenditure’ in the total holiday expenditure of tourists visiting Turkey in recent years has not

exceeded 5%. The per person souvenir expenditure of international tourists in Turkey varies between \$26–46 on average (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yatırım ve İşletmeler Genel Müdürlüğü, n.d.). Pulido-Fernandez et al. (2016), in their study on a sample of tourists participating in cultural events in Spain, found that tourists spend an average of €130 per day on local handicraft products.

It will be beneficial to focus on the cultural and historical characteristics of souvenirs in order to increase the souvenir shopping expenditure of tourists (Swanson & Horridge, 2006). As a matter of fact, uniqueness and authenticity are considered key features for such shopping (Sthapit et al., 2018). The local products that tourists buy as souvenirs are actually imitations of original products produced and sold in bulk by non-native people. This practice causes foreigners to take ownership of cultural heritage products in an inauthentic way by imitating them. It also creates financial leakage, limiting the economic benefits that indigenous groups can derive from the products of their culture (Guttentag, 2009).

2.3. PREVIOUS STUDIES ON SOUVENIR SHOPPING

The role of tourist shopping in tourism research has consistently been underestimated, as evidenced by the scant research on tourist shopping (Kong & Chang, 2012). Shopping for tourist souvenirs is a current research topic (Vega-Vazquez et al., 2017). In recent years, the number of studies on souvenir shopping has increased and the topics of previous research on tourist souvenir shopping are summarized in Table 1. As seen in the table, researchers mostly examine tourists’ attitudes and behaviors and their perceptions of authenticity. On the other hand, almost all the studies were carried out only on a tourist sample. This strengthens the importance of this study which was carried on souvenir sellers.

Table 1. Previous research on souvenir shopping

Researchers	Research topics
Swanson and Timothy (2012); Li and Cai (2008); Collins-Kreiner and Zins (2011); Anastasiadou and Vettese (2019); Park (2000); Oh et al. (2004); Swanson and Horridge (2006); Anderson and Littrell (1996); Birdir and Birdir (2020)	Attitudes and behaviors of tourists towards souvenirs
Soukhathammavong and Park (2019); Elomba and Yun (2018); Brida et al. (2013); Dumbrovska and Fialova (2020); Chang et al. (2012); Trinh et al. (2014); Deng et al. (2021); Lin and Wang (2012)	Authenticity perceptions of tourists and sellers towards souvenirs

Table 1 (cont.)

Researchers	Research topics
Ho et al. (2021); Lin (2017); Littrell et al. (1993); Asplet and Cooper (2000); Lin and Wang (2012); Akyürek and Zeybek (2018)	Souvenirs of a particular type (e.g. food items, handicrafts)
Fangxuan and Ryan (2018); Sthapit et al. (2018); Bojanic (2011); Chang (2014); Sthapit and Björk (2019)	Souvenirs and tourist experiences
Shtudiner et al. (2019); Paraskevaidis and Andriotis (2015); Wei (2018)	Souvenirs and tourist value perception
Kong and Chang (2012); Lacher and Nepal (2011)	Souvenirs and their economic effects
Bynum Boley et al. (2013); Anastasiadou and Vettese (2019)	Souvenirs, technology and social media relationship
Suhartanto (2016); Chang (2014)	Souvenirs and tourist satisfaction
Swanson and Horridge (2006)	Souvenirs and tourist motivations
Wong and Cheng (2014)	Souvenirs and destination image

Source: authors.

Souvenirs and authenticity are the most studied subjects in the current literature. Authentic souvenirs refer to objects based on culture, heritage, destination identity and the uniqueness of certain events or activities in a particular destination, thereby becoming an important sign of a destination's ethnicity or cultural identity (Soukhathammavong & Park, 2019). In a study on the authenticity of cultural motifs in clothing souvenir purchases in New Zealand (Asplet & Cooper, 2000), the importance of authenticity was supported. In another study conducted in Italy on the effect of authenticity-perception for shopping expenditure at cultural events (Brida et al., 2013), tourists were more likely to spend on authentic products. Researchers have confirmed that souvenir authenticity can positively affect tourists' perceived value and behavioral intention in the context of experiential consumption (Deng et al., 2021).

In some studies on souvenirs in the tourism literature, the concept of value has been investigated. In this context, as a result of a study on tourists in Greece (Paraskevaidis & Andriotis, 2015), four different categories of values were discovered; *use value* (functionality; meeting needs and recalling experience), *exchange value* (acquisition cost, for investment; hoping to earn higher prices in the future), *sign value* (prestige; for collection of unique and original items), and *spiritual value* (sacred symbols; for strengthening religious belief). In another study

on Jewish and Christian tourists in Israel (Shtudiner et al., 2019), it was found that tourists (especially Jewish) are willing to pay more for souvenirs (endowment effect). These results show that tourists' perceptions of souvenirs are shaped not only by utility but also by meaningfulness.

In some studies on souvenirs, certain types of products were examined. In this context, as a result of a study examining the perspectives of tourists on food souvenirs (Lin, 2017), it was found that tourists buy food items as a result of three different motivation factors: (a) as a gift, (b) to preserve memories, and (c) as proof of travel. Yu and Littrell (2005) examined the factors affecting the shopping tendencies of tourists for handicraft souvenirs in the USA. Research results show that utilitarian value and shopping companion preferences have a significant impact on tourists' attitudes towards their shopping experience, thereby influencing their purchasing intentions. The findings also confirm that demographic factors such as gender, age, education and income are associated with tourists' shopping orientation (Yu & Littrell, 2005).

Another subject investigated within the scope of souvenir expenditure are the experiences of tourists. In a study conducted in Macau (Kong & Chang, 2012), it was concluded that among the four different tourist segments, namely seekers for experience, naturalness, sincerity and relaxation, the tourist segment with the highest general souvenir shopping interest were tourists seeking experience. As a result of a study on the souvenir shopping experiences of Chinese tourists in North Korea (Fangxuan & Ryan, 2018), it was determined that souvenir shopping experiences were concentrated under four categories: store features, payment methods, tour guides and souvenir sellers. On the other hand, in another study examining the effect of age and family life experiences on the shopping expenditure of Mexican tourists in the USA (Bojanic, 2011), it was found that age and marital status were not effective on shopping expenditure. However, the average expenditure of families without children is higher than those with (Bojanic, 2011).

In some studies, the relationship between souvenir items, technology and social media has been examined. For example, it has been found that tourists who share photos on social media are more likely to buy local souvenir products than tourists who do not (Bynum Boley et al., 2013). Anastasiadou and Vettese (2019) examined visitors' perceptions of 3D-printed, customizable souvenirs and their relationship with such items. While the findings support the design and customization of souvenirs using new technologies, they show that there are intellectual property and ethical challenges that need to be addressed.

According to the literature cited and discussed above, it is clear that almost all of the studies on tourist

souvenir expenditure are designed for quantitative research approaches. Therefore, in future work on tourist expenditure, a knowledge gap can be filled using more qualitative research approaches. This study, which was designed using qualitative research methods, will contribute to filling that gap.

3. METHOD

3.1. PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH

The main purpose of this research is to discover information that will contribute to increasing tourism incomes in destinations with low per person tourist expenditure. For this purpose, the souvenir expenditure of tourists in Turkey was examined, why it is low and what could be done to increase it. Thus, it is expected that the results will contribute to increasing tourism income in Turkey and other destinations. The goals of the study also reveals its importance.

Tourist shopping, local souvenir sales, contributes to the growth of local economies (Elomba & Yun, 2018) and awareness of indigenous cultures (Xie et al., 2012). Many tourists prefer local products when choosing souvenirs (Guttentag, 2009). Souvenirs reflecting local characteristics are purchased more than those imported from abroad and sold at more affordable prices (Anastasiadou & Vettese, 2019). However, most of the souvenirs sold in tourist areas were produced and imported from other countries. Items reflecting indigenous ethnic culture are rare (Chow, 2005). In Turkey, souvenirs are imported from many different countries such as Taiwan, India, Brazil and France, especially China. This policy leads to a leakage of tourism income. For example, in a study conducted in Thailand, it was found that most of the souvenirs sold were imported and these items caused a leakage in income from local goods (Lacher & Nepal, 2011). For destination management organizations, it is important to conduct such a study to increase local income by reducing these leakages.

3.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In qualitative research, there are no hypotheses; only research questions are formulated (Creswell, 2016). These questions are determined according to the research problem and objectives. The main issue in the present work is the low tourist expenditure per person in Turkey compared to competing countries (especially Mediterranean ones such as Spain and France). The share of souvenir shopping in total holiday expenditure in recent years is only 5% (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yatırım ve

İşletmeler Genel Müdürlüğü, n.d.). In this context, one main and two sub-research questions were identified and are set out below:

1. Main research question: What are the factors that can increase the souvenir expenditure of tourists visiting Turkey?
2. Sub-research question 1: What is the domestic and import ratio of souvenirs sold in souvenir stores? And which goods (domestic or imported) sold in souvenir stores provide most income?
3. Sub-research question 2: In the light of online tourist reviews, which features (product, seller and store features) stand out for increasing souvenir spending?

3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

This exploratory study was designed using a qualitative case study research design. Case studies in the field of tourism are carried out on many subjects such as demand analysis in tourism, tourism planning and development, destination image and competition, life cycles of destinations and visitor satisfaction (Xiao & Smith, 2006). A case study is an approach that is used to study phenomena over time using detailed and in-depth data collected from a limited number of systems (cases), many sources (such as observations, face-to-face interviews, documents and reports), and develops categories for describing the case (Creswell, 2007). Most souvenir expenditure in Turkey is made by international tourists in the provinces of Istanbul, Antalya and Muğla (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yatırım ve İşletmeler Genel Müdürlüğü, n.d.). This case study was limited to Istanbul. Almost half (47.6%) of the more than 250 souvenir stores in Istanbul are located in Sultanahmet ($n = 81$) and the Grand Bazaar ($n = 39$) (TripAdvisor, n.d.) and since these places are the most important tourist places (UNWTO, 2014), they were used as the research area.

3.4. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Purposive sampling was used in this study. This method was chosen because sample selection in qualitative research is usually not random, and is selected for a specific purpose (Miles & Huberman, 1994). There is no specific rule for calculating the sample size in qualitative research. In purposive sampling, it is determined by considering the research data. If the purpose is to increase knowledge, sample selection ends when no new information is obtained from the sample units (participants) (Merriam, 2009). In this study, since semi-structured interviews were conducted with souvenir sellers, sample selection was complete as soon as no new information could be obtained from the sellers. During this process, face-to-face interviews were held with 11 sellers in total, seven souvenir stores

from the Sultanahmet and four from the Grand Bazaar. Kozak (2015) states that there is no need for case studies on tens or hundreds of people or businesses at the same time. Semi-structured interviews were conducted between 14–20 September 2020 and the audio recordings obtained lasted between 4–27 minutes. Indeed, Creswell (2016) suggested researchers schedule interviews that would last no longer than 30 minutes. In order to reach more reliable data, shops selling all kinds of souvenirs were included in the sample. Souvenir shops selling only one type (e.g., those who only sell carpets & rugs, decorative lamps or only food) and

souvenir stands selling only small magnets, key chains, etc. were not included. Various jewelry items (bracelets, necklaces, rings and earrings with zultanite stones, etc.), shawls and scarfs, carpets and rugs, items with various logos (wallets, pillows, key chains, mugs, magnets, etc.), printed t-shirts (e.g. I Love Istanbul), Iznik patterned tiles and ceramics, decorative handmade lamps, decorative figurines (e.g. Sultanahmet and Hagia Sophia themed) and many other items are sold in the souvenir shops included in the research. Sample images from the product stands of souvenir shops are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Examples of souvenirs sold in shops
Source: authors

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

In this research, interview and netnography methods were used as data collection tools. Since social facts are variable according to time, it is not possible to talk about their universality. Interview and netnography, which aim to capture and understand this relativity and dynamism of social phenomena, are the most frequently used methods in qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Netnography is the use of social science methods to present a new approach to conducting ethical and thorough ethnographic research that combines archival and online communications,

participation and observation, with new forms of digital and network data collection, analysis and research representation (Kozinets, 2015). The reasons for performing netnography are to increase the reliability of research data by diversifying it, to support semi-structured interview data and to discover possible new information. In this process, TripAdvisor, the most used online travel platform in the world, with a monthly number of visitors close to 30 million, was preferred (Barreda & Bilgihan, 2013). Two different souvenir stores with the highest ratings on TripAdvisor were included in the case study research process. The reason for this is to provide diversity by increasing the number

of cases. A total of 778 tourists' e-reviews made on stores in Sultanahmet were examined and related categories were created. In the process of creating the categories, studies by Swanson (2004), Swanson and Horridge (2006), Li and Cai (2008) and Suhartanto (2016) were used. To analyze the data obtained within the scope of interview and netnography, the following 3-step analysis process explained by Merriam (2009) was taken as a guide:

1. Open coding: data that have any relevance or similarity in terms of meaning are coded separately.
2. Analytical coding: data coded separately in the first step are grouped together again.
3. Creation of categories: categories are conceptual elements that relate to and encompass many unique examples (or previously identified pieces of data) – some of the main categories can be divided into sub-categories.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. FINDINGS FROM SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The evaluations of the sellers regarding the question of which factors are effective in increasing the souvenir shopping expenditure of tourists, their suggestions were examined and the factors identified are given in Table 2. These factors are classified under nine categories: domestic production, qualified (high spending) tourists, qualified employees, tourism budget, accommodation type, marketing (storytelling, advertising and branding), economic support for sellers, tourism season and political relations.

Within the scope of attracting qualified tourists (with a high spending profile) to the country, almost all sellers emphasized tourists from countries such as Europe and the USA because they can spend more due

Table 2. Factors increasing souvenir the shopping expenditure of tourists

Sellers	Categories	Brief explanation of the categories
S1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Qualified (high spending) tourists – Advertising – Tourism budget – Qualified employees – Tourism season 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Qualified (high spending) tourists: attracting high-spending tourists to the country – Advertising: multi-faceted advertisement by the central authorities (e.g. ministries) and advertising for the targeted tourist audience; e.g. on subways, on buses or on social media (YouTube, Facebook etc.)
S2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Qualified (high spending) tourists – Storytelling – Advertising – Political relations – Qualified employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tourism budget: increasing the budget allocated to tourism – Qualified employees: increasing the employment of educated and qualified employees in the tourism sector – Tourism season: trying to extend the tourism season with alternative tourism types
S3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Qualified (high spending) tourists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Storytelling: marketing of natural, historical and cultural places by making interesting stories
S4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Qualified (high spending) tourists – Local production – Economic support for sellers – Tourism season 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Political relations: controlling the fragility of tourism so that the number of tourists does not fall (ensuring security and establishing good political relations with other countries)
S5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Qualified (high spending) tourists – Political relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Local production: making locally produced souvenirs specific to regions (reflecting the historical, cultural and natural attractions of the region)
S6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Qualified (high spending) tourists – Qualified employees – Accommodation type – Political relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Economic support for sellers: providing economic facilities for souvenir sellers by the state e.g. easing taxes, providing low-interest loans, etc. – Accommodation type: preferring other accommodation types (e.g. bed & breakfast, half-board, etc.) instead of all-inclusive accommodation in the hospitality industry
S7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Qualified (high spending) tourists – Economic support for sellers – Local production – Branding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Branding: branding domestic souvenir products
S8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Qualified (high spending) tourists 	
S9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – No data was received 	
S10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Qualified (high spending) tourists – Branding 	
S11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Qualified (high spending) tourists 	

Source: authors.

to exchange rate differences. In this regard, an excerpt from S1 is as follows:

It is important for us that qualified tourists come. There are too many unqualified tourists right now. There are no Europeans anyway, qualified customers always go to our competing countries and spend very high amounts there.

It was emphasized that all employees serving tourists should be trained to have advanced communication skills in order to increase the souvenir shopping expenditure of tourists. In this regard, an excerpt from S1:

There is also the qualification issue of personnel. Now, it is very important for tourists to come, but there must be qualified personnel to work in this sector. The tourist complains a lot about this. In other words, they cannot feel comfortable, they become restless, they start with the taxi driver from the airport, they are already messing with the tourist's thinking until they enter the hotel.

Another issue emphasized by the sellers to increase the souvenir shopping expenditure of tourists is that domestic production should be promoted in supply. In this context, an excerpt from S4 is given below:

Now, domestic production is preferred. Most products come from China. Of course, it is not coming from China, which has been closed for 4 months and 5 months [during COVID-19], prices are increasing because they are on a dollar basis, domestic production should be preferred dominantly. We also have Izmir goods [a city in Turkey], all of the magnets, for example, come from Izmir.

While S1 and S2 emphasized that advertisements should be made for the natural, cultural and historical attractions of Turkey, S10 emphasized that a wide variety of souvenir products available in Turkey are not branded. An excerpt from S10:

We have lots of products, but we are not good at branding our own materials. For example, we cover an imitation bag with our local Iznik pattern and the tourists love it...! However, we must work on branding more than imitating.

In order to attract more high-spending tourists to Turkey, all-inclusive accommodation should be abandoned and other accommodation types (e.g. bed and breakfast, half-board etc.) should be encouraged claimed a seller (S6). An excerpt from that seller's evaluation is as follows:

The quality of the tourist is no longer good, why? Throughout Turkey, Antalya, Marmaris etc. If the hotels are not all inclusive, more high-spending customers

will come. Half-board system is better. Hotels used to be half-board from 1992 to 2000, and what does that mean? Fewer customers but higher quality customers.

Seller 2 (S2) cites the monster myth in Scotland's Loch Ness, pointing out that natural, historical and cultural attractions should be marketed through engaging and compelling storytelling. An excerpt from the seller's evaluation is given below:

Look, they made up a monster myth in a Scottish Lake because Scotland was not attracting too many tourists. What did the 'governor' of that place say? He said; we lied so that tourism could move... We cannot market ourselves, what we have.

Other issues highlighted by sellers (S4 and S5) are about the need for the country's government to provide economic assistance to souvenir sellers (e.g. alleviation of taxes, low-interest loans, etc.) and the need to provide security and establish relations with other countries in order to help lengthen the tourism season and lower the vulnerability of the industry.

4.2. DOMESTIC AND IMPORT RATIOS OF SOUVENIRS

The domestic and imported ratios of the products offered for sale in the souvenir stores in Sultanahmet and the Grand Bazaar are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Domestic and import ratios of souvenirs

Location	Stores	Domestic ratio in %	Import ratio in %
Sultanahmet	Store 1	80	20
	Store 2	95	5
	Store 3	0	100
	Store 4	40	60
	Store 5	0	100
	Store 9	95	5
	Store 10	75	25
Grand Bazaar	Store 6	80	20
	Store 7	100	0
	Store 8	50	50
	Store 11	90	10

Source: authors.

According to the table, it was found that the stores sell 64% domestic and 36% imported souvenirs. On the other hand, as the prices of imported products have

increased with the changes in the exchange rate (as of the current date) souvenir sellers (S4, S8, S10 and S11) have increased the proportion of domestically produced goods in their product supply. For instance, an excerpt from S10 is given below:

25% of our products are imported at the moment, however, that ratio was higher before the pandemic.

Domestic items provide more income for souvenir stores than imported items. An excerpt from S11 evaluation on this issue:

Domestic products are sold the most, they are all local [the seller showed the ceramic plates here], there are magnets made here, some from China. Because of the dollar prices, we had it done here ourselves.

4.3. FINDINGS FROM NETNOGRAPHY

A total of 380 tourists visited souvenir Store 1, which ranked first on TripAdvisor with the highest level of satisfaction among tourists. When the scores of the e-reviews made for Store 1 were analyzed, the store had not received any e-review below average. In Table 4, a total of 21 sub-categories were identified for Store 1 under three main categories: product features (12 sub-categories), seller features (4 sub-categories) and store features (4 sub-categories). In the table, half of the features (49%) that tourists highlighted with expressions of satisfaction are related to product features, while the other half (47%) are related to seller features. On the other hand, it was determined that store features were given in e-reviews very rarely (4%).

Table 4. Categories and frequencies for Store 1

Main categories and sub-categories		<i>n</i>	Rate in %
Product features	diversity	109	10.4
	price	90	8.6
	quality	57	5.5
	packaging & shipping	56	5.3
	originality	54	5.2
	artistry	33	3.2
	handmade items	31	3.0
	localness	30	2.9
	giftable (to someone)	19	1.8
	travel memory	14	1.4
	design	13	1.2
	suitability for collection	5	0.5

Seller features	hospitality	217	20.7
	communication skill	115	10.9
	discounting & gifts	89	8.5
	low pressure selling	74	7.0
Store features	accessibility	19	1.8
	atmosphere	12	1.2
	counter layout	5	0.5
	width	5	0.5

Source: authors.

According to Table 4, the product features that tourists are satisfied with are diversity, price, quality, packaging and fast/quality shipping, originality, artistry, handmade items, localness, giftable (to someone), travel memory, design and suitability for collection. Hospitality, communicating (to give detailed information about products), discounting or giving free souvenirs (some small items) and an unpressurized sales approach constituted the seller characteristics which the tourists emphasized with expressions of satisfaction. Some excerpts from the e-reviews of tourists are given below:

We purchased a range of outstanding pieces at very affordable prices in a 'pressure-free' and friendly atmosphere. I highly recommend.

He was very hospitable, he offered us Turkish tea and some Turkish delight while we were visiting his store. Each piece was so unique, he told us how the art was made. All products were handmade by local artists.

As seen in Table 5, a total of 15 sub-categories were identified under three main categories: product features (9 sub-categories), seller features (4 sub-categories) and store features (2 sub-categories). Half of the features (48%) that have a positive effect on tourist satisfaction are related to product features, while the other half (48%) are related to seller features. Store features have a very low share (4%) just like in Store 1. On the other hand, price, diversity, packaging and fast/quality shipping, quality, localness, giftable (to someone), originality, travel memory and handmade features were the product features that had a positive effect on the satisfaction of tourists. Communication skills, hospitality, selling without pressure and giving discounts/gifts constituted the characteristics of the seller, effective in the satisfaction of the tourists. Some excerpts from the e-reviews of tourists belonging to the relevant categories are given below:

Their prices are reasonable and they gave discounts on almost all the products we purchased.

Here you will find everything you need to buy as a gift from your Istanbul trip. There are beautiful handmade items such as breathtaking colorful mosaic lamps, stunning Turkish tiles and pottery.

A total of 398 tourists evaluated the other gift shop (Store 2) which received highly satisfactory reviews on TripAdvisor. When the scores of the e-reviews made to Store 2 are examined, it was found that 363 e-reviews were excellent (91%) and 25 e-reviews were very good (6%). The features of Store 2 are shown in Table 5 in categories.

Table 5. Categories and frequencies for Store 2

Main categories and sub-categories		<i>n</i>	Rate in %
Product features	price	221	18.0
	diversity	144	12.0
	packaging & shipping	101	8.0
	quality	50	4.0
	localness	22	2.0
	giftable (to someone)	16	1.3
	originality	16	1.3
	travel memory	15	1.2
	handmade items	7	0.5
Seller features	communication skill	198	16.0
	hospitality	170	14.0
	low pressure selling	129	10.0
	discounting & gifts	95	8.0
Store features	accessibility	43	4.0
	width	3	0.0

Source: authors.

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

As a result of the findings obtained from souvenir sellers, nine categories that affect the increase in souvenir expenditure were identified. These categories are related to domestic production, attracting qualified (high spending) tourists, qualified employees (well educated in tourism, speaks at least one foreign language), tourism budgets, accommodation type (bed & breakfast, half board, etc.), marketing (storytelling, advertising and branding), financial support for sellers (by the government), the tourism season (spread of tourism activities throughout the year) and politics (friendly relations with target market countries). It is

important for destination management organizations to benefit from these findings when developing their tourism industry strategies (Aguilo et al., 2017; Alegre et al., 2011; Mok & Iverson, 2000).

As the prices of imported products have increased during the global pandemic and the extremely high exchange rate (as of the date of the research), it was found that souvenir sellers have increased the supply of domestic production. However, more than one third (36%) of the stores in Sultanahmet and the Grand Bazaar, where the research was conducted, still sell imported souvenirs. This finding is similar to that of a study conducted by Lacher and Nepal (2011) in Thailand. Domestic production items mostly consist of ceramics and porcelains produced in Kütahya, while decorative lamps and handmade jewelry (e.g. silver rings made of zultanite stone, etc.) were produced in various workshops in Istanbul. Many items reflecting local motifs (for example, items with miniatures/logo of Sultanahmet or Hagia Sophia Mosque) were imported from China. Study findings showed that authentic souvenirs reflecting local culture, domestic production and handmade, provide more income than imported products, while local products create great satisfaction for tourists. In the literature, various other studies also emphasize the importance of local features in souvenir production (Guttentag, 2009; Keskitalo et al., 2021; Kong & Chang, 2012). Supporting and encouraging the production and sale of souvenir products representing local culture in destinations seems to be the best step to take. The production of souvenirs by providing training to unemployed people can create an important source of employment and income.

It was emphasized that there are a wide variety of souvenir products using the natural, historical and cultural attractions of Turkey, but these products are not promoted or branded to attract tourists. For example, Murano (Venice, Italy) is branded with glass art (Giubilato et al., 2016). Understanding the importance of branding and promotion, Turkey can develop similar strategies to brand some of its important cultural items. Iznik tiles are important in terms of reflecting the characteristics of Roman, Byzantine, Seljuk and Ottoman art. There are 21,043 Iznik tiles on the walls of the Blue Mosque (Türkiye Kültür Portalı, n.d.). Tile art can easily be an important product to promote.

As a result of the findings from tourists' e-reviews, it can be suggested that souvenir buyers take into account both product and seller features during the shopping process. Almost half (48%) of the e-reviews from both stores include evaluations of product features, while the other half include evaluations of seller attributes. In this context, it is possible to conclude that store features are not of great importance in the shopping experiences of the tourists. This result is not consistent with studies conducted in China (Li & Cai, 2008), North

Korea (Fangxuan & Ryan, 2018), Indonesia (Suhartanto, 2016) and the USA (Swanson, 2004; Swanson & Horridge, 2004; Swanson & Horridge, 2006). In those studies, store features were found to be an important factor in terms of tourist experience, travel motivation and satisfaction within the scope of souvenir shopping. The difference here can be attributed to differences in the present data collection and analytical methods. While online evaluations of tourists were used in the present study, a survey was the main instrument in previous research. The subject was approached with survey questions from related studies. In this context, it can be argued that more accurate results can be achieved by using different methods in researching the spending behavior of tourists (Kim et al., 2010).

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In this research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with souvenir sellers and online tourist comments formed the main framework. The reason for this is that the research was conducted during the global pandemic and international travel was greatly reduced. When the literature on tourist expenditure was examined, almost all of the studies were designed using quantitative research approaches. Therefore, in future work on tourist expenditure, qualitative research approaches can be recommended to be used more. On the other hand, considering that there is limited research on the classification of souvenirs in the literature, work to fill this gap in the literature is suggested. In future studies, focus group meetings can be held with destination management organizations as well as souvenir sellers. Further research could be undertaken in other destinations where tourist expenditure per person is low.

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