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LOCAL PEOPLES' PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGIOUS TOURISM: A RESEARCH IN DEMRE DISTRICT OF ANTALYA

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ABSTRACT

Like other industries, tourism and travel industry has been affected too much from global COVID-19 pandemic. The negative effects of pandemic can be easily seen in all tourism types starting from 3S (sea, sand, sun) tourism to religious tourism. According to World Religious Travel Association (WRTA) around 300 million tourists move internationally in religious tourism market. This study aimed to determine the perspectives of the local people living in Demre on religious tourism and to find out whether the local people living in the district were aware of the potential of religious tourism in the district. It also aimed to reveal whether there was a difference between the demographic characteristics of the local people and their perspectives on religious tourism. As a result of the logistic regression analysis conducted within the scope of the research, it was observed that people with high income levels and those working as managers had a low perspective on religious tourism.

Contribution/Originality: The study aimed to determine the perspectives of the local people living in Demre on religious tourism and to find out whether the local people living in the district were aware of the potential of religious tourism in the district.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism can be evaluated as the world's one of the biggest economic, social, and cultural activity. As an industry, it recruits lots of workforce including many women and young people especially in developing countries (United Nations UNCTAD, 2021). During travels people come together, meet different cultures, and get better understanding of each other. By years, international tourism flows have shown a continuous increase in terms of tourist numbers and revenues except crises and shocks. This situation shows the strength and resistance of the industry (UNWTO, 2019). In the year of 2019, travel and tourism industry accounted for 10.4 percent of global GDP (USD 9.2 trillion) and 10.6 percent of all jobs (334 million). Because of COVID-19 global problem, 62 million jobs were lost in the year of 2020 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2021). In other words, the total number of jobs in travel and tourism industry decreased from 334 million to 272 million in 2020 (www.wttc.org/Research/Economic-impact:accessdate:18.08.2021). International tourist arrivals decreased by 85 % in January-May 2021 and all regions suffered from COVID-19 (www.e-unwto.org/doi/epdf/10.18111/wtobarometereng.2021.19.1.4:accessdate:18.08.2021). Asia and the Pacific had the largest decline (95 %) followed by Europe (85 %), Middle East (83 %), Africa (81 %), and Americas (72 %) (www.webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2021-07/210721-barometer-

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en_1.pdf:accessdate:20.08.2021). According to the projections, international tourist movements will not return to expected levels until 2023 or later (www.news.un.org/en/story/2021/06/1095052:accessdate:18.08.2021).

2. RELIGIOUS TOURISM

Like other industries, tourism and travel industry has been affected too much from global COVID-19 pandemic. The negative effects of pandemic can be easily seen in all tourism types starting from 3S (sea, sand, sun) tourism to religious tourism. According to World Religious Travel Association (WRTA) around 300 million tourists move internationally in religious tourism market (https://www.slideshare.net/WRTA/worldreligioustravelassociationoverview?from_action=save:accessdate:26.08.2021). Religious tourism can be defined as the movement of tourists to sacred places and attending religious activities (Chrysanthi, Panoraia, & Dimitrios, 2015). According to Petrovic, Lakicevic, and Boskovic (2020), religious tourists have chance of experiencing religious events and local activities. Citing Shinde (2003); Terzidou, Stylidis, and Szivas (2008) have mentioned that during religious tourism experience there will be direct and indirect contact of tourists with residents and different businesses or institutions.

In the written literature, it is possible to see comparisons between pilgrimage and religious tourism, but in fact, religious tourism has more comprehensive meaning (Iliev, 2020). Wider usage of religious tourism term also comes from its historical background. Referencing Rinschede (1992), Romanelli, Gazzola, Grechi, and Pollice (2021) have underlined that this type of tourism is known everywhere as the oldest tourism type. According to Griffin and Raj (2017), there are three advantages of religious tourism; it has a positive effect on humanity's common heritage and increases resident's local development and understanding in terms of culture. Chrysanthi et al. (2015) have stated that all people who belong to different economic classes or payment levels may attend to religious tourism.

Regarding religious tourism, it is possible to find several academic studies. Some of the studies focus on religious tourists/visitors' experiences of religious tourism (Albayrak et al., 2018; Huang, Pearce, Guo, & Shen, 2020; Rebuya, Lasarte, Amador, & Roca, 2020) some of them focus on the effects of religious tourism on regional development (Chrysanthi et al., 2015; Petrovic et al., 2020), some of them focus on sustainability-oriented religious tourism (Romanelli et al., 2021), some of them focus on religious tourism concept and paradigms (Iliev, 2020), and few of them focus on local people's perspectives (Alıpour, Olya, & Forouzan, 2017; Cavus & Zere, 2019; Oner & Cansu, 2018; Sahiner, 2012; Silva & Junior, 2016; Terzidou et al., 2008) on religious tourism.

Huang et al. (2020) have investigated visitors' spiritual values and influencing factors in religious tourism destinations. They have focused on 7 different themes of spiritual values; a new window for life, the need for religious belief, importance of closer relationships, inspiration from others, enlightment from natural features, symbolism of wild animals and insects, and sacredness of symbolic properties. Results showed that sample visitors are looking for balanced life conditions. Albayrak et al. (2018) have investigated religious tourists' experiences in Jerusalem with a sample of 848 religious tourists. Findings have revealed that engaging, discovering, interacting and belonging, spiritually and emotionally connecting, relaxing, and feeling peace are important components and create different experiences. Rebuya et al. (2020) have conducted a research on religious tourism motivational factors and experiences. According to the results, satisfaction of convictions and fulfilment of curiosity are very important for religious tourists. Petrovic et al. (2020) have carried out a research on the impact of cultural and religious tourism on the development of local community in Kosovo and Metohija with a sample of 38 visitors. Results showed that both cultural and religious tourism are important to community in Kosovo and Metohija in terms of economical transactions. Chrysanthi et al. (2015) have investigated religious tourism in the island of Samos (Greece) in terms of regional development. Results revealed that Samos needs more tourism policy at local level in order to benefit more from its potential. Romanelli et al. (2021) have investigated sustainability-oriented religious tourism and have found out that religious tourism has positive effects and orient the destination to better sustainability related policies. Iliev (2020) have analysed religious tourism concept and different paradigms and

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practices by identifying 124 documents. The results showed that there is a need to change the definition of religious tourism, and understanding the motivations, experiences of religious tourists, and segments of religious tourism are all important. Terzidou et al. (2008) have investigated perceptions of residents in terms of socio-economic impacts of religious tourism in the island of Tinos (Greece). According to the results coming from 146 locals, religious tourism is widely accepted and welcomed by locals because of its positive impacts on local economy (more employment, better income etc.) and involvement of locals in religion. Silva and Junior (2016) have analysed factors affecting residents' support for religious tourism by using descriptive research and quantitative approach. Results have revealed that resident's support for religious tourism was highly affected by perception of benefits and residents' trust in government actors. Alıpour et al. (2017) have investigated residents' perception about environmental impact of religious tourism in Mashhad (Iran) and have found that in general perceptions of residents were negative.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

Turkey, heavily invested in 3S tourism (sea, sand and sun) is trying to benefit from its alternative tourism potential. In the year of 2019, Turkey hosted 45.1 million tourists, then experience huge decrease because of COVID-19 pandemic (www.statista.com/statistics/707699/foreign-tourist-arrivals-inturkey/:accessdate:18.08.2021). It is possible to find Antalya, İstanbul, Muğla and İzmir among most visited cities in Turkey. This research was done in Demre (District of Antalya). Demre is well-known as the place where Saint Nicholas worked as a bishop (www.ktb.gov.tr/EN-99259/antalya.html:accessdate:23.08.2021).

The study aimed to determine the perspectives of the local people living in Demre on religious tourism and to find out whether the local people living in the district were aware of the potential of religious tourism in the district.

It also aimed to reveal whether there was a difference between the demographic characteristics of the local people and their perspectives on religious tourism. Inline with the purpose of the study, the population of the study consisted of the local people living in the district of Demre. Convenience sampling method was used in the study as it was impossible to reach the whole population.

Questionnaire technique was used as data collection method. The scale which was developed by Sahiner (2012) by reviewing the related literature and used in previous studies, was employed in the study. The sections deemed appropriate for the study were taken from the scale. The research questionnaire comprised two parts. The first section of the questionnaire included 11 questions regarding the demographic characteristics of the local people living in Demre district. Demographic variables consisted of (gender, age, education, monthly income, and profession) and how long they have been living in Demre, if they have traveled for religious tourism purposes before, whether they have visited the religious sites in Demre and its surrounding, whether they have taken their guests coming from nearby cities to the religious sites in Demre, and whether they have prior knowledge about religious tourism and if they have, where they got this information. The second section of the questionnaire included 27 items intended to find out the opinions of the local people in order to determine the perspectives of the residents of Demre on religious tourism. The scale was a 5-point likert type and required participants to rate the items by choosing one of the options "1-strongly disagree", "2-strongly disagree", "3-indecisive", "4-agree", and "5-strongly agree.". The questionnaires were conducted between November 2019 and August 2020. Inline with this data, 404 people were administered the questionnaire in the context of the study. Of the 404 questionnaires administered to the participants, 12 questionnaires were found to be incomplete and incorrectly filled, and the remaining 392 questionnaires were considered suitable for statistical analysis. By consulting the population sample table developed by Ural and Kilic (2013), it can be argued that 392 participants constituting the research sample are enough to represent the research population (Ural & Kilic, 2013) .

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Table-1. Demographic Variables.

Independent variable	Group	n	%
	Male	236	60.2
Gender	Female	156	39.8
	Total	392	100
	18-25	156	39.8
	26-35	111	28.3
	36-45	89	22.7
Age	46-60	32	8.2
	61 and over	4	1.0
	Total	392	100
	0-1500	109	27.8
	1501-2500	99	25.3
Income (Monthly)	2501-3500	129	32.9
	3501-5000	37	9.4
	5001 and above	18	4.6
	Total	392	100
	Literate	28	7.1
	Primary school	54	13.8
	High school	139	35.5
Education	Vocational School	113	28.8
	Faculty/College	55	14
	Postgraduate/Doctorate	3	0.8
	Total	392	100
	Student	100	25.5
	Housewife	27	6.9
	Civil servant	51	13
Profession	Farmer	58	14.8
	Craftsmen	50	12.8
	Private sector employee	88	22.4
	Private sector manager	10	2.6
	Civil service manager	8	2.0
	Total	392	100
	Born and raised	187	47.7
Residence period	1-5 years	119	30.3
	6-10 years	41	10.5
	More than 11 years	45	11.5
	Total	392	100
Have you ever travelled for the purpose of religious tourism?	Yes	150	38.3
	No	242	61.7
	Total	392	100
Have you visited the religious sites in Demre and its surrounding area?	Yes	313	79.8
	No	79	20.2
	Total	392	100
Have you taken visitors from different cities to the religious sites in Demre?	Yes	219	55.9
	No	173	44.1
	Total	392	100
Do you have prior knowledge about religious tourism?	Yes	234	59.7
	No	158	40.3
	Total	392	100
	Family	51	13
If so, where did you get this information?	School	95	24.2
	Social media	59	15.1
	TV	29	7.4
	I do not have any information	158	40.3
	Total	392	100

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While entering the data to the package program (SPSS 20.0) for data analysis, incorrectly filled and incomplete questionnaires were excluded from the analysis, and data analysis was performed with the remaining questionnaires. In addition, as a result of the reliability analysis of the research scale, the reliability of the 27 items was found to be 0.894. Statistics such as frequency and percentage distribution, mean and Standard deviation, as well as logistic regression analysis were used in the analyses of the data.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Table-2. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Skewness Values of the Religious tourism items.

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness
Development of tourism in Demre increases the foreign currency inflow to the region.	4.33	0.92	-1.68
Development of tourism in Demre increases the per capita income of the people.	3.85	1.03	-0.83
Development of tourism in Demre creates new employment opportunities in the region.	4.12	0.93	-1.28
Development of tourism in Demre contributes to the development of infrastructure and superstructure facilities.	3.98	0.97	-1.04
Tourists' shopping positively affects tradesmen in the city.	4.11	0.95	-1.20
Development of tourism in Demre causes an increase in the prices of products and services in the district.	4.06	0.98	-1.14
Tourism is effective in the increase in real estate rents and prices.	4.36	0.85	-1.42
Tourism contributes to the marketing of handicraft products in the region.	4.02	0.90	-0.78
Tourism changes local people's perspectives on people from other cultures positively.	3.91	1.02	-0.77
Tourism increases the living standards of the local people.	3.79	1.03	-0.73
Tourism causes an increase in crime rate in the region.	3.05	1.30	-0.74
Tourism leads to the deterioration of the family structure of the local people.	2.89	1.33	0.71
Tourism ensures the protection of natural, cultural, and historical sources.	3.95	1.07	-0.91
Tourism ensures the development of environmental awareness.	3.85	1.06	-0.88
Tourism causes over population and migration.	3.50	1.17	-0.44
Tourism causes local people to lose their cultural values.	2.87	1.31	0.11
Tourism causes moral degeneration in general.	2.87	1.36	0.10
Religious tourism in Demre causes the local people to be affected by the cultural characteristics of tourists.	3.43	1.03	-0.27
As religious tourism develops, the behavior of people in Demre will change.	3.54	1.06	-0.53
Development of religious tourism increases people's interest in other beliefs in Demre.	3.38	1.25	-0.36
Events should be organized in order to better promote religious tourism assets to the public in Demre.	4.00	1.01	-1.04
I think religious tourism in Demre contributes to the dialogue between local people and tourists.	3.89	0.95	-0.78
Antiques are the legacy of all of us.	4.35	0.84	-1.66
Santa Claus Church is important for religious tourism in the district.	4.35	0.87	-1.73
Demre and its surroundings are important for religious tourism.	4.28	0.85	-1.46
I think it is positive that religious and historical buildings are repaired and opened to tourism in Demre.	4.23	0.88	-1.32
If events are held to promote Demre, I would like to attend them.	3.95	1.04	-0.97

Note: n=392; 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree on the scale.

Demographic variables of the participants in the study are illustrated in Table 1. Revealed in Table 1, findings about the demographic characteristics of the participants are as follows. While 60.2% (n=236) of the local people participating in the study were male, 39.8% (n=156) were female. When the age ranges of the local people

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participating in the study were examined, it was seen that most of the participants were between the ages of 18-25 with 39.8% (n=156 people). The majority of the participants had a monthly income of 2501-3500 TL with 32.9% (n=129). Regarding the educational status of the participants, it can be seen that most of the participants were high school graduates with 35.5% (n = 139), followed by vocational school graduates with 28.8% (n=113). It can be stated that 25.5% (n=100) of the local people participating in the research were students, 22.4% (n=88) were private sector employees, and 14.8% (n=58) were farmers. In addition, it was observed that 47.7% (n=187) of the participants were born and raised in Demre, and 30.3% (n=119) had been living in Demre for 1-5 years. Concerning the question "Have you ever travelled for the purpose of religious tourism?", 61.7% (n=242) of the participants said no where as the 38.3% (n=150) answered yes. While 79.8% (n=313) of the participants gave a positive answer to the question "Have you visited the religious sites in Demre and its surrounding areas?", 20.2% (n=79) of them answered no. The local people participating in the study were asked if they had taken their guests coming from different cities to the religious places in Demre and its surrounding, and 55.9% (n=219) gave a positive answer to the question, whereas 44.1% (n=173) stated that they had not. Moreover, it was found that while 59.7% of the participants had prior knowledge about religious tourism, 40.3% (n=158) of them did not. When asked about where the participants got information about religious tourism, 24.2% (n=95) of them said they got information from their schools and 15.1% (n=59) said they obtained information about religious tourism by using social media.

The mean, Standard deviation, and skewness values regarding the scale used in the study are given in Table 2. In Table 2, the item "Tourism is effective in the increase in real estate rents and prices."(4.36) has the highest mean. This is followed by the items" Antiques are the legacy of all of us"(4.35) and "Santa Claus Church is important for religious tourism in the district.". The items with the lowest means include the statements "Tourism causes local people to lose their cultural values"(2.87),"Tourism causes moral degeneration in general' (2.87), and "Tourism causes the deterioration of the family structure of the local people" (2.89).

Logistic regression (LR) analysis was performed because the dependent variable in the study was two-level categorical, and the independent variables were categorical, ordinal, and continuous, and the basic assumptions in other regression models did not need to be met (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). In addition, this analysis was preferred to interpret group membership by predicting the categorical dependent variable of belief status in the study and to investigate the possible relationship between the dependent variable (belief) and independent variables (gender, age, income, education, and profession). Logistic regression analysis was performed with the SPSS 20 program in order to examine belief, taken as the dependent variable, and five independent variables. In addition, since there was no lost data, no data deletion was required.

In the study, the model that included all independent variables^{x2} (5, n=392) =13.943 (p <.05) had a significant result. Accordingly, there is a relationship between the dependent variable of belief status and the independent variables of gender, age, income, education, and profession. The fact that^{x2} was significant supports the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The correct classification rate before the model was 77.0%, and 76.5% after the logistic regression model. The Cox&Snell R Square and Nagelkarke R Square values, obtained by making an inference about the amount of change in the dependent variable explained by the model, are .035 and .053 (Uğurlu, 2016). These values show that the set of variables explained between 3.5% and 5.3% of the variability in the dependent variable. The significance value (Sig. Value) must be less than .05, and as a result of the goodness of fit test, it was found to be .01 in this study. Moreover, the fact that the chi-square value of the study was significant (Chi-square =13.929; df =5) shows that the model created made a better prediction (Uğurlu, 2016).

Table 3 demonstrates the regression coefficients, 95% confidence intervals for the odds ratios of each variable, odds ratios (Exp (β) and Wald statistics.

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Table-3. Logistic Regression Analysis of Belief Status According to Independent Variables.

Variables	β	Wald	Exp(β)	95%CI for odds ratios	
				Lower	Upper
Gender	0.123	0.231	1.131	0.685	1.868
Age	0.364	6.050	1.439	1.077	1.923
Income	-0.047	0.119	0.954	0.731	1.245
Education	0.332	8.368	1.394	1.113	1.745
Profession	-0.097	2.072	0.907	0.794	1.036
Constant	-0.148	0.084	0.862		

Based on Wald criteria, it can be stated that except for gender (x^2 (1, n=392) = 0,231; p>.05), age (x^2 (1, n=392) = 6,050; p>.05), income (x^2 (1,n=392) = 0,119; p>.05), and profession (x^2(1,n=392) = 2,072; p>.05), education (x^2 (1, n=392) = 8,368; p <.05)significantly predicted the participants' perspectives on religious tourism. On the other hand, it is observed that a one-unit change in education affected the odds ratio in religious tourism by 1,394 (139% increase).

Two examples are explained in order to make the values in Table 3 more meaningful to the reader. According to this;

$$Y_i = \frac{e^u}{1+e^u}\ (i = 1 \dots, n) Y_i = \frac{e^u}{1+e^u}\ (i = 1 \dots, n)$$

The equation shows the category to which the individual belongs in the dependent variable, which is perspectives on religious tourism, in other words, the probability of being in one of the categories of being a believer or unbeliever. And u is the line regression equation.

That is;

$$u = A + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + B_3X_3 + \dots + B_kX_k$$

Here *A* is the constant in Table 3, and while Bs are coefficients of variables, Xs can be considered as independent variables. Accordingly, when we place the variables in the study in *u*, the following equation is obtained.

$$u = -0{,}148 + 0{,}123X_{gender} + 0{,}364X_{age} - 0{,}047X_{income} + 0{,}332X_{education} - 0{,}097X_{profession}$$

When the equation is associated with two different examples, people's perspectives on religious tourism can be evaluated as follows;

Example 1: Gender: male (code 1), Age: 18-25 (code 1), Income: 5001 and above (code 5), Education: literate (code 1), Profession: private sector manager (code 7);

$$u = -0{,}148 + (0{,}123\ x1) + (0{,}364x1) - (0{,}047x5) + (0{,}332x1) - (0{,}097x7) = -0{,}243$$

$$Y_1 = \frac{e^{-0{,}243}}{1 + e^{-0{,}243}} = 0{,}439$$

This value indicates that a person with these characteristics has a perspective on religious tourism in the probability of 0.43, which is low. Accordingly, it can be put forward that the value for a man's perspective on religious tourism who is between the ages of 18-25 and has low education but a high-income is 0.439.

*Example 2:*Gender: female (code 2), Age: 36-45 (code 3), Income: 3501-5000 (code 4), Education: vocational school (code 4), Profession: civil servant (code 3).

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$$u = -0{,}148 + (0{,}123\ x2) + (0{,}364x3) - (0{,}047x4) + (0{,}332x4) - (0{,}097x3) = 2{,}039$$

$$Y_2 = \frac{e^{2{,}039}}{1 + e^{2{,}039}} = 0{,}884$$

This value indicates that a person with these characteristics has a perspective on religious tourism in the probability of 0.88, which is high. Accordingly, it can be stated that the value for a woman's perspective on religious tourism who is between the ages of 36-45 and a graduate of vocational school with an income between 3501 and 5000 is 0.884.

5. CONCLUSION

Development of tourism in a destination does not depend solely on the tourist attractions of the destination. Feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of people living in the destination towards tourism are also effective. The positive attitude and behavior of local people contributes to the development of tourism in the destination, but in the opposite case, it will prevent development of tourism in the destination. In addition to the importance of the destination in terms of religious tourism, the district of Demre has plenty of opportunities for the development of tourism with its natural charm. In addition, a memorial ceremony is held for Saint Nicholas in Demre every year on December 6. Although various events are organized for the development of tourism in Demre, the biggest obstacle is that they are not promoted sufficiently. The fact that there is no study examining the perspectives of local people in Demre on religious tourism before makes this study unique.

As a result of the analysis of the 392 questionnaires conducted to determine the perspective of local people living in Demre on religious tourism, it was determined that the majority of the participants were male. This finding is similar to the research conducted by Usta (2005) in the relevant literature. It was also found that more than half of the local people living in Demre were between the ages of 18-35 and most of them had income between 2501-3500 TL. In addition, within the scope of the research, it was revealed that the majority of the local people living in Demre were high school and vocational school graduates. This finding shows similarity with the research conducted by Oner and Cansu (2018). Moreover, while the participants were from many different professions, it was identified that a significant portion of the local people living in Demre were private sector employees, farmers, and students.

When the local people's answers to the detailed information questions about Demre were examined, it was determined that most of the local people were born and raised in Demre and they did not travel for the purpose of religious tourism before. It was also revealed that the majority of the participants visited the religious tourism sites in Demre and its surroundings and took the visitors from different provinces to the religious places in Demre. Furthermore, it was determined that they had prior knowledge about religious tourism and got this information through various communication channels (such as social media, school, television, and family). In general, it can be said that there is a positive support coming from locals to religious tourism activities in Demre. This result is in line with Terzidou et al. (2008) study.

As a result of the logistic regression analysis conducted within the scope of the research, it was observed that people with high income levels and those working as managers had a low perspective on religious tourism. On the other hand, it was detected that people's perspectives on religious tourism were high when their education level and age increased. Moreover, people's perspectives on religious tourism changed positively with increasing age, and local people who were university graduates also had different perspectives on religious tourism from those with lower education levels. It is possible to suggest that this may result from the fact that education provided during the education period and cultural interaction have a positive effect on people's attitudes towards religious tourism.

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Although this result differs from the results of the research conducted by Cavus and Zere (2019) it is similar to the result of the study conducted by Sahiner (2012).

It was revealed that the majority of the participants in the study were male and high school graduates. It shows similarity with the study conducted by Sahiner (2012) in that most of the participants were male, however the fact that the majority of the participants were university graduates differs from the research result. In addition, it was determined that most of the participants included in the study were private sector employees, and this result differs from the result of Sahiner (2012) who found that most of the participants were civil servants. Considering that the majority of the participants participating in the study were born and raised in Demre and most of the participants in the study conducted by Sahiner (2012) were born and raised in Karaman, it can be put forward that the sample groups of both studies were effective.

Sahiner (2012) created hypotheses about religious tourism as opportunity and threat (concern) in her study and divided these hypotheses into sub-hypotheses. It was revealed that there were no relationships between the participants' perception of religious tourism as a threat (concern) and the variables of gender and age while a significant relationship was identified between the participants' perception of religious tourism as a threat (concern) and their education level. As the level of education increased, the concern for religious tourism decreased. In the study, a difference was observed between the participants who never went to school and those who had a master's/doctorate degree. It can be claimed that the fact that people who have never received education are not worried indicates that they have no idea about the subject. A significant relationship was found between the participants' perception of religious tourism as an opportunity and their gender, age, and education levels.

If we are to make a general evaluation as a result of the research, it can be asserted that local people's perspectives on religious tourism differ according to demographic variables in Demre. In order to reduce this difference, development of tourism in the district can be accelerated by focusing on promotional activities. Considering the results obtained in the present study, following suggestions can be made to increase local people's perspectives on religious tourism in Demre district.

Within the scope of the research, it is seen that people with low educational level have a low perspective on religious tourism. People with this level of education can be encouraged to visit religious tourism areas, or various courses can be offered to these people by local authorities. Like in Silva and Junior (2016), it can be mentioned that more positive perception will turn back as more resident's support towards religious tourism.

Regarding the local people's perspectives on religious tourism, local authorities can help especially young people to have an interest in learning about different religions. In addition, regarding the promotion of religious tourism resources it is believed that local authorities will contribute to the promotion of the district both nationally and internationally by focusing on a variety of activities such as conferences, symposiums, and events and by ensuring the participation of the local people in these activities. There are various Lycian way trails in the district and organizing different activities such as zipline and cable car in these points for visitors who love adventure may bring about an increase in the number of visitors. Expectations of third-age tourism groups can be determined, and this age group can be designated as the target audience by the local authorities in the promotion activities of religious tourism. Making the district more attractive and charming for foreign tourists who will visit the destination can arouse these people's interest in accommodating and staying in the district more. It can be ensured that investments to be made in the district of Demre are increased and that the local people' views are taken into account in these investments.The present study has some limitations. Initially, the study was only conducted with the participation of the local people living in Demre district, and those living in other districts were excluded from the scope of the study. Since the target audience from whom the research data were obtained was the local population of Demre, the perspectives of domestic and foreign tourists visiting Demre on religious tourism in the district were not included in this research. In addition, it is assumed that the local people residing in the district of Demre perceived the questions on the questionnaire correctly and gave sincere answers to the questions.

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Although this study is a preliminary study that examines the perspective of the local people living in the district of Demre on religious tourism, various research topics can be suggested to researchers in this field in order to further develop the relevant field. First of all, the questionnaire developed within the scope of this research concerning Demre can be used to determine the perspectives of people living in other provinces and districts on religious tourism. In addition, the research to be carried out in other provinces and districts can be done as an observational research, not a questionnaire-based study. Other research topics that can be suggested to researchers include examining the perspectives of domestic and foreign tourists on religious tourism instead of the perspectives of local people living in provinces and districts and determining the extent of their perspectives on religious tourism.

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