

## Chapter 10

# Perceived Destination Image: The Case of Gallipoli

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The perceived destination image is a strategic weapon that provides a competitive advantage for the tourism destinations. Perceptions are the elements that give meaning to destinations. In this respect, it is important for the destination marketers to know how tourists perceive the destination. It can be seen that tourists with different demographic and cultural backgrounds who visit the same destination can perceive its image differently. The tourism marketplace is highly competitive. Because of this, destination management organizations (DMOs) need to understand the actual and the desired perception of their destinations in order to take necessary measures. In this chapter, the concepts of destination and perceived destination image are emphasized. Secondly, the political environment, cultural attractiveness, social environment, and natural environment factors affecting the perceived destination image will be examined. Finally, the perceived destination images of domestic and foreign tourists visiting the Gallipoli in Turkey will be examined comparatively.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter aims to present and discuss the concept of perceived destination image as shown in the literature. The process of perceived destination image formation is dynamic. The factors which influence the destination image are severally important and they complete each other. The perceived destination image plays a very essential role in the destination marketing process, because it provides crucial information about how the place is perceived by tourists. Different groups of people may see the features of a same destination from different perspectives. This chapter proposed that; tourists which have different demographic characters and travel behaviors might have different perceptions of the same destination. At the end of the chapter there is a case study about Gallipoli to support this proposal. This study also highlights the presence of image heterogeneity that different tourists may gain different benefits from a destination.

Destination image is a strategic weapon that provides a competitive advantage for the tourism industry. It plays a critical role in the description, promotion and organization of destinations. Because of this holistic nature, the image emerges as a very important concept in terms of the success of destinations. In this sense, destinations with a positive image are more often considered and preferred by customers (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991: p. 2)

There are many factors that affect the decision-making process of a tourist destination. Accommodation, cultural attractions, weather, landscapes, political factors, exchange rates are some of the factors that influence perceptions about a destination of tourists. For this reason, destination marketers are looking for the most important factors that influence the image of the destination. In addition, destination image influences the customers' future destination selection, recommendation behaviour and repeat visits (Fayeke & Crompton, 1991: p. 15; Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010: p. 585).

The studies show that destination image affects tourists' destination selection process (Camilleri, 2018a,b; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Chon, 1992; Chon, 1990; Chi & Qu, 2008). Destination image means all of the beliefs, thoughts and expressions that a tourist has about a destination or place (Crompton, 1979: p. 18). For this reason, the tourists mostly prefer the destinations which have positive image.

The objectives of the chapter are; to define the concepts of destination and perceived destination image, to examine the political environment, cultural attractiveness, social environment and natural environment that are the factors affecting the perceived destination image and to reveal the perceived destination images of domestic and foreign tourists visiting the Gallipoli Peninsula Historical National Park in Turkey comparatively.

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