

## A Study of Travel Satisfaction on Elderly German Travelers to Bodrum

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**Abstract:** In this study, the researcher examined whether the demographic variables play a role in determining satisfaction or not. Therefore, 250 elderly German tourists are taken into research that are on holiday in Bodrum/Turkey. From the literature review, the customer satisfaction measurement tool of tourism industry has been developed. Analysis was done by SPSS 11.5 statistics package program. In the end of study, important differences on vacation satisfaction of elderly German tourists have been found according to demographic variables. In the end of study, it's been found that demographic variables like age, occupation, education and coming on destination (individual/tour) make differences on vacation satisfaction.

**Key words:** Elderly/older tourist, seniors, vacation satisfaction, German

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### INTRODUCTION

Customer satisfaction is increasingly becoming a salient issue in most service industries. With reference to the tourism and hospitality industry, it can be stated that satisfied tourists are more likely to recommend the tourist destination to others, which is the cheapest and most effective form of marketing and promotion (Söderlund, 1998). Furthermore, tourist satisfaction usually contributes to increased rates of the retention of tourists' patronage, loyalty and acquisition, which in turn helps in realizing economic goals like increased number of tourists and revenues (Spreng and Mackoy, 1996; Augustyn and Ho, 1998). Customer satisfaction is one of the most widely studied and embraced constructs in marketing. Over the past two decades more than 15,000 academic and trade articles have been published on the topic (Peterson and Wilson, 1992; Pizam and Ellis, 1999). This was originally conceived with reference to goods but has been increasingly developed through the 1980 and 1990s within the field of services marketing (Bowen and Clarke, 2002). The literature related to quality and satisfaction in the tourism dates back to at least the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission reports of 1962 (Baker and Crompton, 2000). Service managers who are well versed in the intricacies of how customers develop service perceptions can therefore, derive a clear advantage from this knowledge. Consistent with this direction, notable scholarly effort has been devoted to improve our practical understanding of such important services constructs as service quality and satisfaction (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Anderson *et al.*, 1994; Taylor and Baker, 1994).

A review of the existing literature indicates a wide variance in the definitions of satisfaction the lack of a

consensus definition limits the contribution of consumer satisfaction research. The satisfaction literature has not yet, explicitly or implicitly, established a generally accepted definition of satisfaction, which has limited the abilities to develop appropriate measures and compare results across studies (Giese and Cote, 2000). According to most common opinion that service encounter satisfaction is defined within the disconfirmation of expectations paradigm (Churchill and Surprenant, 1982; Oliver, 1980; Tse and Wilton, 1988). The theory underlying the disconfirmation paradigm is that consumers reach satisfaction decisions by comparing product or service performance with prior expectations about how the product or service would or should perform. Each individual consumer is assumed to have expectations about how each individual service/product will perform. These expectations are compared with actual perceptions of performance as the product/service is consumed (Bitner, 1990; Oliver, 1980; Caruana *et al.*, 2000; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). In contrast, when expectations exceed performance, the result is customer dissatisfaction (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996; Choi and Chu, 2001). When expectations are met, or when performance actually exceeds expectations, satisfaction results (Bitner, 1990; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988; Walker *et al.*, 2006). Zeithaml *et al.* (1996) argued that the extent of discrepancy between customers' expectations or desires and their perceptions of the quality of service is generated through word-of mouth, personal needs, experience and external communications that influence customers' expectations.

As a consequence, it affects several desirable outcomes like customer long-term loyalty, worth-of-mouth promotion and purchases, economic success. At the same time, through tourist satisfaction, the relationship

between the tourist and the tourist destination is strengthened. Most studies that have been conducted on tourist satisfaction associate high tourist turnover in a destination with dissatisfaction or tourism product with dissatisfaction with the type of tourist services and goods that are provided in a destination (Oliver and Swan, 1989; Fornell, 1992; Spreng and Mackoy, 1996; Augustyn and Ho, 1998; Dolen *et al.*, 2004). Since retaining tourists is as important as attracting new ones, it is necessary to understand international travelers' satisfaction to design promotional campaigns and tour packages to attract and retain tourists (Rittichainuwat *et al.*, 2002). Implicit in this belief is the notion that improvement in performance quality and satisfaction will result in retention or expansion of tourist numbers and active tourism support and ultimately enhanced profitability and political support (Baker and Crompton, 2000). Customer satisfaction has a significant impact on profitability; it is central to assessing the past performance of firms and to predicting their future financial success (Anderson *et al.*, 1994). One of the main problems in achieving this objective is to know how to satisfy consumers. To do this, we must first identify their needs and desires and then we must transform these needs and desires into specific characteristics of the service or product (Dellaert *et al.*, 1998).

**Customer satisfaction:** Customer satisfaction has been noted as a major element needed to create and sustain a competitive business (Ueltschy *et al.*, 2002). Therefore, satisfaction is one of the most debated issues in literature. It has received considerable attention in the marketing literature and practice in recent years (Westbrook and Oliver, 1991; Price *et al.*, 1995). When we have a look at the researches about this topic some of them are about how to measure satisfaction (Oliver, 1980; Baker and Crompton, 2000; Peterson and Wilson, 1992; Pizam and Ellis, 1999) and variables that affect satisfaction (Gilbert *et al.*, 1982; Wirtz and Bateson, 1999; Voss *et al.*, 1998; Dolen *et al.*, 2004; Bowen, 2001), a group of them are about quality-satisfaction-behavioral behavioral intentions (Ismail *et al.*, 2009; Brady and Robertson, 2001; Yoon and Uysal, 2005; González *et al.*, 2007; Oh, 1999; Yu and Dean, 2001). Some of them are contempesed on consumer satisfaction theory and tested the models that they developed (Bitner, 1990; Pieters *et al.*, 1995; Barsky, 1992; Barsky and Labagh, 1992). Recently, numerous researchers have attempted to apply customer satisfaction theories developed by consumer behaviorists in the areas of lodging (Barsky, 1992; Barsky and Labagh, 1992; Saleh and Ryan, 1991; Ekinici and Riley, 1998), restaurant (Bojanic and Rosen, 1994; Lee and Hing, 1995), foodservice (Almanza *et al.*, 1994) and tourism

(Pizam and Milman, 1993; Danaher and Arweiler, 1996; Ryan and Cliff, 1997; Hudson and Shepard, 1998) in order to investigate customer satisfaction applicability to the hospitality and tourism industries. While there are a variety of approaches to the explanation of customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction, the most widely used is the one proposed by Richard Oliver who has developed the expectancy disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1980). According to this theory, which has been tested and confirmed in several studies (Tse and Wilton, 1988), customers purchase goods and services with pre-purchase expectations about anticipated performance (Pizam and Ellis, 1999).

In some researches service satisfaction is inspected about different regions (Akama and Kieti, 2003; Rittichainuwat *et al.*, 2002; Aktas *et al.*, 2007) and different accommodation types (Nash *et al.*, 2006). Especially research of Aktas *et al.* (2007), that is applied in Turkey is taken into consideration. Their research results suggested that importance and satisfaction analysis showed that although different segments of Antalya visitors had different evaluations, the top drivers of satisfaction for all visitors were value for money, variety of attractions, historical richness and variety of shopping products.

**Elderly tourists:** Researches show that travel wishes takes part in first place when people get retired (Gladwell and Bedini, 2004). As people grow older, they feel the need to different parts of the world (Trettheway and Mak, 2006). The proportions of senior tourists are increasing in the world. And their relative wealth is growing faster than that of the most other age groups. In developed countries people of age 55 and above possess a relatively large share of discretionary income because their investments in home and family have been made and their children no longer depend on them (Anderson and Langmeyer, 1982). Many of them have the time to travel and are willing to spend a significant amount of their savings doing so (Fleischer and Pizam, 2002). Therefore, during the past decade older adults have been drawing increased attention from tourism researches (Nimrod, 2008).

Researches about elderly tourists vary different fields. Some of them have focused on descriptive characteristics of older adults' tourism behavior (Javalgi *et al.*, 1992) and on the associations between various sociodemographics and elderly tourists (e.g., Peterson, 2007; Zimmer *et al.*, 1995). Some of them examined about benefits of tourism to elderly (Milman, 1998; Statts and Pierfelice, 2003) and vacation motivation that affect purchasing decision (Sellick, 2004; Shoemaker, 2000; Bai *et al.*, 2001).

Several researchers have examined constraints on tourism at an old age (e.g., McGuire, 1984; McGuire *et al.*, 1986; Blazey, 1987; Fleischer and Pizam, 2002). Another research topic is differences related vacation of youngs and olds (Anderson and Langmeyer, 1982; Ananth *et al.*, 1992; Javalgi *et al.*, 1992; You and O'Leary, 2000; Gibson and Yiannakis, 2002). The older tourists seek a different experience than the younger tourists (Tretheway and Mak, 2006). Other studies examined older tourists and tried to identify differentiated sub-segments within the older adults' segment (e.g., Pennigton-Gray and Lane, 2001; Shoemaker, 2000). But there is a few research in literature on satisfaction of elderly tourists.

**Elderly German tourists:** Europe is a region that is forecast to have a declining population in 2005 and 2025. General population levels in Europe are characterized by low fertility and with high mortality rates. The result is a rapidly ageing population and shrinking population base in future years. Germany's population under the age of 45 is expected to make up 46% of country's population in 2025 on a smaller population base, compared to 55% today (Tretheway and Mak, 2006). Germans that are getting older rapidly are nations that go on more holidays in the world than other nations. German older market comprises of 32% of international travel in Germany (Ryan, 1995). Thus Germans attract interest of all marketers. German seniors constitute a significant market segment in the travel industries of other countries as well.

The senior market is of significant size and importance many countries. Furthermore, various studies suggest that seniors like their younger counterparts, are not all alike and travel for a multitude of reasons. But the same studies have shown that in most cases seniors have different needs and preferences from younger tourists (Fleischer and Pizam, 2002). In spite of the importance of senior market, tourism establishments make applications without knowing characteristic specialties and interests of senior tourists (Wuest *et al.*, 1996; Oh *et al.*, 2002). Thus if the industry is to capture this considerable market, it should satisfy the specific needs of this segment (Fleischer and Pizam, 2002).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**The aim of the study:** The aim of this study is to put forward the satisfaction of elderly German tourists in Bodrum vacation and determining if demographic variables makes any difference or not.

**Sample selection:** For sampling especially September and October of off-season months are chosen which elderly

tourists prefer. Foreign tourist number that visit Bodrum, according to temporary data related to 2008 is 482.270 in September, 499.874 in October and totally 982.144 ([www.turizm.gov.tr](http://www.turizm.gov.tr)). But there isn't any information about the number of German and elderly tourists in this amount. Therefore, taking 982.144 and time and cost limitations into consideration, sampling number that should be taken is determined as 246 for 5% mean level,  $p = 0.8$  and  $0.05$  accepting sampling mistake (Yazicioglu and Erdogan, 2004). Five hundred surveys were left to five star hotels in Bodrum in September and October 2008 for German tourists but 260 surveys returned. These decrease to 250 as a result of extreme value and missing data analysis.

**Data collection:** Collecting data is obtained by applying survey form that is prepared by researcher. Surveys were done during tourists stay in hotel. Therefore, five star hotels that entertain German tourist randomly chosen. A part of the application was done face to face and some part was done by the help of hotel staff.

Survey form consists of two parts. First part consists of nine questions to determine demographic structure of tourists. Second part consists of 21 statements to put forth the vacation satisfaction of elderly tourists and these statements were evaluated by 5 fold likert type scale. This scale is a scale between 5 (too satisfied) and 1 (not satisfied).

**Data analysis:** The data gathered by the survey have been analyzed with the SPSS statistics program, which is devised for the social sciences. Initially, the distributions of the frequencies have been handled and evaluated. The acidity test has been applied by using SPSS 11.0 program for the data. The T-test, variance analyses and Scheffe test has been applied to find out the affect of demographic variables on vacation satisfaction. Alpha scale has been found 0.8669. As a result of T test no relation has been found between elderly's vacation satisfaction and gender and income variables. Statements and variables that do not have meaningful relation are not mentioned in study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the situation of elderly German tourists. As shown in the table, 76% of elderly tourists are between 60 and 74 age group, 24% of them are 75 years old and over. About 45.6% of the subjects are male and 54.4% of the subjects are female. 50.8% of this group are married, 24.4% never married, 19.2% divorced and 15.6% of subjects spouses are dead. 18.4% of elderly tourists are primary school graduates, 58% are high school and 23.6%

**Table 1: Demographic factors of elderly tourists**

Demographic variables	Number	%	General characteristics	Number	%
<b>Age</b>			<b>Annual Income (Euro)</b>		
60-74	190	76	10.000-	35	14.0
75+	60	24	Between 10.000-30.000	95	38.0
			Between 30.000-50.000	72	28.8
			50.000 +	48	19.2
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Occupation</b>		
Male	114	45.6	Officer	62	24.8
Female	136	54.4	Employee	136	54.4
			Self employment	52	20.8
<b>Marital status</b>			<b>Type of incoming</b>		
Not married	36	14.4	Individual	57	22.8
Married	127	50.8	Tour	193	77.2
Divorced	48	19.2			
Spouse dead	39	15.6			
<b>Education</b>					
Primary	46	18.4			
High school	145	58.0			
University	59	23.6			

**Table 2: Relation between age and satisfaction (t-test)**

Satisfaction	Age groups	Mean	F	Sig. (2-tailed)
Statement 4: Communication facilities	60-74	3.96	5.982	0.050*
	75+	3.65		
Statement 16: Health services during vacation	60-74	3.71	4.419	0.034*
	75+	3.35		
Statement 20: Environmental situations	60-74	3.67	11.934	0.013*
	75+	3.15		

\*\*p<0.01 \*p<0.05

have bachelor's degree. About 24.8% are officer, 54.4% are employee and 20.8% of elderly tourists are self employed. Fourteen percent of elderly tourists earn <10.000 Euro annually, 38% earn between 10.000 and 30.000 Euro, 28.8% between 30.000 and 50.000 Euro and 19.2% earn >50.000 Euro annually. While 22.8% of elderly tourists travel individually, 77.2% prefer tour program.

As shown in Table 2, it is determined that in three situation satisfaction level of 60-74 age group are more than the other age groups. It is also determined that communication facilities (p = 0.052), health services during vacation (p = 0.034) and environmental situations (p = 0.013), gives less satisfaction to tourists of 75 years and older.

In Table 3, it is seen that elderly that come via tour are more satisfied with both region selection (F = 0.817, p = 0.044) and travel agencies services (F = 1.145, p = 0.017). Region selection in fact is the personal selection of individual tourists. Thus, it is expected to be more satisfied. However, it can be thought as elderly that travel with tour makes selection with the effect of travel agency staff. Thus the result is interesting. If the tourist has decided the region personally and not satisfied, it can be thought as either not having enough inquiry or expectations are higher than things that are faced with. It is quietly normal that elderly travel with tour operators are more satisfied in terms of travel agency services. Because individual tourists rarely use travel agencies or none. For air transportation it is determined that individual travelers

are more satisfied (F = 7.941, p = 0.038). Preferring small air planes or charters is thought to cause problem. But having a conclusion about this subject is impossible with remaining data. Individual travelers are more satisfied with health services during vacation (F = 5.378, p = 0.015). If the group doesn't have a special deal with the hotel, health services in the hotel are same for everyone. Thus there shouldn't be any difference. But it can be accepted normal on account of expensiveness of individual travel thus higher income level tourists would mainly choose who have special health insurance.

In Table 4 between two of education and satisfaction statements meaningful relation has been found. It is determined that high school graduates are more satisfied with travel agencies services (p = 0.011). University graduates come after.

Higher education level satisfaction with travel agencies services could be commended as less expectation. But this is only a possibility. To make this commend, expectations should be measured that it can be another research topic. When environmental situations affect on satisfaction is inspected, primary school graduates are more satisfied (p = 0.041).

In Table 5, local agencies services (F = 3.944, p = 0.021), land transportation (F = 10.407, p = 0.000), airport services in Turkey (F = 9.335, p = 0.000), Informing about holiday region (F = 4.707, p = 0.010), hotel services (F = 6.827, p = 0.001), hotel staff (F = 9.568, p = 0.000), satisfactions are higher in self employed tourists.

Table 3: Relation between type of incoming and satisfaction (t-test)

Satisfaction	Type of incoming	Mean	F	Sig. (2-tailed)
Statement 2. Region selection	Individual	3.98	0.817	0.044*
	Tour	4.28		
Statement 3. Travel agencies services	Individual	3.82	1.145	0.017*
	Tour	4.17		
Statement 7. Air transportation	Individual	4.14	7.941	0.038*
	Tour	3.88		
Statement 16. Health services during vacation	Individual	3.89	5.378	0.015*
	Tour	3.54		
Statement. Animation facilities in the hotel	Individual	4.04	7.263	0.030*
	Tour	3.76		
	Tour	4.27		

Table 4: Relation between education and satisfaction (One-way ANOVA)

Satisfaction	Profession	Mean	F	Sig.	Scheffe
Statement 3. Travel agencies services	Primary school	3.74	4.581	0.011**	1-2
	High school	4.18			
	University	4.14			
Statement 20. Environmental situations	Primary school	3.89	3.248	0.041**	
	High school	3.40			
	University	3.66			

df = 2 \*\*p<0.01 \*p<0.05

Table 5: Relation between profession and satisfaction (One-way ANOVA)

Satisfaction	Profession	Mean	F	Sig.	Scheffe
Statement 5. Local agencies services	State officer	3.41	3.944	0.021*	1-3
	Employee	3.82			
	Self employment	3.90			
Statement 6. Land transportation	State officer	3.11	10.407	0.000**	1-2, 1-3
	Employee	3.83			
	Self employment	3.85			
Statement 7. Air transportation	State officer	3.61	3.809	0.023*	1-2
	Employee	4.05			
	Self employment	4.02			
Statement 8. Airport services in Turkey	State officer	3.45	9.335	0.000**	1-2, 1-3
	Employee	4.00			
	Self employment	4.19			
Statement 9. Informing about holiday region	State officer	3.58	4.707	0.010*	1-2, 1-3
	Employee	4.00			
	Self employment	4.06			
Statement 10. Hotel services	State officer	3.47	6.827	0.001**	1-2, 1-3
	Employee	3.92			
	Self employment	4.15			
Statement 11. Hotel staff	State officer	3.39	9.568	0.000**	1-2, 1-3
	Employee	4.01			
	Self employment	4.17			
Statement 12. Sound insulation in hotel	State officer	3.39	5.937	0.003**	1-2, 1-3
	Employee	4.01			
	Self employment	4.17			
Statement 13. Security services of hotel	State officer	3.19	7.980	0.000**	1-2, 1-3
	Employee	3.83			
	Self employment	3.79			
Statement 14. Hotel hygiene	State officer	3.52	6.145	0.002**	1-2
	Employee	4.04			
	Self employment	3.92			
Statement 15. Environmental hygiene	State officer	3.16	11.953	0.000**	1-2, 1-3
	Employee	3.90			
	Self employment	3.87			
Statement 16. Health services during vacation	State officer	3.23	6.937	0.001**	1-2
	Employee	3.81			
	Self employment	3.60			
Overall satisfaction	State officer	70.95	9.125	0.000**	1-2, 1-3
	Employee	77.51			
	Self employment	78.29			

df = 2 \*\*p<0.01 \*p<0.05

Air transportation ( $F = 3.809$ ,  $p = 0.023$ ), hotel security services ( $F = 7.980$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), hotels hygiene ( $F = 6.145$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), environmental hygiene ( $F = 11.953$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), health services during vacation ( $F = 6.937$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), satisfaction is higher in employee.

When over all satisfaction is taken into consideration, it is determined that state officers are least satisfied group from vacation, employees comes after and most satisfied is self employed.

### CONCLUSION

Seventy six percent of German tourists that took part in survey are between 60 and 74 age group. Nearly half of them male and more than half are female. Half of this group is married and other half is single. Singles consists of people that never married, divorced and spouse dead. 58% of elderly tourists are high school graduates. While 14% of elderly annually income is <10.000 Euro, 38% between 10.000 and 30.000 Euro, 28.8% 30.000-50.000 Euro and 19.2% earns >50.000 Euro annually. About 22.8% of elderly tourists prefer to travel individually and 77.2% prefer to travel by tour.

It is determined that 60-74 age groups satisfaction is more than others for statements communication facilities, health services and environmental effects in relation between age and satisfaction.

In relation between type of incoming and satisfaction, it is determined that elderly tourist that prefer tours are more satisfied with region selection and travel agencies services. Region selection in fact is individual elderly tourists own selection. Thus it is expected to be more satisfied. Because of this the result is interesting. If the tourist is not satisfied with the region that he decided to go, it can be said that expectations of the tourist is more than the service he receive or he did not take enough inquiries. Being more satisfied with travel agency services quite normal for tourists that come with tour. Individual tourists rarely use travel agency or never use. For air transportation, it is determined that individual tourists are more satisfied. It can be said that satisfaction of scheduled flights are more than satisfaction of charters. It is also determined that individual travelers are more satisfied with health services during vacation.

In relation between education and satisfaction, it is determined that satisfaction of travel agency services decreases with the decrease in education. According to this result it can be said that expectation of tourist low education level are higher. To say that expectations must be measured; it can be a subject of another research. When environmental situations affect on satisfaction is inspected, it is found more satisfied in terms of primary school graduates.

In relation between profession and satisfaction, it is determined that self employed are more satisfied with local agencies services, land transportation, airport services in Turkey, informing about vacation region, hotel services, hotel staff and sound insulation. For satisfaction of air transportation, hotel security services, hotel hygiene, environment hygiene and health services during vacation it is determined more for employee group.

As a result of the research it is determined that some elements (age group, education, type of incoming, profession) affect vacation satisfaction. Establishments that serve elderly tourists must take care to the differences of this segment to satisfy their customers.

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