



Rosen Research Focus | Asli D.A. Tasci

INFLUENCES ON DESTINATION LOYALTY



Tasci studied the drivers of destination loyalty in relation to place- and people-related factors.



Lower Duden Waterfalls, Antalya.

Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management and fellow researchers have undertaken research in the popular tourist destination of Antalya, Turkey to investigate destination loyalty. The study explores whether place-oriented or people-oriented factors have a larger influence on tourists' likelihood to revisit the same destinations, while also considering the differences between domestic and international tourists. The findings from this research will support tourism managers' understanding of how to drive repeat visits in a market with overwhelming competition.

Destination loyalty refers to the phenomenon whereby individuals choose to revisit the same vacation destination multiple times. It is a relatively well-known concept often used as an important measure of commercial success within the tourism industry, as it reflects visitors' strong personal desire to return to a specific location. Many researchers have focused on understanding how to encourage tourists to return to a prior destination, especially when there is a whole world of possibilities to explore.

Prior research indicates that many of the driving factors, including satisfaction, risk, loyalty, facilities, climate, and even the friendliness of hosts or staff, are place-related. So far, there have been fewer studies into the impact of people-related influences, which may include cultural differences, social distance, and emotional solidarity. It is important to consider people-related factors as well, as tourists may be motivated

by discovering authenticity in the real lives of others, far away from their everyday realities.

Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management and fellow researchers have developed a model of destination loyalty that integrates both people-oriented and place-oriented factors. Their research aimed to uncover the impact of cognitive image factors—i.e., tourists' pre-existing perceptions—as well as the influence of more emotionally driven perspectives upon place attachment (the bond between a tourist and a location). It also examined the interactions between social distance, cultural familiarity, and emotional closeness, while determining their effects upon destination loyalty. Tasci and her colleagues hope their research will be useful to tourism managers as it will provide insight into how they can inspire destination loyalty in their customers.

PLACE-RELATED PARTICULARS

An initial aim of the study was to investigate if destination image—a place-oriented concept

that encapsulates a tourist's combined knowledge, emotions, and intentions regarding specific locations—has an impact on an individual's place attachment. Prior research has been undertaken across a selection of domestic and international tourist populations, from golf retreaters in China to Korean pop fans, to examine the connection between destination image and place attachment. All previous data indicates that destination image has a positive influence on place attachment.

Other research has also demonstrated that place attachment plays a central role in destination loyalty. This explains how the emotional bonds tourists may create with a particular destination can drive their intention to revisit. Positive links have been recognised between place attachment and destination loyalty. Therefore, Tasci and her colleagues formed the hypothesis that place attachment would have a significant impact on loyalty in their research.

PEOPLE-ORIENTED FACTORS

Along with the examination of place-related factors, the research team analyzed the relative importance of people-oriented elements including perceived distance.

The concept of 'distance' does not always refer to the number of miles a person has traveled to reach their destination, but can also relate to more abstract concepts, such as cultural or social distance. Prior research has demonstrated that when perceived distance is smaller, or there are strong cultural similarities between tourists and residents, it can lead to stronger emotional solidarity. The research team predicted that perceived differences could have a negative influence upon a tourists' emotional solidarity. This refers to how strongly a tourist may identify with a place and its people, possibly influencing their intention to return—or not.

The researchers also believed it was important to consider the relationship

between hosts and guests to gain a better understanding of place attachment as social experiences and interpersonal relationships strengthen bonds and attachments to a destination. Dr. Tasci predicted that emotional solidarity would have positive influence on both place attachment and destination loyalty. Another major factor investigated by the team was the difference between international and domestic visitors in relation to destination loyalty. Tourists traveling from abroad may have different reasons and motivations for returning to a travel destination than local visitors. For example, foreign tourists are more likely to visit another country to experience a culture different from their own, whereas domestic tourists may be returning to visit a specific event or attraction.

PERCEPTIONS OF DESTINATION LOYALTY IN ANTALYA

The research was conducted in the popular tourist destination of Antalya, Turkey. At hotspots around the city, such as beaches, heritage sites, and natural attractions, tourists were approached and asked to take part in a short survey. Both domestic and international tourists were recruited. Those from outside Turkey tended to live in European countries such as Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Spain, Azerbaijan, and the U.K. A total of 510 tourists (260 domestic and 250 international) completed the survey, which was carefully designed to measure information about their current and past visits to this destination.

The researchers wanted to capture both cognitive and affective image for destination image to ensure a complete assessment of this element. Cognitive factors such as sights, activities, attractions, shopping, nightlife, and cuisine were measured with a Likert-type scale, whereas the affective factors were recorded using emotional scales. These ranged from pleasant to unpleasant, arousing to sleepy, exciting to gloomy, and relaxing to distressed. There were also questions measuring cultural distance, social distance, emotional solidarity, place attachment, and destination loyalty.

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IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESULTS

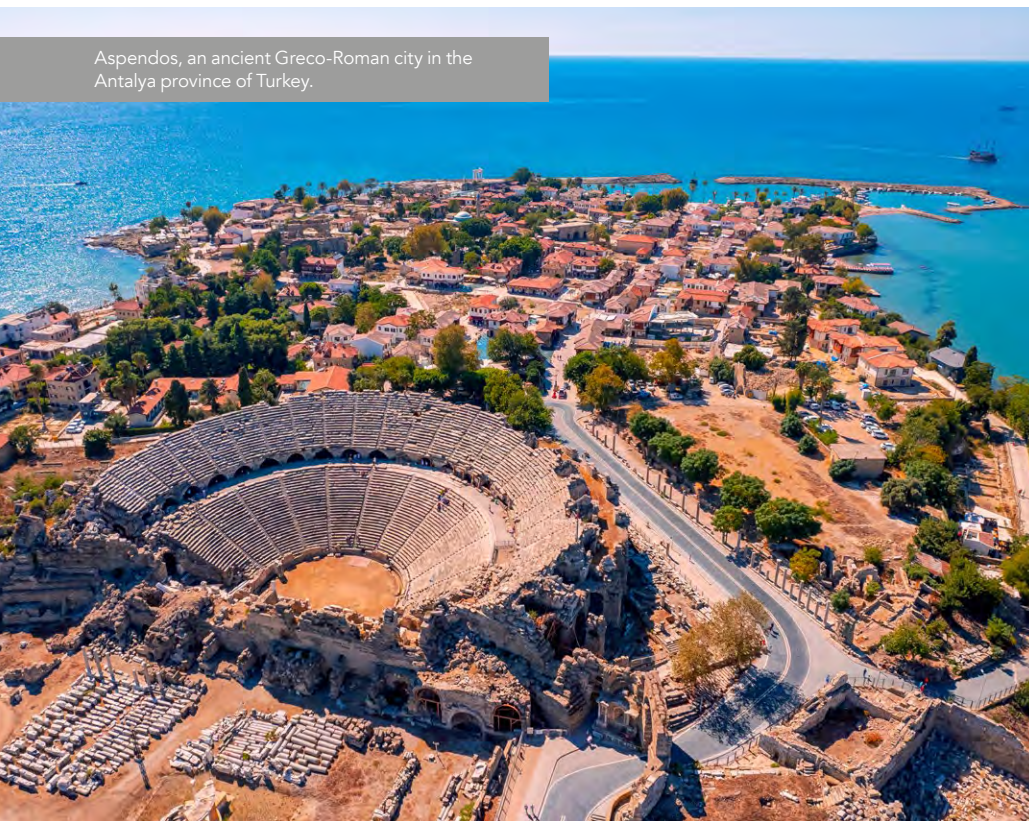
The findings from this study demonstrate specific differences between the perceptions of domestic and international visitors to Antalya. The researchers found that domestic tourists were more likely to rate the festivals and nightlife highly, as well as considering the destination to be more pleasant. This may be due to domestic visitors engaging more with local activities. In comparison, international tourists rated shopping, food, and local hospitality as better. Despite major tourist cities in Turkey tending to adopt elements from other European cultures, international tourists often have a stronger interest in local features such as cuisine and authentic souvenirs. International tourists also felt a higher cultural difference than domestic tourists, indicating that cultural difference is not directly related to social difference. Domestic tourists also tended to give higher ratings to emotional solidarity, place attachment, and past and future loyalty.

Interestingly, both place-oriented and people-oriented factors played a role in destination

loyalty, particularly in relation to destination image and place attachment. Both cognitive and affective images had a positive influence, although the impact of cognitive images was felt more strongly. The research team believed this highlights that, although affective elements are important, tourists' knowledge of attributes is a more significant driver in destination loyalty.

INTERESTINGLY, BOTH PLACE-ORIENTED AND PEOPLE-ORIENTED FACTORS PLAYED A ROLE IN DESTINATION LOYALTY, PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO DESTINATION IMAGE AND PLACE ATTACHMENT.

Aspendos, an ancient Greco-Roman city in the Antalya province of Turkey.



Both place-oriented and people-oriented factors play a role in destination loyalty.



As predicted, place attachment had a significant positive influence on destination loyalty. Interestingly, place *identity* had a higher influence on past loyalty, whereas place *dependence* had a greater influence on future loyalty. Tasci and her fellow researchers believe this makes sense as place identity is more related to personal impressions of a destination, whereas place dependence relates to future behaviors. In terms of the influence of perceived distance upon emotional solidarity, social distance was found to have a significant positive influence on emotional closeness and sympathetic understanding. This supports the theory that social interaction affects emotional bonds surrounding place attachment. The team believes these findings emphasize the prominence of social distance more than cultural distance as a key factor in loyalty.

FUTURE USE

The model was a better predictor of future rather than past loyalty, establishing that place-oriented factors were more significant predictors of destination loyalty than those that were people-oriented. Thoughts and emotions regarding the destination were more of a driver than interactions with locals. The research reveals that certain tourist attributes are needed for people to feel attached to a place. Tasci and collaborators feel that these results demonstrate the need for tourism managers to highlight authenticity and heritage for international customers, while also providing exciting activities and nightlife for domestic tourists who are more familiar with the culture. Using promotional materials showing locals and tourists having positive interactions would also be helpful in creating perceptions of social unity and sympathetic understanding.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci investigates the main drivers of destination loyalty in relation to place- and people-related factors.

REFERENCES

Tasci, A.D.A., Uslu, A., Styliadis, D., Woosnam, K.M. (2022). Place-oriented or people-oriented concepts for destination loyalty: Destination image and place attachment versus perceived distances and emotional solidarity. *Journal of Travel Research*, 61 (2), 430–453. doi.org/10.1177/00472875209823

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

Based on this research, what advice would you give to tourism managers looking to drive greater destination loyalty?

// Image is still everything; destination managers need to focus on improving the knowledge about their touristic attributes to attract repeat visits from both domestic and international visitors. //



Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci



Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci is a Professor in the field of tourism and hospitality marketing at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. After receiving her doctoral degree (destination marketing) from Michigan State University in 2003, she worked in Turkey, Hong Kong, and the U.S.A. Her research interests include tourism and hospitality marketing, particularly consumer behavior. She completed a number of studies measuring destination image and branding with a cross-cultural perspective.

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The Temple of Apollo, Side Old Town, is a notable tourist attraction in Antalya Province.