



## An Analysis of Participant Attitudes toward International Tourism Fairs

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine participants' attitudes toward international tourism fairs by using statistical methods. A survey was used as the data collection method. 467 participants who participated in international tourism exhibitions held in Kiev / Ukraine, Minsk / Belarus, Tbilisi / Georgia, and Seoul / South Korea in 2017 were given a questionnaire related to the research subject. The statistical data were analyzed by means of the SPSS package program. The variables were described in terms of frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean and standard deviation statistics, and t test and variance analysis were performed. According to the results of the participant attitude analysis, participating in tourism fairs makes both organizationally and individually positive contribution to tourism businesses.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

With subsectors such as accommodation and transportation, the tourism sector has social and economic aspects, undergoing an incessantly evolving and transforming process. Technological developments, the rising level of social welfare, and the information explosion have also affected the activities of tourism enterprises. Tools such as the Internet and social media offer great opportunities for both tourism and tourism participants in terms of access to information and marketing. To attract more interest in the resources they have, tourism destinations host various tourism events such as fairs and sponsor various activities. We can say that tourism fairs make significant contributions to all stakeholders in the tourism sector. Karakaş and Şengül (2017) state that asking for the opinions and suggestions of the participants in tourism fairs is important for the participants to be able to influence the fair organizers, and thus feel that they play an active role in tourism. Furthermore, activities such as fairs create intercultural interaction (Binbaşıoğlu and Gültekin, 2013), and therefore by enabling cultural value sharing, tourism fairs and festivals benefit both entertainment and culture as well as economic and social development (Jauhari and Munjal, 2015). According to the research results, tourism activities offer rich benefits to stakeholders. The aim of the present study is revealing the attitudes of participants attending international tourism fairs toward these fairs through statistical methods. There is a copious amount of research in the literature on tourism fairs and tourism fair organizations (Torun et. al., 2012; Esfidani et al., 2012; Avan et. al., 2016; Şengel et al., 2017; Sarmiento & Simões, 2018).

## **TOURISM EVENTS**

Event tourism is both a line of business and a globally important sector of the economy; it is also a practical field of study for understanding and developing tourism through activities (Getz, 2016). Events not only contribute to the economic development of a region, but also create more awareness and economic value for the regions in which they are held (Jauhari and Munjal, 2015).

The festivals and fairs in the scope of the events play an important role in the lives of societies; therefore, various events are organized to improve the image perceived by local communities and visitors (Gürsoy et al., 2004). Hence, developing fair activities and measuring their impact on tourism will be beneficial for tourism stakeholders. Tourism events organized at national and international level play a key role in creating the demand for tourism. Festivals and fairs have attracted the attention of humans since ancient times and it is safe to predict that this interest will continue in the future. Fairs contribute to the development of international relations and trade (Aymankuy, 2006). Therefore, the participation of tourism enterprises, entrepreneurs and other tourism stakeholders in tourism activities should be encouraged and supported by public organizations and relevant NGOs. *“The exhibitions are large exhibitions that are opened to showcase merchandise at certain times and in certain places. Today, not only commercial goods but also services and entertainment are introduced and marketed at the fairs. As such, fairs are of great importance within the tourism sector, with a leading role in the service industry and major contribution to the national economy.”* (Aymankuy, 2006). As a marketing activity for the participating companies, fairs help visitors both to establish good relations with the companies and to get the services they need (Çakıcı, 2017). In addition, fairs are becoming

increasingly important both to promote touristic destinations and to inform the visitors about the recent developments in tourism. Today, international tourism fairs have become more important. The importance of international tourism fairs is better appreciated when they are viewed in terms of both the number of participants and the number of visitors. International ITB Berlin is the world's leading travel fair. In 2018, 10,000 companies and organizations from 186 countries hosted about 170,000 people, including 110,000 commercial visitors (<https://www.itbberlin>). FITUR (International Tourism Trade Fair) tourism professionals and IBERO is a global meeting point for the leading trade fairs in the American market. In 2018, an international exhibition of 10.190 exhibitors, 140.120 commercial exhibitors and 110.860 visitors from 165 countries and regions participated in the international tourism fair (<http://www.ifema.es/fitur>).

MITT (Moscow International Travel & Tourism Exhibition), the largest B2B (Business to Business) travel event of Russia and CIS, attracts representatives from the tourism sector from Russia and other parts of the world. MITT, which attracted 22,777 professional visitors and 1,799 companies from 80 regions of Russia and 90 other countries in 2018, is one of the most prestigious fairgrounds in the world with its 40.000-m<sup>2</sup> exhibition area and seven exhibition halls. MITT fair visitors' specific lines of business include tour agency, tour guide MICE (Meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions), corporate tours, hotels, accommodation, medical centers, and clinics (<http://www.mitt.ru>). UTRECHT Tourism Fair, which was held in the Netherlands from 9 to 14 January 2018, was attended by more than 1,400 tourism organizations and 108,779 visitors from 70 countries (<http://www.tanitma.gov.tr/TR>). In addition to providing guidance to stakeholders, local people, tour operators, tourists, tourism entrepreneurs, public sector and government as well as those interested in these fairs EMITT' Istanbul (East Mediterranean International Tourism & Travel Exhibition) is a business platform that offers new business and collaboration opportunities to the sector. At the fair where participants have the opportunity to increase their business volume, there are country pavilions, holiday destinations, summer tourism, winter tourism and outdoor tourism destinations, hotels and tourism centers, tour operators and agencies ([www.emittistanbul.com](http://www.emittistanbul.com)).

## **ATTITUDE**

The reason why the concept of attitude, which is carefully emphasized in many areas ranging from psychology to sociology, from political science to marketing, is so important is that it has an elastic structure that is compatible with every subject. Many topics (attractiveness, buying behavior, customer satisfaction, etc.) are based on the attitude concept (Demirtaş, 2012). Thus, to gain a deeper grasp of the subject, it would be helpful to cite some definitions of the concept of "attitude" here. Ajzen (1993) defined the attitude as "*a tendency of the individual to react to a certain object. In another definition, attitude was defined as "an individual's assessment of another individual, group, object, behavior, institution, event or thought, and of self"* (Demirtaş, 2012). Kağıtcıbaşı, (1999) explains attitude as "*an individual's tendency to form personal thoughts and emotions about psychological objects in a regular fashion.*" It was emphasized that attitude has three dimensions as cognitive, emotional and behavioral (Ajzen, 1993). The cognitive dimension is the verbal information about the attitude object. The emotional dimension comprises all the observable affective reactions including the physiological reactions such as excitement, sweating, accelerated heartbeat, and verbal reactions toward the attitude object. The behavioral dimension includes all the observable

behaviors toward a certain attitude object (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1999). That the tourism product is naturally human-centered at its production, consumption and presentation stages renders the psychological dimension of tourism highly important. Therefore, the body of research focusing on consumer behaviors, attitudes and tourism events constitutes a major part of the science of tourism. Especially in recent years, the rising number of national and international studies on event tourism is clearly remarkable.

In his study on trade fairs and exhibitions, Kozak (2005) points out the differences between EMITT fair participants' participation purposes and the related variables. The perceived sub-dimensions of the participant purposes were determined by using factor analysis. This factor analysis yielded four factors as (1) "*strategic benefit-oriented activities*", (2) "*sales-related activities*", (3) "*promotional activities*," and these were related to (4) "*research-related activities*". Among these factors, in terms of the strategic benefit-oriented targets, the highest value was found for the target of "improving the image of the company," and regarding the research factors, the highest values were identified for "collecting information about competitors" and "comparing our market and competitive position". On the other hand, among the targets related to sales and promotion, the lowest values were found for "meeting new customers," "customer relations," and "forming new business relations." In his study in the Lismore region of Austria, Mackellar (2006) studied the links between congress, festival and tourism organizations by applying network analysis, which revealed that the links between tourism and congress organizations are an indispensable part of performing an event successfully, and described the organizations contributing to the development of the congress and festival. Some important participants of festivals and organizations, representatives of governments and congress organizers were included in a series of in-depth interviews, and many other actors reported playing a critical role in the successful operation of the network. This study also found that a strong relationship between festival coordinators and media supported by promotional coverage in local newspapers bolsters the effectiveness of congresses, while underlining the importance of cooperation, resource sharing, innovation, and regional development. In their research on international trade fairs, Yüksel and Voola (2010) analyzed the perceptions about company effectiveness and challenges they faced, along with participant motivations for attending such fairs. Their findings revealed that some of the most important promotional targets for the success of a country's international promotion are having a sales office representative in the target markets, providing effective and efficient information, implementing lobbying activities, having professional and educated fair employees, and having printed materials. Among the main targets that a company aims to achieve by participating in international travel trade fairs are developing relationships with customers and learning their needs, increasing demand through personalized and direct communication, and improving the national image. As the factors that affect the participation in the international travel fair, the reputation of the fair, the profile of the visitors, and the past exhibition performance are among the highest-frequency factors. In addition, it was also found that following the contacts in the fair, performance evaluation of the fairs, receiving effective government support, and financial, accessibility or logistical challenges in participating in the fairs are among the major challenges highlighted. Another study conducted by Lukrecija and Nemanja (2010) focused on the commercial exhibitors and non-commercial visitors attending ITB Berlin by their nationality, age range, exhibition companies, exhibition types, interest and general impressions. In the study

conducted in ITB Berlin between 2004 and 2008, it hotels were found to constituted the highest number of the enterprises participating in the fair whereas travel technology / information and reservation systems companies represented the lowest number of participants. The countries that visited ITB Berlin most frequently were found to be Germany, the European Union countries, and some non-member countries from North America, the Near East, Central Asia, and Africa, respectively. The products exhibited at the fair are tour operators, travel agencies, hotel businesses, consulting / advertising agencies, transportation companies (bus, railway, transport, airline), tourism associations, and travel technology, information and reservation systems. In addition, in terms of their purposes, the fairs visited by the non-commercial visitors were ranked as vacation trips, adventure trips, culture tourism, training trips, business trips, health tours, sports trips, and student and youth trips, respectively. The age range of the most frequent visitors is the 42-50 and 51-60 age groups, and the 0-20 age range represents the lowest number of visitors. The majority of the visitors stated that they were satisfied with the fair. In order to determine marine tourism industry enterprises' purpose of participating in fairs, Arlı (2012) found that the most important purpose of attending fairs was 'promoting new goods/services.' The second most important purpose was "*attracting new customers*" and "*increasing the profitability of the business*", and the third was "*contacting clients and establishing relationships with them.*" According to the findings of this study, marine tourism businesses' fair participation purposes geared toward new products, new customers and profitability. In their study on tourism fairs and exhibitions, Chen and Mo (2012) focused on factors determining the service quality of trade fairs. In their study, path analysis was applied for 241 participants (136 men, 105 women). They determined the service quality with six factors including fair management, registration, content, fair and exhibition attractiveness, exhibition layout and function, and access. The highest age range of the participants is 34-44 and the lowest age group is 18-24. Associate program or university graduates have the highest participation rate while those with a postgraduate degree display the lowest rate of participation. The majority of the participants stated that they participated in at least three fairs. In their study on visitors to fairs and festivals, Rittichainuwat and Mair (2012) researched the participation objectives of "shopping customers" and "customers participating in seminars to maintain their awareness of the new trends in the tourism industry and to seek new information." Their findings indicate that visitors to consumer travel fairs have more than one source of motivation such as purchasing, acquiring information, being interested in the subject, or being encouraged by the media to visit. Half of the visitors view travel fairs as an important distribution channel whereby they can make special agreements about trips to the selected destinations. Furthermore, discounts and special promotions on the purchased products, reviewing products before making a decision, collecting information for future purchases, interest in the exhibition theme, observe product development, meeting travel gurus and celebrities are some other motivating factors that drive participation. Focusing on fairs, Munjal (2015) aimed to identify the weaknesses and strengths of fairs, to emphasize the importance of the cultural resources and to encourage urban development. Supported by the government and civil societies, fair stakeholder and participant awareness of these issues was fostered. In their study on maximizing the cultural and economic benefits from trade fairs and festivals, Jauhari and Munjal (2015) discussed the opportunities afforded and challenges posed by fairs and festivals. While noting the increasing awareness about events and fairs, they highlighted the need for raising awareness about tourism destinations, and creating potential for the regional investments and commercial activities. In their study to determine

whether Romanians are interested in attending fairs and festivals and whether they want to travel or not to attend them, Teodoroiu et al. (2016) surveyed 116 participants whose majority were young people. According to the research results, the desire to participate in fairs and festivals was determined as 84%. Among the sources of information considered in selecting a resort (vacation destination) to stay, online reviews had the highest rate, followed by recommendations from family and friends. Şengel et al. (2017) studied the potential effects of congress and fair organizations on tourism. In general, it was found that the participants attended the fair more than three times. The participants who were participating in EMITT as a representative of a country, a city or a company had a minimum of five years of experience in the tourism sector. Their study also indicated that congress and fair organizations are very effective in country, city or company promotions. They also found that fairs contribute to the improvement of tourism by allowing finding new contacts, meeting new people, and creating a positive image of tourism.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this study, the survey was used as the data collection method. In the first part of the questionnaire form, there are 9 questions related to the demographic characteristics, while the second part of the questionnaire form includes 12-item statements for measuring the attitudes of the participants. These statements were ranked with a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from “I absolutely disagree” = 1, to “I absolutely agree”= 5. By reviewing the previous studies on the subject (Aycı, 2011; Torun et. al., 2012; Burgucu, 2013; Çelik & Göçmen, 2013; <http://www.stteurasia.com>) the second part of the questionnaire was created, and the soundness of the questionnaire in terms of both content and comprehensibility was verified by expert opinion. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for internal consistency of the 12-item scale was calculated as 0,897.

The study group consists of 467 participants participating in international tourism fairs held in Kiev / Ukraine, Minsk / Belarus, Tbilisi / Georgia, and Seoul / South Korea in 2017. The themes of these tourism fairs focus on health tourism and health equipment, promotion of food and beverage products and kitchen equipment, promotion of tourism destinations and tour sales. According to the individual characteristics of the participants of these fairs, they are entrepreneurs who invest in the tourism sector, professional managers and employees, researchers and media, and other visitors from the different business lines of the tourism sector. The statistical analyses in the present study were performed with SPSS package program. The study variables are defined by frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean and standard deviation statistics. Moreover, since the parametric test assumptions were supported (normal distribution, homogeneity of variances, number of individuals in each group, etc.), t-test was applied in the case of two independent groups, and variance analysis was performed in the case of three independent groups. Based on the variance analysis, the Tukey test, as a multiple comparisons test, was used for the comparison of the two groups.

## **RESULTS**

Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage distributions related to the individual characteristics of the 467 participants in our study. According to the Table, 56.7% of the participants are female and 43.3% are male. In their study on congress and fair organizations, Şengel, et al. (2017) found that the number of women attending the fairs is

higher than the number of men. 20.8% of the participants in the current study are 24 and younger, 41.8% are aged 25-34, 23.3% are aged 35-44, and 14.1% are in the 45 and older age group. When the distribution of the participants according to their marital status is examined, it can be seen that 46.9% of them are single and 53.1% are married. Further, 38.3% of the participants are from Ukraine, 26.6% are from Belarus, from 13.1% are from Georgia, 9.2% are from Turkey, and 6.4% are from other countries (Turkmenistan, Poland, Latvia, Serbia, Azerbaijan, South Korea, Greece, Slovakia, Germany, Finland, and China). Tourism is a phenomenon that brings together different nationalities and mediates cultural change. According to their educational status, 62.5% of the participants have an undergraduate degree, 21.4% of them have a post-graduate degree, 7.7% of them have an associate degree, 3.0% graduated from a secondary school, and 5.4% of them reported having other level of education. Chen and Mo (2012) also investigated the factors determining the service quality of the fairs. By their level of education, the group with the highest fair participation rate is “associate program” or “university” graduates, and the group with the lowest rate of participation is the “post-graduates.” These results indicate that the level of education is a prominent feature in every aspect of life. It is possible to say that the participants with a high level of education have less interest in fairs because their frequency of participation shows that they have attended fairs no more than three times. 40.5% of the participants are visitors, 29.1% are businesspersons, 12.4% are manufacturers, 12.2% are researchers and 5.8% are distributors. Şengel, et. al., (2017) report that the distribution of the participants by business fields is as follows: travel agencies / tour operators (11%) hotels / resorts (17%), foreign participants (12%) and towns / associations (24%). It can also be seen that the distribution of the participants according to their fields of operation is 34.3% in “medical services”, 23.3% are other (visitors), 11.1% in “food and beverage”, 20.6% in “travel agency,” and 10.7% operate in the field of “accommodation.” According to the findings of the research conducted by Kozak (2005), 50.6% of the fair participants work in the travel sector and 36.7% of the participants work in the hospitality industry. 74.8% of the participants work in public and 25.2% work in private companies. As regards to the participation of private companies or public enterprises in fairs, participation rates of 1 times (21.6%), 2 or 4 times (42.3%), and 5 times (36%) were reported. The majority of the participants stated that they participated in tourism fairs for the purpose of “expanding the customer network” (34.0%), “advertising” (30.8%), “selling” (14.6%), “knowing competitors” (6.4%), and “other” (7.1%). Kozak (2005) lists the purposes reported most frequently by the participants for attending fairs as “enhancing company's image,” “collecting information about competitors,” “benchmarking our market and competitive position,” and “test introduction of a product/services,” respectively. In addition, the distribution of the participation frequencies of the participants in tourism fairs is shown in Table 1 as “for the first time” (25.3%), “the second time” (36.8%), “the third time” (15.2%), and “the fourth time or more” (22.7%), with the participants attending a fair for the second time forming the biggest group.

An overview of the individual characteristics of the participants in Table 1 reveals that the proportion of female participants (56.7%) is higher than the male participants. This shows that the gender factor has no positive or negative impact on commercial fair visitors, but we can say that female employment has a significant proportion in the tourism sector. When the distribution of the participants according to age groups is considered, it is clear that the majority of them belong to the 25-44 age group, which can be explained by the fact that the participants attain professional seniority and maturity in terms of experience and status only after reaching this age level.

**Table 1:** Distribution of Participants According To Their Individual Characteristics (n=467)

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Gender	Female	265	56,7
	Male	202	43,3
Age	24 -	97	20,8
	25-34	195	41,8
	35-44	109	23,3
	45+	66	14,1
Marital Status	Single	219	46,9
	Married	248	53,1
Nationality	Russia	30	6,4
	Belarus	124	26,6
	Georgia	61	13,1
	Ukraine	179	38,3
	Turkey	43	9,2
	Others (visitor)	30	6,4
Education Status	Secondary school	14	3,0
	Associate degree	36	7,7
	Undergraduate degree	292	62,5
	Post-Graduate	100	21,4
	Other	25	5,4
Occupational Position	Manufacturer	58	12,4
	Tradesperson	136	29,1
	Distributor	27	5,8
	Researcher	57	12,2
	Other (visitor)	189	40,5
Field of Operation	Accommodation	50	10,7
	Travel Agency	96	20,6
	Food and Beverage	52	11,1
	Medical Services	160	34,3
	Other (visitor)	109	23,3
Purpose of Participation	Advertise	144	30,8
	Expanding the Customer Network	159	34,0
	Determining Target Group	33	7,1
	Selling	68	14,6
	Knowing competitors	30	6,4
	Other (visitor)	33	7,1
Participation Frequency	1	118	25,3
	2	172	36,8
	3	71	15,2
	4+	106	22,7
<b>Total</b>		<b>467</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Remarkably, the citizens of the country where the fair organizations are organized demonstrate more interest in participating in the fairs. In addition, the fact that the majority of the participants have university level education is another remarkable point. By occupational position, only the “visitor” group has a significant proportion, followed by “tradesperson.” In terms of their field of operation, “visitor” has a significant proportion. Concerning the purpose of participation, “advertising,” “expanding the customer network” and “selling” are purposes highlighted the strongest by the participants, showing that they are aware of tourism fairs and eager to attend them.



In the current study, the descriptive statistical items aiming to determine the attitudes of the participants about international tourism fairs are presented in Table 2. The statistics in Table 2 reveal that the arithmetic mean value for all items is close to or above 4. Participants' most positive attitude towards tourism exhibitions is "gives the opportunity to know international companies" ( $\bar{X}=4,37$ ), and to this statement %52.7 of the participants responded with "I absolutely agree" and %36.0 responded with "I agree." Further, the participants responded the statements of "expands company's customer network" ( $\bar{X}=4,34$ ), "provided the opportunity to promote the company's products" ( $\bar{X}=4,33$ ) and "gives the opportunity to know the company's other products" ( $\bar{X}=4,31$ ) with a higher level of positive attitude. However, the participants less positively responded to the statements "Provides information about the target markets" ( $\bar{X}=4,03$ ), "Allows our company feedback on the market" ( $\bar{X}=4,01$ ), "Improves the company's international recognition" ( $\bar{X}=4,00$ ), and "It makes it easier for us to plan for the future" ( $\bar{X}=4,92$ ). In the perceived attitude subscale, the arithmetic mean of all items is close to each other and varies between ( $\bar{X}=3,92$ ) and ( $\bar{X}=4,37$ ).

Congress and fair organizations clearly emerge as an important factor in successful country, city or company publicity. It is obvious that fairs have an important role in finding new contacts, meeting new individuals, getting to know different cultures and strengthening the positive image of tourism, and thus have a significant impact on the development of the tourism sector. Furthermore, in the relevant literature other positive aspects of the fair organizations are stated as improving relations with customers and learning the needs of customers, influencing demand through personalized and direct communication, and creating positive values for the country (Şengel et al., 2017; Yüksel & Voola, 2010; Hausmann, 2007). Participatory attitudes show that participating in tourism exhibitions provides both corporate and individual contributions to tourism businesses. Therefore, participating in such activities offers benefits to the marketing activities of a business, in terms of knowing domestic / foreign markets and competitors, future planning and image. Therefore, in the individual interviews during the research process the participants underscored that participating in such fairs is of great importance for the company's image and that is the primary reason for them to participate in these activities.

**Table 2:** Descriptive Statistics on Participant Attitudes toward International Tourism Fairs

ITEMS	I absolutely don't agree	I don't agree	I agree little	I agree	I Absolutely I agree		
	%	%	%	%	%	$\bar{X}$	SS
Gives the opportunity to know international companies	0,6	2,8	7,9	36,0	52,7	4,37	0,80
Improves the company's international recognition	1,1	4,5	21,4	39,0	34,0	4,00	0,91
Strengthens the company's image	0,4	2,6	12,6	39,6	44,8	4,26	0,81
Expands company's customer network	0,2	1,9	11,1	39,2	47,5	4,34	0,76
Gives the opportunity to know the company's other products	0,4	2,1	10,5	38,5	48,4	4,31	0,78
Provided the opportunity to promote the company's products	0,2	1,3	9,9	43,5	45,2	4,33	0,72
Provides branding for the company	0,9	3,0	18,0	36,8	41,3	4,15	0,88
Provides information about the target markets	0,4	4,7	21,4	38,5	34,9	4,03	0,89
It makes it easier for us to plan for the future	1,1	6,0	24,0	37,5	31,5	3,92	0,94
Allows us making new contracts	0,6	5,1	17,8	34,9	41,5	4,12	0,92
Allows our company feedback on the market	1,1	6,4	19,3	37,3	36,0	4,01	0,95
Gives the opportunity to know the competitor company's products	1,1	4,1	12,8	38,8	43,3	4,19	0,89

The results of the t test and variance analyses for the comparison of participatory attitudes about international tourism fairs according to individual characteristics are shown in Table 3. Accordingly, no significant difference was found between participants' attitudes in terms of age, marital status, nationality and participation purpose variables ( $p > 0.05$ ); but a significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) was identified according to gender, educational status, occupational position, field of operation, and participation frequency. The analysis of the arithmetic mean values revealed that the attitudes of the females ( $= 4.22$ ) were more positive than those of the males ( $= 4.09$ ). On the other hand, the associate program graduates ( $\bar{X}=4,28$ ) have the most positive attitude, while the post-graduate graduates ( $\bar{X}=3,99$ ) have the most negative attitude. In addition, the participants whose occupational position is "tradesperson" ( $\bar{X}=4,26$ ) have the most positive attitude, and those with the "distributor" position ( $\bar{X}=3,83$ ) have the most negative attitude toward fairs.

**Table 3:** Comparison of Participant Attitudes toward International Tourism Fairs by Individual Characteristics

Variable	Group	$\bar{X}$	SS	t/F	p
Gender	Female	4,22	0,55	2,36	<b>0,019*</b>
	Male	4,09	0,56		
Age	24 -	4,14	0,54	0,071	0,976
	25-34	4,16	0,53		
	35-44	4,18	0,55		
	45+	4,17	0,66		
Marital Status	Single	4,16	0,53	0,04	0,968
	Married	4,16	0,58		
Nationality	Russia	4,10	0,63	1,876	0,097
	Belarus	4,20	0,56		
	Georgia	4,29	0,55		
	Ukraine	4,08	0,53		
	Turkey	4,19	0,54		
	Other	4,26	0,59		
Education Status	Secondary school	4,18b	0,69	3,51	<b>0,008*</b>
	Associate degree	4,28a	0,51		
	Undergraduate degree	4,21b	0,56		
	Post-Graduate	3,99c	0,51		
	Other	4,12b	0,53		
Occupational Position	Manufacturer	4,17b	0,57	3,54	<b>0,007*</b>
	Tradesperson	4,26a	0,47		
	Distributor	3,83c	0,64		
	Researcher	4,11b	0,46		
	Other	4,15b	0,60		
Field of Operation	Accommodation	4,22a	0,52	2,97	<b>0,019*</b>
	Travel agency	4,28a	0,52		
	Food and beverage	4,24a	0,51		
	Medical services	4,05b	0,53		
	Other	4,16a	0,64		
Purpose of Participation	Advertise	4,18	0,55	0,89	0,490
	Expanding the customer network	4,16	0,51		
	Determining target group	4,18	0,56		
	Selling	4,06	0,58		
	Knowing competitors	4,31	0,51		
	Other	4,15	0,76		
Participation frequency	1	4,04c	0,58	3,99	<b>0,008*</b>
	2	4,17b	0,53		
	3	4,17b	0,57		
	4+	4,29a	0,54		

(\* $p < 0,05$  a,b,c: different letters indicate differences between groups)

Further, the participants whose field of operation is “medical services” ( $\bar{X}=4,05$ ) have the least positive attitude and they approach the subject of fairs/expos more critically. By their “participation frequency,” those with four or more times of participation in tourism fairs ( $\bar{X}=4,29$ ) have the most positive attitude, while the first-time participants ( $\bar{X}=4,04$ ) have the lowest positivity, as can be seen in Table 3. Finally, individuals’ tourism fair participation varies by their personal characteristics. For the female participants, associate program graduates, tradespersons, and travel agencies, the purpose of participation is “knowing competitors,” and those who have participated in tourism fairs four times or more display more positive attitudes compared to the other participants.

## **CONCLUSION**

Tourism fair organizations are an issue of interest for both private and public sectors. Tourism fair organizations contribute to the successful communication of a business organization with the actors in its environment as part of its business activities. In terms of their focus and international recognition, there are different tourism organizations that are held annually. In the tourism sector, there are some well-known and well-attended international tourism fairs such as EMITT Istanbul, (East Mediterranean International Travel and Tourism), ITB Berlin (The World’s Leading Travel Trade Show) and MITT (Moscow International Travel & Tourism). Companies, professionals, researchers and visitors from all areas of the tourism sector participate in such fairs. Although it is costly to participate in such fairs, they are important because of the contribution they make to the participating companies’ marketing activities and image. Evaluating the effectiveness of these fairs and their participants’ attitude can help to point out some important results for tourism stakeholders. According to the results of our study, “gives the opportunity to know international companies” statement ( $\bar{X}=4,37$ ) reflects the most positive attitude of the participants. Information and intelligence is the second most important factor for companies’ marketing and product development activities. Therefore, it is not possible to be in contact with the relevant stakeholders and to follow the competitors and developments in the market. Therefore, it would be beneficial for businesses to participate in tourism fairs not only to expand their customer network and to promote their product but to get a chance to be informed about other competing products. In the interviews, the participants stated that simply participating in such fairs was not sufficient for effective marketing, but selection of stand location, design of catalogs, and new product development and presentation were also crucial factors for such marketing success. After all, the expectations of participants from tourism fairs are commercial and this is in line with our research findings as well. Similar conclusions were reached by other research as well. Arlı (2012) concludes that fairs offer many benefits such as promoting new merchandise and services, gaining new customers, and contacting special clients. Rittichainuwat and Mair (2012) studied the reasons for the visitors for attending fairs and festivals, and found that the visitors to the consumer travel fairs have multiple goals for participation. Five major drivers motivate the visitors to attend consumer travel fairs, which are discounts and special promotions, desired travel locations, evaluation of products before purchase, information collection for future purchases, and product and service purchases. In our study, we have found that fair visitors’ purposes for participation are not significantly different from those of commercial fair visitors. Consumer exhibition visitors have multiple motives for participation including purchasing, collecting information and following the

emerging trends. To attract more visitors and make more sales, exhibitors and exhibition organizers are suggested to contribute to the development of tour operators by offering unique travel opportunities and supporting seminars where visitors can communicate face to face with company experts. Consumer exhibitions have the potential to become an efficient distribution channel for small and medium-sized firms, while allowing large companies to create immediate cash flow by selling directly to their customers. However, the success of consumer fairs depends on fair organizers' attracting new visitors and making sure that the visitors re-visit similar fairs throughout the year.

The limitations of this research are as follows: This research reflects the views of the participants on the tourism fairs organized for health, food and beverage and travel / accommodation. In this respect, it becomes difficult to generalize our conclusions for tourism fairs that focus only on travel and accommodation. Therefore, it would be useful to generalize the results of our study by drawing support from further research that examines participant attitudes to tourism fairs according to their field of specialization.

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