



Hostel Experience of Tourists Visiting Göreme (Cappadocia) Region**

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Abstract

The objective of the present research is to understand and examine hostel experiences of travellers visiting hostels operating in Göreme province of Cappadocia region. Within the context of user-generated content, data were collected between 27 February and 6 March 2019 from online reviews and comments at hostelworld.com online platform and content analysis has been utilized to examine data. Results indicated differences as well as commonalities prior researches in terms of hostel experiences' characteristics. The findings show that hostel experiences are multifaceted and heterogeneous based on factors of cleanliness and facilities, location, atmosphere, security, staff/owner, price/value for money, social atmosphere, food experience, authentic experience and memorable experience. The presence of food, authentic and memorable experiences have emerged as distinct factors accelerating the quality of hostel experiences that travellers gain. Further implications for hostel managers and recommendations for future researches are also presented.

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INTRODUCTION

Experience is a multi-layered concept which encompasses several different characteristics rather than merely being considered as economic products and services offered to customers to meet their needs (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). It is also considered as one of the driving factors to transform travel experiences (Ross, 2010). It is, therefore, hotel establishments operating within the hospitality and tourism industry are prone and motivated to concentrate on creating an effective managing of experiences that their customers gain (Walls et al., 2011). The types of experiences differ and range from internal to external and subjective to staged while components of experiences rely on various distinct features such as physical, sensory, restorative, introspective, transformative, hedonic, emotional, relational, spiritual and cognitive experiences (Packer & Ballantyne, 2016).

Each kind of accommodation type offers different experiences to travellers within hospitality and tourism including Hostels. Hostels, which are ranging from backpacker-oriented to budget accommodation referring to similar characteristics, offer more than low price particularly social-interaction and thereby they are regarded as one of most proper types among other accommodations as it offers multipurpose stays such as leisure, recreation, or modes of enjoyment (Borovskaya & Dedova, 2014; Butler & Hannam, 2013). In the existing literature, studies revealed that there are many characteristics relating to Hostels' price that are frequently considered by travellers. However, although it is receiving more attention there is little known concerning this issue in the extant literature for which the current research has been structured to contribute data to the literature. In this sense, the preliminary aim of the present paper is to explore and understand the hostels' experiences of travellers visiting the Hostels of Göreme province that is situated within the Cappadocia region.

Göreme is a touristic province which is situated in Capadocia region to where tourists often travel to gain real authentic experiences rather than staged (Tucker, 2002). Göreme National Historical Park covers 40 square kilometres area between Nevşehir province and Avanos and Ürgüp districts in the Central Anatolia (Belkayalı et al., 2010). The region is regarded as a popular area for tourists whose primary motivations are cultural and religion (Erdogan & Tosun, 2009). The Göreme National Park, which was taken on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1985, is a collection of historical, archaeological sites and subsequently was declared a natural protected area in 1986 (Çamur & Cihangir, 2017). Göreme is a unique landscape and well-known touristic region with its authentic houses designed with rock-cut where people can stay like the cave-man style in motel-pensions or hostels (Tucker, 2003).

The current paper is structured as follows: The first section provides the literature review which presents the conceptual framework of hostels by providing motivations and the factors as to why travellers choose this type of accommodation. The following section elaborates the method used highlighting data collection and analysis processes which is followed by the findings section that discuss and point out key dimensions. The last section informs readers about the results and implications including recommendations for future research studies.

Literature Review

When considered previous studies relating to hostels the vast majority of them have focused on backpacker-led dimension as this kind of accommodation type often provide low price (Brochado & Rita, 2018; Chitty et al., 2007) along with the significance of hostels are becoming an increasingly important market for youth and students as well (Amblee, 2015). It was reported that Hostels are treated as heterogeneous and thus travel motivations are varied and

wide-ranging factors (Oliviera-Brochado & Gameiro, 2013). For instance, de Oliveira Santos, (2016) has found cleanliness, location and facilities as the highest significant price determinants to the Hostels based on subjective characteristics.

In their study, Cró and Martins (2017) aimed to investigate the effect of hostel guest reviews left travellers online platform on hostel price premiums. The authors identified atmosphere, cleanliness, facilities, location, staff, and security as six major features mostly rated by travellers visiting hostels. On the other hand, social atmosphere, location and city connection, staff, cleanliness, security and facilities emerged as chief determinants on service quality of backpackers who prefer to stay at the Hostels, (Brochado et al., 2015; Musa & Thirumoorthi, 2011) while spatial location plays a crucial role itself for travellers to determine their selection of a hostel among others (Cró & Martins, 2018). Furthermore, demographic differences such as age, gender and country of origin were extracted as the main motivational factors of backpacker travellers to stay at hostels (Hecht & Martin, 2006).

In another study, cleanliness of rooms, value for money and the presence of self-catering opportunities were found to be major factors for backpacker travellers preferring to stay at hostels (Nash et al., 2006). Moreover, by using a survey, in their study which aimed to investigate prerequisites of budget accommodation travellers in Scotland, the characteristics regarding their accommodation preference and the levels of importance including satisfaction with regards to the main establishments offering low-price accommodation, the authors found price, location and being a member of Youth Hostel Association as leading factors.

It was interestingly noted in previous studies that the overall perception of staff has been found to be an integral part of improving the service quality that subsequently impacts hostel experience which is yielded over time during the travellers' stay or trip (Moufakkir & Alnajem, 2017). Hostels provide travellers with a diverse range of activities and tourists mostly prefer to stay for several different purposes thus are chosen by a different group of categories rather than solely solo travellers or backpackers. Overall, this kind of holidaymakers' major activities visiting youth hostels have been illustrated as general sightseeing, walking around town, dining out, visiting pubs, hill walking, and rambling (Thyne et al., 2006). Given that the previous studies associated with the hostels that were led by scholars it can be claimed that the vast majority of them heavily concentrated on motivations and characteristics as to why travellers prefer to stay at hostels whilst the experience side of the concept is omitted which still remains rare.

Methodology

User-generated content (UGC) has become one of the most significant sources not only for travellers but also tourism enterprises because of the rapid development of internet and the social media use (Kaosiri et al., 2019) in the web 2.0 (Simeon et al., 2017). In particular, it has received prominence in searching information regarding travel-related issues where travellers share their post-travel experiences as comments, and opinions that create content to be used for others (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Moreover, the vast majority of travellers prefer to use UGC as a source of information in reaching travel-related information as it provide trustable contents for trip planning process (Yoo & Gretzel, 2011) and thus more than 80% of people use internet as an online search platform for their holiday instead of using traditional tour operators and agents (Filiari, 2015). Within the context of purposeful sampling technique, data was collected between 27 February and 6 March 2019 from travellers' reviews (n=548) that they posted at www.hostelworld.com, which is an emerging travel blog for travellers those who benefit for hostel bookings or

selection of a holiday destination (Golden & Cunningham, 2005), after their stay from March 2016 to February 2019 at six different Hostels operating in Göreme within Cappadocia region.

The data analysis process has been performed at two stages: human coding and computer aided content analysis software programme which is called Leximancer. At initial stage of the data analysis process data was examined independently and manually by authors. Within the scope of UGC, inductive content analysis has been employed to facilitate data examination process which consisted of different steps. At the first step, the narratives of travellers were collected as data from www.hostelworld.com after selected the unit of analysis and transferred to the world page to be coded. Then, the coding process has been realized by three independent human coders and extracted categories in a subsequent process. To determine coding schema authors discussed and agreed on each emerged category. In the last stage, results obtained from the study have been reported by the categories based on content referring to the phenomenon being explored (Elo et al., 2014).

At the second stage of the data analysis process data was examined through using Leximancer qualitative data analysis software. Leximancer provide researchers with conceptual and relational analyses, measuring both the existence of described concepts in texts and the ways in which these concepts are connected to each other (Brochado et al., 2019). It can also better serve to researchers to efficiently and objectively create concepts and wider themes, investigate different codes, their interrelationships and to visualize content results (Kolar, 2019). The preliminary aim to use Leximancer was that as it ensures the increased reliability and validity of extracted themes while decreasing the bias during the course of content analysis (Moyle et al., 2014).

Findings

Findings of the present research are separated into two parts. First, software extracted several indicators derived from text contents and identified key concepts that are relevant to the contents. The major themes and key concepts were created as Hostel (546 hits), Breakfast (457 hits), Place (305 hits), Clean (266 hits), Tours (205 hits), Room (124 hits), Recommend (90 hits), Air (69 hits), Time (59 hits), Staff (57 hits), Area (48 hits), People (46 hits) and Breakfast (43 hits) (see Figure 1). These concepts emerged from the software analysis programme constitute the dimensions of main themes that have been created as hostel experience of tourists.

Figure 1. Concept Map of Hostel Experience by Leximancer



In the second stage of data analysis process, the themes of the hostel experience of tourists visiting Göreme (Cappadocia) were determined as ‘cleanliness and facilities’, ‘location’, ‘atmosphere’, ‘security’, ‘staff/owner’, ‘price/value for money’, ‘social atmosphere’, ‘food experience’, ‘authentic experience’ and ‘memorable experience’.

Cleanliness and Facilities

It is clear from the travellers’ comments that cleanliness and facilities of hostels are significant factors that affect their experiences. Travellers stressed that having facilities such as laundry service, swimming pool, bar, wi-fi connection, hot water, lockers in the room, storage room, garden/terrace and comfortable rooms and beds is positive side of hostels which enhanced their experiences. On the other side cleanliness is also seen important for travellers. A great number of travellers mentioned the cleanliness of rooms and bathrooms. Some positive comments related to facilities and cleanliness are given as follows:

“...fantastic facilities: clean, quiet, comfy and with a terrace” (T122)

“We stayed in a 6 beds dorm and it was pretty much an adjoining room with 2 beds and then 4 beds, so it felt spacious. Rooms were really clean, and the linen was so fresh and crisp...” (T166)

“Rooms very clean, always hot water in shower, wi-fi works in rooms” (T141)

“...The swimming pool and rooftop bar were the clincher here...” (T456)

“Spotless dorms, amazingly comfortable beds, as clean as the bathroom/shower. Useful Lockers inside the rooms (they provide you a key)”. (T52)

“Lots of facilities are offer for the guests, including laundry and storage room”. (T136)

“...lovely garden and terrace, comfy room” (T25)

“Stayed in winter, rooms were warm. The whole hostel was clean, and bathrooms are cleaned every day...” (T344)

According to the results of this study, although they are much less than positive ones, there are also negative comments related to facilities and cleanliness emphasized by travellers. Mainly the challenges are related to the space, bathrooms, showers and cleanliness. Several quotations are given below.

“My only problem with this hostel was the limited bathroom and shower options (shared shower per floor, shared bathroom per room). They are not ideal”. (T99)

“...the dorm was a bit cramped - meaning, the space was too less, but then, it works unless you are too picky. Not enough bathrooms for sure (1 per floor) and when the hostel runs at full capacity, I'm sure people will suffer”. (T129)

“But the cleanliness is on the other extreme, if not worse. Literally you'll see balls of dust rolling through your room, not to mention the shared bathroom and all the paper no one seems to care about...” (T462)

“...I have problem with cleanliness, since, first day until checkout, I cannot use the toilet, so dirty.. and I have to move to another place..!! Hope they will improve their cleanliness..!!” (T461)

As it is indicated by the travellers in the present study cleanliness and facilities are seen crucial attributes to choose hostels (Oliveira-Brochado & Gameiro, 2013; Emblee, 2015). In one of the studies (Santos, 2016), it is stated that cleanliness and facilities are among the most relevant hostel characteristics (Santos, 2016). Cleanliness is stated as

the most significant factor according to a research (Hecht & Martin, 2006) in the current literature. Moreover, cleanliness is also seen crucial in accommodation decision process (Radder & Wang, 2006; Ryan & Huimin, 2007). The result of a study (Brachado et al., 2015), emphasized that cleanliness and facilities are indicators of service quality. Lastly, the current literature show that the guests of hostels are willing to pay higher price for higher levels of cleanliness (Cró & Martins, 2017).

Location

Location is another important issue that was emphasized by travellers visiting hostels in Göreme. Findings show that being close to the city centre, stores, restaurants, sunset point, bus station, panorama viewpoint, open air museum and valley is seen as an advantage for hostels in Göreme (Cappadocia). Moreover, not being in the hustle and noise is another significant issue pointed by travellers which are also related to location of hostels. It is clear from the findings of this study that almost all travellers within the scope of this study did like the location of hostels. Several comments related to location are given as follows:

“...it's very close to the city centre and sunset point...” (T13)

“The place is very close to the stores and restaurants which makes it great”. (T24)

“...the hostel located at the middle of the city and very close to all places and bus station...” (T334)

“Awesome location - close to everything but far enough from main street to avoid hustle and noise”. (T436)

“Close to bus station, walkable distance to open air museum as well as panorama view”. (T530)

“The location it's perfect, right in the middle of Göreme and close to everything you need”. (T191)

“...in the middle of Göreme. It's easy to walk to the open-air museum, up to the sunset spot, and straight into the Rose Valley!” (T112)

Many studies (Santos, 2016; Huang & Xiao, 2000; Ryan & Huimin, 2007; Musa & Thirumoorthi, 2011; Emblee, 2015; Brachado et al., 2015) in the literature pointed that location is considered as one of the key aspects of hostels when choosing to accommodate by tourists. In addition, location is also seen as one of the crucial contributors of service quality and experience (Brachado et al., 2015; Cró & Martins, 2017).

Atmosphere

Views of the valley, décor, surrounding of Cappadocia are components related to the atmosphere of hostels in Göreme that most travellers liked. It is clear from the comments of travellers that atmosphere is significant issue which enhanced the experience and satisfaction. For instance, words of traveller 217 are shaped as “*the ROOF TOP TERRACE! You could sit up there and have a drink or wake up for sunrise and watch the balloons in the sky, so amazing!*”. Some other travellers' comments related to the atmosphere are given below.

“The accommodation is beautiful, blending in with the lovely surroundings of Cappadocia...” (T447)

“... rooftop terrace overlooking the town centre was filling and satisfying”. (T58)

“...decor is nice as well”. (T88)

“...the views from hostel's rooftop are breath-taking”. (T291)

“...We could see the balloons every morning from the window in our room!!!” (T327)

The current literature also supports that atmosphere is the main characteristic for the hostels (Santos, 2016) that is also one of the most important dimensions of service quality (Musa & Thirumoorthi, 2011; Brachado et al., 2015). Moreover, it is one of the factors encouraging the positive word-of-mouth (Murphy, 2001) and has effect on satisfaction (Knutson, 1988). In one of the studies conducted by Heide & Grønhaug (2008), it is stated that atmosphere is considered as a fundamental factor to attract and satisfy guests.

Security

The statements of travellers indicate that hostels in Göreme and the destination itself does not have safety problems. Travellers emphasised in their comments that they felt safe and secure in Göreme and security was not their concern during their vacation. For example, one of the travellers (T49) say that: “*I was worried about coming here as a solo young female...Göreme is super safe and lovely to walk around in...*”. Another traveller (T214) also states that they were not concerned about security. Moreover, they also mentioned about lockers room where they could store their valuable things. A few quotations related to security are given as follows:

“lockers for dorm bed where you can store your valuable...” (T96)

“...As a solo traveller I felt safe and found many people to talk to”. (T156)

“...we felt secure enough to leave everything there”. (T301)

“A very safe place where one can walk alone at night without worry...” (T332)

“... I felt very safe as a solo female traveller...” (T352)

“... The cave dorm was comfortable with security lockers. Security included day and night watchmen and watch dog”. (T443)

Security is considered as one of the most significant contributors of hospitality which has effect on tourists’ decisions (Hecht & Martin, 2006; Radder & Wang, 2006), and hostel preferences (Musa & Thirumoorthi, 2011). It is also seen as one of the key factors when choosing a hostel (Emblee, 2015) and accepted as a dimension of service quality (Brachado et al., 2015). Moreover, travellers are willing to pay more to accommodate in the secure places (Cró & Martins, 2017). Hecht & Martin (2006) emphasized that when choosing accommodation, security is in the top five service preferences.

Staff/Owner

The findings indicate that a great amount of comments is related to staff or owner of hostels. Travellers emphasized the characteristics of staff or owners of hostels which they liked as being friendly, helpful, hospitable, informative, funny, smile, entertaining and kind. Several examples of positive comments about staff/owners are given as follows.

“Staff was very friendly, and they went out of their way to help me out with whatever I needed and offered me complimentary tea a few times...” (T12)

“...The manager is lovely! He helped me out so much. I stayed two nights and got the room to myself. He helped organise my hot air balloon ride and tour then also told me about the location of the jewellery place, so I got to see

that too. I had a little trouble with the tour, but Ahmet was amazing help. Probably the nicest manager I've ever met!..." (T76)

"The hostel staff/ owners are so lovely, probably the nicest I've met in Turkey. They were also kind enough to lend me some blankets when I asked about sleeping in the caves here for a few days". (T531)

"Wonderful host...She took very good care. She is very informative and funny. She arranged hot balloon ride for us. And don't forget to go for a morning stroll with her to see the balloons rising with sun in the background". (T27)

Despite mostly having positive comments related to staff/owner by travellers, a small number of negative reviews also exist. The negative comments are related to the behaviours of owners, negligence of staffs and communication problem. For example, traveller 9 had problem with the staff/owner as stated in this comment: *"The problem of the hostel is the staff. Two people, one of them is a kind person, who speaks fluently English, but he is not there all the time. The owner of the place, should not have any contact with tourists at any time: Around midnight, he forced me in an extremely rude way, to leave not only the common room, but also the terrace, because he wanted to sleep there, with comments like: don't you know how to behave in foreign countries. Also, on my second day, there was no breakfast"*. In addition to this, a few travellers' comments are given below.

"... the staff is not the best. Only one of the two guys can communicate in English, both were very passive-aggressive to me in multiple situations (to other guys too), although they were super nice to girls (which is not surprising). The checkout is very early (10:30am), one of them came at 10:27 to hurry me up. They say tea is free but its only for breakfast". (T225)

"...I did have some problems obtaining help from the staff. While the manager was always generous and available to help (even over phone when away), the alternate employee showed very little effort in resolving issues and rather preferred to play video games on his phone while ignoring concerns". (T270)

Parallel to the findings of this study, it is also stressed from the literature that staff are crucial part of hostel experience (Santos, 2016) which is an indicator of service quality (Brachado et al., 2015) and encouraging??? positive word of mouth (Murphy, 2001). Helpful and friendly staff who provide better service also ensure guests' satisfaction (Murphy, 2001). It is emphasized that hostel guests give importance to friendliness and kindness of staff (Brochado et al., 2015). The characteristics of staffs are crucial in determining brand loyalty, brand image (Chitty et al., 2007) the return intention and recommendation of guests (Brochado & Rita, 2018).

Price/Value for Money

Price/value for money has emerged as one of the crucial issues in hostel experience of travellers in Göreme. Most travellers found the prices of hostels economical especially for budgeted tourists. In addition, they found it good value for the money paid. Several statements related to price/value for money are as:

"...one of the cheapest options in town..." (T152); "...the price is really affordable". (T139)

"...Shared dorm room was cheap..." (T383); "...a great option if you're on a budget". (T462)

"...it was very economical..." (T525); ... Overall very good value for money. (T102)

"...you cannot beat the value..." (T164); "The value for your money is great here!" (T223)

“Absolutely fantastic value for money...” (T200); “And worth the money...” (T525)

In the related literature, it is also emphasized that price is a crucial factor indicating the service quality (Chowdhary & Prakash, 2007). Murphy (2001) added that not only cheap price is enough for the hostel market, value for money is another issue that is needed. The author (Murphy, 2001) also mentioned that value for money is an important contributor for gaining positive word-of-mouth. Value for money considered another issue as one of the most important drivers of service quality (Nash et al., 2006; Brachado et al., 2015). Brochado et al. (2015), stressed that providing affordable price is among one of the main characteristics of hostels.

Social Atmosphere

Travellers visiting hostels in Göreme stated the importance of social atmosphere mentioning socializing and meeting different people in hostels. It is clear from their comments that they are motivated to connect with new people and make friends and thus, the environment of hostels is significant for them. Most of travellers have positive comments related to social atmosphere of hostels in Göreme. Some of travellers' words are given as follows.

“...the cave and rooftop terrace are a nice place to meet other people”. (T44)

“... The atmosphere was social, and I connected with others staying there...” (T138)

“The social area makes it easy to meet others, which is a big plus for me...” (T380)

“...Great social atmosphere. Met a lot of great people here...” (T415)

“.. a super friendly, warm environment! I made many good friends...” (T426)

“It has a good common area to meet people or sit and read”. (T543)

The current literature also supports that the guests visiting hostels, especially backpackers are willing to meet new people and make new friends (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Thyne et al., 2005). First, social atmosphere is considered as one of the most significant attributes of hostels (Bell, 2008). Therefore, common areas and social experiences may improve the social atmosphere. Moreover, social atmosphere is considered as an important dimension of service quality (Brachado et al., 2015). Social atmosphere is also seen significant in determining the word-of-mouth information (Murphy, 2001).

Food Experience

Since the hostels in Göreme provide breakfast and some of the hostels also have café/restaurants, food emerged as the theme of hostel experience of travellers. Most of travellers mentioned that they liked Turkish breakfast served at hostels. The clues to that are the words such as ‘really good, delicious, enjoyed the breakfast, yummy, awesome, very filling’ and etc. Moreover, travellers stated that they liked the homemade wine, cafe/restaurant on the roof and dinners made by staffs. More details related to food emphasized by travellers are given below.

“The free breakfast is awesome; a choice between Turkish breakfast (eggs, bread, olives, cucumber and tomato) or omelette, scrambled eggs, French toast, muesli or plain toast” (T126)

“...Breakfast is simple but healthy and plentiful and tea is always available”. (T344)

“The breakfast here is the best breakfast I’ve had all over turkey. Love the breads, baked egg dish, and the hummus here!...” (T469)

“...the breakfast they serve is very nice...there is a very nice coffee/restaurant on the top of it and they have their own wine which they serve with some free cheese and bread...” (T535)

“Adorable cafe upstairs with tasty house wine” (T534); “They also made some fantastic dinners...” (T2)

“...one of the staffs made manti for us when we bought the ingredients. delicious!!!” (T423)

The related literature supports the findings of this study and show that food plays a crucial role in tourist experiences (Quan & Wang, 2004; Wu and Liang, 2009). It is stressed that food experience is one of the core motivations for tourists (Seyitoglu, 2017). Moreover, most guests like to eat food in a nice atmosphere (Kim et al., 2009). Food and beverages are considered as significant dimensions of guest's satisfaction in the hotel sector (Seyitoglu, 2017).

Authentic Experience

The term of authenticity is generally associated with history, traditions, reality, culture and locality (MacCannell, 1976; Waitt, 2000; Özdemir & Seyitoğlu, 2017). Since tourists willing to experience others' culture, authenticity is usually related to locality and original (Cohen 1988; Asplet & Cooper 2000). Another study (Wait, 2000) also stated that authenticity has connection with past and history. According to the findings of this study, travellers found authentic to accommodate in traditional cave rooms in hostels. Moreover, one of the travellers (T117), mentioned about having authentic Turkish breakfast with saying that: “...*authentic Turkish breakfast every morning - it tasted amazing*”. Several other comments related to authentic experiences are shaped as:

“It was a great experience living in a traditional cave house”. (T12)

“...It is a very authentic experience staying in the cave rooms. If you're looking for a chill, authentic place...this is definitely the hostel to choose”. (T404)

“This place will make you want to extend your stay in Göreme...It was nice experience to stay in a cave”. (T548)

“...amazing experience to have accommodation at cave...” (T334)

Memorable Experience

Memorable experience is defined as experiences which are not forgettable after event(s) (Kim et al., 2012). More specifically, when define the term, the components of experiences that affect tourists should be considered. For example, experiencing local culture is one of the significant components which enable to have memorable experience (Morgan & Xu, 2009). Moreover, relaxation, hedonism, refreshment, adverse feelings, happiness, meaningfulness, knowledge, challenge, assessment of service, novelty, unexpected happenings, involvement, and participation are also seen as dimensions for memorable experience (Kim et al., 2012). Experiencing memorable times also helps to enhance positive word-of-mouth (Murphy, 2001). Some studies (Nash et al., 2006; Thyne et al., 2005) emphasized that hostels' guests especially backpackers are looking for memorable experiences.

The findings of this study show that there are clues from travellers which point memorable experiences. For instance, traveller 26 states that “*Having a glass of tea as the sun sets in the distance, listening to the call to prayer or waking up to hot air balloons over the quiet valley - it's just magic... (T26)*” Another traveller (T43) says that:

“... I will never forget Cappadocia and I thank Terra Vista for hosting me and making the experience possible!”. A few more comments related to memorable experience are given as follows:

“...moments that you will never forget. Thank you!” (T111)

“This hostel was the best I've experienced! I stayed in cave room and totally loved it...I recommend this place to the ones who want to have a memorable trip in Cappadocia”. (T393)

“...Overall, I had a pleasant stay here, I'm loving it!” (T95)

“Incredible experience, loved everything about this place!” (T282)

“This place made me feel like home”. (T25)

“It was a lovely couple day at this place! Very relaxing and cool vibe. And the cave room is too cool!...” (T513)

Novelty considered as one of the dimensions of memorable experience contains four items such as “*once-in-a-lifetime experience, unique, different from previous experience, and experienced something new*” (Kim et al., 2012). Since travellers emphasized that seeing air balloons from their windows created a unique experience for them, these are also accepted as examples for memorable experiences. For instance, traveller 28 says that: “*In the early morning the balloons passed the hotel balcony almost within touching distance and provided a different emotion to actually going up...wonderful experience*”. Moreover, traveller 239 also mentioned that: “*... The most amazing thing was that I could see the balloons even from the window of my room. You just wake up and look at the window and see the balloons. Unique thing!*”

Conclusion

The aim of the current paper was to investigate travellers' experiences visiting six different hostels operating in Göreme province of Cappadocia region by analysing their comments and reviews posted at www.hostels.com thorough user-generated content. Data analysis revealed several different characteristics on which hostel experiences based on dimensions namely cleanliness and facilities, location, atmosphere, security, staff/owner, price/value for money, social atmosphere, food experience, authentic experience and memorable experience. Study findings are partly consistent with previous studies (Cró & Martins, 2017; 2018; Nash et al., 2006) whilst new characteristics referring to hostel experiences have emerged in the present research. Findings support that food and authentic and memorable experiences as emerging and new characteristics have been found to be most determining factors of travellers' experiences visiting hostels. It should be kept in mind that the factor of food may have substantial impact on the quality of overall hostel experience which can be assess as an integral part of hostels.

First, dimensions of hostel experiences were identified as heterogeneous rather than homogenous and they consist of various factors. Particularly, as Göreme is a unique landscape and well-known touristic region with its authentic houses designed with rock-cut travellers are able to gain authentic experiences where they can stay like the cave-man style in motel-pensions or hostels. These results, which generate one of the major implications of the present research, provide meaningful insights for hostel managers who should be aware of the enhancing impacts of these factors to the experiences. Another key implication of the current research deriving from study results is that memorable and authentic experiences were factors closely affecting hostels experiences of travellers. Moreover, memorable and authentic experiences may also be evaluated as driving and improving factors for hostel experiences. Second, it can

be confirmed from the findings that the characteristics (cleanliness and facilities, location, atmosphere, security, staff/owner, price/value for money, social atmosphere, food experience) of hostels emerging in the study can determine the overall experience of travellers. Moreover, it is also illustrated that as travellers' experiences yielded as positive, their intentions to revisit hostels as well as attitudes become positive to recommend others. In other words, as the vast majority of travellers' hostel experiences have been reflected as positive thus the attributes of WOM created more positive effects on travellers as has been corroborated by study findings (Amblee, 2015).

The present study has some limitations due to the nature of the method used. The unit of analysis of the present research comprised of travellers' online comments and reviews visiting hostels in Göreme region and thereby study results do not provide wider applicability of research findings. Since the sample size is limited with tourists accommodating six hostels in the region and considering the existence of many more destinations in the world, it is not possible to generalize the findings. Therefore, a multiple study consisting of more destinations is suggested for future studies. Moreover, it is also suggested for future studies to explore to measure the degree of coherence of hostel experiences that they gain along with their travel motivations.

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