

# TOURIST DESTINATION RISK PERCEPTION: THE CASE OF GAZIANTEP PROVINCE IN TURKEY

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**Abstract:** In the research conducted to determine the risk perceptions of the domestic tourists and to understand their travel attitudes related to Gaziantep destination, 302 people were reached through a convenience sampling; some results were obtained by applying various analyzes to the obtained data. It was set forth that the data showed appropriate and normal distribution for factor analysis, and that it was loaded on 8 factors. It has been determined that the questionnaires loaded on the factor are highly reliable and averages of variables loaded in 8 factors were taken and correlation analysis was performed. In this context, positive and significant relations were found about risk perceptions in general terms. Besides, it was determined that the majority of the participants came from the developed regions such as Marmara, Central Anatolia and Mediterranean and visited Gaziantep city, they didn't have any concerns about the issues which may cause a negativity like terrorism, security and food hygiene etc. and they will visit Gaziantep city again.

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**Keywords:** Risk Perception, Risk In Tourism, Perception Of Destination, Gaziantep

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The degree to which the tourism sector may be affected by an unfavorable situation is higher than many other sectors. Tourists want to spend time, relax and enjoy totally positive experiences in peaceful and safe destinations. Researches (Wong and Yeh, 2009; Fuchs and Reichel, 2011; Baker, 2014; Sönmez and Graefe, 1998a; Sönmez and Graefe, 1998b; Seabra et al, 2013) show that risk perceptions about destinations that tourists might consider traveling have a significant impact on their decisions to postpone, cancel or change destination selections. For this reason, all stakeholders need to do some work to learn the factors that tourists perceive as a risk about the destinations and to reduce and eliminate these factors if possible. The studies related to the risk perception of the destination (Seabra et al, 2013; Lepp and Gibson, 2003; Reisinger and Mavondo, 2006; Fuchs and Reichel, 2006; Kozak, Crofts and Law, 2007) are generally aimed at international tourists. Studies on the national tourist are being held back. The risk perception related to destinations in the country of domestic tourists is important in terms of destination stakeholders. In case of a decrease in the demand for international tourism, domestic tourists enliven the tourism economy of the country. It will also be difficult to focus on international tourists and try to understand and reduce their sense of destination risk without understanding the destination risk perception of domestic tourists and without trying to reduce these risk perceptions. Located in the southeast of Turkey and on the Syrian border, Gaziantep is an important tourism destination with its historical and cultural richness. Gaziantep cuisine, also known for its baklava, pistachio and hundreds of dishes, was included in the "Creative Cities Network" in gastronomy by Unesco on December 11, 2015. In spite of the rich tourism potential in the study, the effects of determining the

risk perceptions of the domestic tourists towards the Gaziantep destination, which is considered to be risky due to being on the Syrian border, and to determine the travel attitudes were investigated.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Samadi and Nejadi describe risk perception, one of the most searched topics in recent years, as "subjective belief that one has about the negative consequences of buying decision" (2009, p.263). Consumers are willing to buy products or services that will meet their expectations, but they also hesitate to make a mistake and experience a bad purchase (Wong and Yeh, 2009, p.7). The risk perceived in the service procurement process is higher than the perceived risk in the procurement process of a physical product, although there is a risk in all procurement processes. Because the service is abstract, consumers do not have the chance to review or evaluate the service before the purchase (Quester and McOmish, 2005, p. 205). Even if it does not exist in reality, the risk perception that occurs in the consumer will affect the buying behavior. On the contrary, a true risk is a concern, but not perceiving this risk will not affect consumer behavior (Fuchs and Reichel, 2006, p. 84). Factors affecting risk perception can be listed as follows; Product characteristics, economic status of the individual, level of education, age, past experiences (Koç, 2008, p. 297), personality, social environment, culture and psychological status (Akin and Albuz, 2016, p. 1155).

According to the literature on consumer behavior (Pandit, Karpen and Josiassen, 2008; Bhatt and Suryawanshi, 2014; Carroll, Connaughton, Spengler and Byon, 2014; Maciejewski, 2012), perceived risk consists of some sub-dimensions such as performance risk, financial risk, social risk, time risk, psychological and physical risk. The sub-dimensions

of risk perception can affect each product or service purchase, different combinations and different levels (Maciejewski, 2012, p. 41).

One of the important factors affecting the decision making process in the purchase of touristic products is the perception of risk. Tourism has various risk perceptions at different levels (Fuchs and Reichel, 2006, p. 84). Occurrence of risk perception during the purchase of touristic products are caused by the product being abstract, heterogeneous (Quester and McOmish, 2005, p. 205) and inseparable. Due to these features, the fact that the quality of touristic products can not be assessed before the procurement process makes the decision making process of tourists difficult (Wong and Yeh, 2009, p. 18). The high risk perception in this process causes tourists to tend to change their choices (Wong and Yeh, 2009; Garg, 2013).

It is very important to know what the destination risk perception dimensions are and the extent to which these dimensions affect the visiting decision in destinations that have historic richness, cultural values and different tourism products but are perceived as risky to visit due to geopolitical and terrorist incidents. In their work, Fuchs and Reichel stated that the knowledge of the sub-dimensions of the destination risk perception would make the destination marketing strategies effective and reduce the obstacles ahead of visiting the destination. In the same study, it was emphasized that travel motivations should be known in order to determine the risk perception in the selection of the destinations and that it is important to know the travel motivations in order to show which sub dimensions can be reduced in the destination risk sense (2011, p. 266). In his research, George (2010) noted that travel motivation influences the perception of risk, for example, the risk perception of travel for friends and relatives is higher than for business and leisure travelers.

The risky factors in the studies related to destination risk perception are dealt with in different ways. Baker (2014) analyzed 7 risk factors; financial, social, psychological, physical, functional, situational - finally and travel risk; Reisinger and Mavondo (2006) 13 risk factors; cultural, functional, financial, health, physical, political, psychological, satisfaction, social, hijacking, bomb explosion, biochemical attack and time waste; Quintal, Lee and Soutal (2005), 6 risk factors; financial, psychological, social, physical, convenience, performance; Fuchs and Reichel (2011), 6 risk factors; human-induced risks, socio-psychological risk, food safety problem and weather, financial risk, service quality, natural disasters and car accidents.

Fuchs and Reichel (2011) noted that the risk perceptions of destinations between first-time visitors and returnees differ between groups. Destination risk perception factors for first time visitors to Israel: human-induced risks, socio-psychological risk, food

safety problem and weather risk; Destination risk perception factors for repeat visitors to Israel are financial risk, service quality risk, natural disasters and car accidents risk.

Wong and Yeh (2009) examined the effect of tourist risk perception, tourist information about destination and hesitation on tourists' decision making process of buying. According to the results of the research, the information that the tourist has about the destination increases or decreases the effect of the destination risk perception on the hesitation.

Reisinger and Mavondo (2006) conducted a survey of 830 tourists from Australia, Canada, Greece, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom and the United States to study the impact of cultural differences on the travel risk perception. The results of the research show that cultural differences are an important effect of 9 risk factors except for functional, financial, psychological and social risk factors on tourist travel risk perceptions.

In this study, six factors were considered: destination risk perception, human-induced risk, socio-psychological risk, food safety problem and weather, financial risk, service quality, natural disasters and car accidents. Human-induced risks cover issues such as terrorism, snatching, political instability, abuse; socio-psychological risk cover issues of the choice of destination being the inverse of the tourist's personal image, the social environment changing the perspective of tourists; food safety problem and weather cover issues of different dishes, not being as hygienic as possible, weather conditions not being suitable; financial risk cover issues of failure to meet the cost of the service received, extra costs incurred; service quality cover issues of service quality not being as expected, tourism enterprises being inadequate, staff not being qualified; natural disasters and car accidents cover issues of floods, storms, erosion incidents and traffic accidents.

## METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted with 302 native tourists visiting Gaziantep for 5 weekends between April 3 and May 7, 2017 spring season. For the research, 6 points including 4 hotels located in the city center, Gümrük Han and Historical Tahmis Kahvesi, where tourists frequently visit, have a rest and drink coffee, on Gaziantep Kültür road were chosen. Among domestic tourists, those who were over 18 years old and those who agreed to respond, visiting these 6 points were included in the survey by convenience sampling. The survey used in the research was adapted from the work of Fuchs and Reichel in 2006. The survey used in the research consists of 2 parts. In the first part, questions about the demographic characteristics of the tourists, the provinces they live, the purpose of their visit, the number of days they would stay and the number of their visits, in the second part, questions about determining the risk

perceptions of tourists about Gaziantep destination and their travel attitudes were asked. Various data were obtained by applying various statistical analysis methods to the data obtained from the related sample group.

### 3.1. The Research Findings

The data of the research was obtained from 302 people. 54% of the tourists who participated in the survey are men (163 people) and 46% (139 people) are women. It was determined that the participants were generally married (60%- 181), had an income of 5000 and over (25%-76 people) and they generally come from Marmara (30-90%), Central Anatolia (20%-60 people and Mediterrenenan(19,5%-59 people). It has been revealed that the vast majority of tourists visited the city of Gaziantep for the first time (41-124%). However, participants (36-109%) participating in the survey were found to visit Gaziantep city for the third time and more than 3 times. It was found that the participants generally stayed for 2-3 nights, while the main purpose of the trips is cultural (38%- 115 people) and gastronomic (31%-94 people).

Various judgments about Gaziantep city, people, tourist products, security, service quality and hygiene have been drawn up to expose the thoughts of the tourists visiting Gaziantep city. According to this; it was found that the participants had no concern about situations like being exposed to any violence (60%-181 people), being abused (59% - 178 people), loss of possessions (52% - 157 people), pickpocketing (47% - 142 people). In addition, it was found that the city being on the Syria border does not endanger the safety (44%-127 people), there is no terrorist incidents (45%- 135 people), it is not a risky (54%-163 people), dangerous city (44%- 133 people), having different cultures does not cause trouble during the trip (44%-133 people), the city is a safe destination (36%-109 people), however, that it is weak in terms of touristic products (34% - 102 people), they spent little money during their travels (27%- 82 people), it is not an expensive city (38%-115 people), the city is sufficient about the service quality (46%-139 people) and qualified personnel (39%-118). They also stated that they had no concerns about the city's food safety (44%-133 people), hygiene-cleanliness (42%-127 people), and epidemic disease (45%-136 people). They stated that they will come to Gaziantep again (56%-170 people) and even recommend the city of Gaziantep to their friends (54%-163 people).

Factor analysis was conducted in order to measure different concepts in the research. However, the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity results were significant (Approx. Chi-Square :, 5829,747df: 630, Sig: 000) and the BMD value was calculated as 892 to test the appropriateness of the data for this analysis before doing the factor analysis. As a matter of fact, these

results demonstrate the suitability of data for factor analysis. Factor analysis was applied to the data in the direction of this obtained result. According to this, based on the criterion that the calculated eigenvalue is greater than 1 when factor number is determined, 8 factors are loaded. The total variance explained by the factors is found to be 65,038%. Therefore, this result is sufficient to represent the factors. However, the factor loadings of the variables (except those below 0.40 (question 17) are shown in Table 1. Reliability statistics analysis was applied to the reliability of the question groups loaded on the factors and Cronbach's Alfa value was calculated as 0.864 as the analysis result. The reliability coefficient takes values between 0 and 1, and as these values approach 1, the reliability increases (Ural and Kilic, 2005: 258). Therefore, Cronbach's alpha value of over 0.80 suggests that the scale is highly reliable. The question groups with sufficient reliability values were taken in order to use them in the analysis of the correlation to be applied and new variables were created. These variables are; Psychological Risk Perception (PRA), Social and Human-Induced Risk Perception (TİKRA), Risk Perception of Travel Attitudes to Destination (DYSTRA), Risk Perception of Service Quality (HKRA), Financial Risk Perception (FRA), Risk Perception about Health and Food Safety (SGGRA), Risk perception related to safety (GRA) and Risk perception for natural disasters and car accidents (DAACYRA).

**Table 1. Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

	Component							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
3- I am worried that the social structure of the people of Gaziantep (socio-cultural) will be in conflict with the values I have adopted.	.818							
2- I am worried that my trip to Gaziantep will damage my reputation in the eyes of my friends.	.817							
1- I worry that my Gaziantep travel will be in conflict with the viewpoint of my life.	.808							
4- I worry about being exposed to violence in Gaziantep.	.726							
1- I worry about getting sexually abused in my Gaziantep trip.	.695							
5- I am worried about being exposed to events such as theft, standing and pickpocketing in Gaziantep.	.725							
7- I am worried about a terrorist incident on my trip to Gaziantep.	.694							
6- I am worried about the loss of baggage and other commodities on my trip to Gaziantep.	.610							
10- I am worried that Gaziantep is on the Syrian border, making my travel dangerous.	.602							
11- I worry about Gaziantep people's point of view about tourists (discriminating, xenophobic).	.537							
12- Since Gaziantep gets a lot of immigrants from the other cities, the formation of people from different cultures worries me during my travels.	.510							
7- I am worried that my trip to Gaziantep will cause me stress and tension.	.501							
34- I recommend people to visit Gaziantep.	.925							
35- I am positive about Gaziantep.	.914							
37- I would like to visit Gaziantep again.	.883							
31- Gaziantep is a safe city for tourists.	.843							
24- I think there are too many touristic products in Gaziantep.								
14- I worry that touristic facilities in Gaziantep will not provide sufficient quality services.							.735	
15- I worry that the employees in tourist enterprises are not qualified.							.693	
16- I worry that the attitudes and behaviors of the people of Gaziantep will not be friendly.							.611	
13- I worry about possible strikes in Gaziantep during my trip.							.564	
18- I worry about the attitudes of the people working in tourism enterprises towards tourists (xenophobic, etc.).							.512	
27- I worry that my trip to Gaziantep (accommodation, eating/drinking, means of transport, etc.) will cost more than anticipated.							.745	
20- I am worried about spending so much money in Gaziantep.							.706	
29- I travel too much.							.699	
28- I worry about spending my money unnecessarily by traveling to Gaziantep.							.638	
26- I think that Gaziantep is a more expensive city than the other cities I traveled to.							.600	
20- I worry that the weather conditions (rain, wind, heat) will be bad during my travel.							.763	
21- I worry that there may be epidemics in Gaziantep during my travel.							.625	
19- I worry about food safety in Gaziantep.							.695	
22- I worry that the hygiene and cleanliness conditions in Gaziantep will not be at the expected level.							.595	
33- Traveling to Gaziantep is more dangerous than the other cities of Turkey.							.832	
34- According to my friends and relatives, traveling to Gaziantep is risky.							.718	
32- While I am in Gaziantep, my family and my friends worry about my safety.							.874	
25- I worry about being exposed to traffic accidents on my trip to Gaziantep.							.791	
23- I am worried about the natural disasters.							.747	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

Correlation analysis was performed on the data obtained to investigate the relationship between the

factors and various findings were obtained. These findings are shown in table 2.

**Table 2. Correlations Analyz**

		PRA	TIKRA	DYSTRA	HKRA	FRKRA	SGGRA	GRA	DAAKYTRA
PRA	PearsonCorrelation	1	,313	-,131	,310	,162	,245	,251	-,039
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,023	,000	,005	,000	,000	,497
	N	302	302	302	302	302	302	302	302
TIKRA	PearsonCorrelation	,313	1	-,197	,585	,358	,524	,441	,141
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,001	,000	,000	,000	,000	,014
	N	302	302	302	302	302	302	302	302
DYSTRA	PearsonCorrelation	-,131	-,197	1	-,176	-,259	-,272	-,184	,218
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,023	,001		,002	,000	,000	,001	,000
	N	302	302	302	302	302	302	302	302
HKRA	PearsonCorrelation	,310	,585	-,176	1	,384	,623	,396	,099
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,002		,000	,000	,000	,087
	N	302	302	302	302	302	302	302	302
FRKRA	PearsonCorrelation	,162	,358	-,259	,384	1	,352	,373	,293
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,005	,000	,000	,000		,000	,000	,000
	N	302	302	302	302	302	302	302	302
SGGRA	PearsonCorrelation	,245	,524	-,272	,623	,352	1	,352	,047
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000		,000	,417
	N	302	302	302	302	302	302	302	302
GRA	PearsonCorrelation	,251	,441	-,184	,396	,373	,352	1	,236
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,001	,000	,000	,000		,000
	N	302	302	302	302	302	302	302	302
DAAKYTRA	PearsonCorrelation	-,039	,141	,218	,099	,293	,047	,236	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,497	,014	,000	,087	,000	,417	,000	
	N	302	302	302	302	302	302	302	302

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
 \* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Gaziantep, which is located in the Southeastern Anatolia region of Turkey and is included in the "Creative Cities Network" by Unesco in the field of gastronomy, can also be expressed as an important destination in historical, cultural and natural areas. The research carried out in order to determine the risk perceptions related to the Gaziantep destination and to understand the tourists' travel attitudes is of importance for this reason. With the help of the data obtained within the scope of this aim, various results have been revealed. Accordingly, Data was found to be meaningful, appropriate and range normally; in line with this result, data was loaded to 8 factors. It was also found that the question groups loaded into the factors were highly reliable. Besides, it was set forth that participants generally came from Marmara, Central Anatolia and Mediterranean regions of Turkey, and visited the city of Gaziantep with their families with the purpose of culture and gastronomy. It has been determined that tourists will visit the city again without any concerns about terror, security, food hygiene-safety related to Gaziantep. In addition,

the results of the correlation analysis performed to determine the relationship between two or more variables and to predict similar results are summarized below.

A positive significant relation was determined between psychological risk perception and social and human-induced ( $r=0,515^{**}$ )  $p=0,000$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ); service related ( $r=0, 310^{**}$ )  $p=0,000$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ); financial ( $r=0, 162^{**}$ )  $p=0,005$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ); health and food safety ( $r=0, 245^{**}$ )  $p=0,000$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ); security ( $r=0, 251^{**}$ )  $p=0,000$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ) risk perceptions. A psychological risk perception and a negative relation to the risk perception regarding the travel attitudes towards the destination were found at a weak level ( $r= -0, 131^{**}$ )  $p=0,023$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ). However, no correlation was found between psychological risk perception and risk perception for natural disasters and car accidents ( $r = -0,039$ ),  $p = 0,497$ ,  $p <0,01$ ).

A positive relation was found between social and human-induced risk perception and service related ( $r=0,585^{**}$ )  $p=0,000$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ); financial ( $r=0,358^{**}$ )  $p=0,000$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ); health and food safety related ( $r=0,524^{**}$ )  $p=0,000$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ); security related ( $r=0,441^{**}$ )  $p=0,000$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ); natural disaster and car accidents related ( $r=0,141^{*}$ )  $p=0,000$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ) risk perceptions. However, there was a negative relationship between the risk perception based on the social and human-induced risk and the risk perception related to the travel attitudes towards the destination.

A negative significant relation was found between the risk perception related to the travel attitudes towards the destination and service related risk perception ( $r= -0, 176^{**}$ )  $p=0,002$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ); finance ( $r= -0, 259^{**}$ )  $p=0,000$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ); health and food safety related ( $r= -0, 272^{**}$ )  $p=0,001$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ); security related ( $r= -0, 184^{**}$ )  $p=0,001$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ) risk perceptions. However, there was a positive relation between the risk perception related to the travel attitudes towards the destination and the risk perception for natural disasters and car accidents ( $r = 0, 218^{**}$ )  $p = 0,000$ ,  $p <0,01$ ).

A positive relation was found between service-based and finance-based risk perception ( $r= 0, 384^{**}$ )  $p=0,000$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ); health and food safety based risk perception ( $r= 0, 623^{**}$ )  $p=0,000$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ); security based risk perceptions ( $r= 0, 396^{**}$ )  $p=0,000$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ). However, no association was found between the service-based risk perception and the risk perception for natural disasters and car accidents ( $r = 0, 099$ ),  $p = 0,087$ ,  $p <0, 01$ ).

A positive relation was found between financial risk perception and health and food safety related perception ( $r= 0, 352^{**}$ )  $p=0,000$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ); security related ( $r= 0, 373^{**}$ )  $p=0,000$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ); and natural disaster and car accidents related ( $r= 0, 293^{**}$ )  $p=0,000$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ) risk perceptions. In addition, a positive relation was found between health and food safety risk perception and security related risk perception ( $r= 0, 352^{**}$ )  $p=0,000$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ); while there is no relation between the risk perception of

natural diseases and car accidents ( $r= 0, 047$ )  $p=0,417$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ). In addition, a positive relationship was found between the security risk perception and the risk perception for natural disasters and car accidents ( $r= 0, 236^{**}$ )  $p=0,000$ ,  $p<0, 01$ ).

It can be said that the results obtained in relation to the risk perception in the study are similar to the results of the studies revealed in the literature. The main reason for this is thought to be due to the similarity of the risk factors revealed in determining the risk perception of the people. As a result of the researches carried out, there were no studies on the risk perception and travel attitudes of the tourists related to the Gaziantep destination. Therefore, it is thought that this study will contribute to the literature and new researchers on the subject because it covers the city of Gaziantep. In other destinations outside Gaziantep, it can contribute to new studies with different sampling groups and statistical analysis methods in order to determine the risk perceptions of tourists and to understand their travel attitudes. As a matter of fact, new models can be realized and give directions to the researchers.

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