



# Destination Marketing for Expatriates: A Case Study in Northern Cyprus

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## Abstract

With the intensifying competition in the global tourism industry, there has arisen an important need to enhance destination marketing initiatives in order to remain relevant. With effective marketing approaches, it is possible to increase the visitors that a destination receives, which is a beneficial outcome for any destination. Therefore, it becomes a critical concern for tourism stakeholders to identify the different methods that can be used to enhance or make destination marketing approaches more effective. This article explores one such possibility and that is the use of expatriates as a tool to enhance the marketing approaches as well as outcomes for any destination. Using the findings of a quantitative study carried out on expatriates in North Cyprus (Kyrenia City), the article discusses how these individuals can be an effective marketing tool. By using a questionnaire approach, with a study sample of 418 participants, the study sought to establish the general attitude (i.e. positive or negative) as well as the experiential image that the expatriates had of Kyrenia city and North Cyprus as a tourism destination on the whole. The findings revealed that expatriates could also be used as a critical marketing tool by helping further establish the destination image, from an outsider's perspective as well as in identifying the positive destination attributes to be incorporated in the area's tourism marketing initiatives.

**Keywords:** Expatriates, Destination Image (DI), Experiential Image (EI), North Cyprus (TRNC), Kyrenia city, Tourism Marketing.

## Introduction

Tourism serves a critical role in any country that possess the necessary amenities to support such an industry and this is because it can be a significant contributor to the economy through increased revenue and needed employment generation among other positive factors. For this reason, understanding the key factors that shape or affect this industry is vital because this can help influence either the success or failure of the selected sector. An area that has received particular concern in the tourism industry is destination marketing, and this is largely due to its



important role in influencing the performance and revenues of any given destination. For instance, Brondoni (2016), discusses how globalisation is increasing the growth, as well as competition, in the international tourism industry.

Brondoni (2016) projects that global tourism will continue increasing and as a result, destinations may have to enhance their marketing initiatives in order to benefit from this real and imminent upsurge. Therefore, one can see how from the example above how enhancing destination marketing initiatives can be considered an important topic and it is a key area of focus for this article. In particular, identifying some of the approaches or methods that can be used to enhance tourism/destination marketing, thus represents a major objective of this paper. The identified topic is that of employing/making use of expatriates as a critical tool to be used in improving the destination marketing initiatives of the host area which is a 'state within a state' since 1983, and without international recognition. With a relatively small amount of empirical efforts directed towards the topic in this area, a research gap exists that the study sought to address.

Expatriates, who are generally understood to be foreign individuals/immigrants residing in a country for occupational/work related purposes can serve an important role for the tourism sector of the host country. This is simply because they can serve as representatives for their host country residents. In so doing, they can help provide a possible overview of the tastes, preferences, attitudes as well as image of the destination for their respective nationality/country of origin. Such information can prove highly useful for the destination/tourism marketing initiatives that are undertaken by the host country, and if properly leveraged can lead to positive outcomes in terms of attracting more visitors belonging to the expatriate's host country. Therefore, a key factor to understand from the above propositions, is that establishing both attitudes and destination image of expatriates for a given country can play a critical role in improving its tourism marketing initiatives.

### **Research problem**

A key problem that the article identifies is the limited research/empirical work concerning the selected topic of Expatriate use in Destination Marketing. In particular, that of establishing the attitude as well as existing destination image of Expatriates concerning their host country as a tourism destination. The article identifies expatriates as having high potential in terms of improving their host nation's tourism marketing activities and eventually the number of visitors that they attract. This can be accomplished by establishing the existing attitude that these expatriates have in terms of their host nation as a tourism destination as well as their Experiential Image (EI) of the destination. Thus, with limited research exploring this topic, the study not only identified a gap but sought to address it in the context of the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC) and specifically expatriates residing in Kyrenia (Girne) City.

### **Research question**

As previously mentioned, this study attempts to answer the following two questions in order to examine the EI image of North Cyprus from its expatriate's perspective:

1. *What the EI of North Cyprus is as perceived by Kyrenia city's expatriates?*
2. *What the general attitude (i.e. positive or negative) is of North Cyprus as a Tourism destination by Kyrenia City's Expatriates?*

## Study Setting - North Cyprus Destination

From the previous studies there are various factors that have been established which can help one briefly understand North Cyprus as a tourism destination. First, the majority of the studies have pointed out to the destination being well suited for leisure tourism and this is on its account of having features such as good climate, natural scenery, an unpolluted environment and a calm atmosphere among other key attributes associated with this form of tourism (Akis & Warne, 1994; Alipour and Kilic, 2005; Bouzari, 2012; Katircioglu et al, 2007).

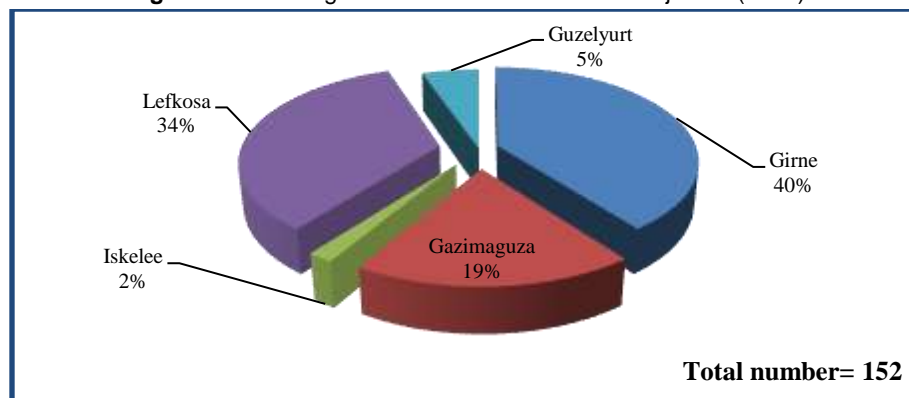
In addition to this, the sector is slowly growing and though it lags behind in terms of its performance when compared to The Republic of Cyprus, it has strong potential which could help it grow if all the proper approaches are taken up. There are various reasons for this performance for instance, the country in terms of constructing as well as implementing effective policies for the tourism as well as other sectors has not been highly effective, and this has impeded it from achieving its full potential especially in tourism (Katircioglu et al, 2007). Thus, it is vital for the destination to begin exploring some of the critical issues necessary for it to improve this and the issue of expatriates and their role in tourism promotion is one alternative that should be looked into.

## General Overview of Kyrenia City

Located between the *Pentadachtylo* (five finger) hills and the Mediterranean Sea, Kyrenia is a city that surrounded by a unique as well as natural beauty and scenery. This evocative city offers its visitors a unique experience since it has a significant number of attractive sites starting from the historical Harbour, Kyrenia castle, the ancient Shipwreck museum; extending all the way to St. Hilarion castle a Byzantine/ Lusignan caste, and Bellapais Abbey in the village Lawrence Durrell speaks of in his classic work *Bitter Lemons*. It should be mentioned that Kyrenia is one of the most popular cities in Northern Cyprus, thus making it an appropriate selection for the study. In addition to various attractions and sites that are well known, Kyrenia city has abundant tourism such as it is a leading in the TRNC, in terms of accommodation facilities, hotels, restaurants, and all essential factors to delight it is guests. In addition to this, various institutions such as academic as well as businesses are located in this city, therefore, justifying why it should be selected concerning the subject matter of expatriates (Tourism Planning Office [TPO], 2015).

Finally, it has the highest number of travel agents (Table 1) when compared to other regions of North Cyprus (TPO, 2015). Consequently, it is highly expected that a large number of expatriates should be residing in this location and this makes it an attractive focal point for the study.

**Figure 1.** Travel Agencies in TRNC. Source: Abuhjeeleh (2017).



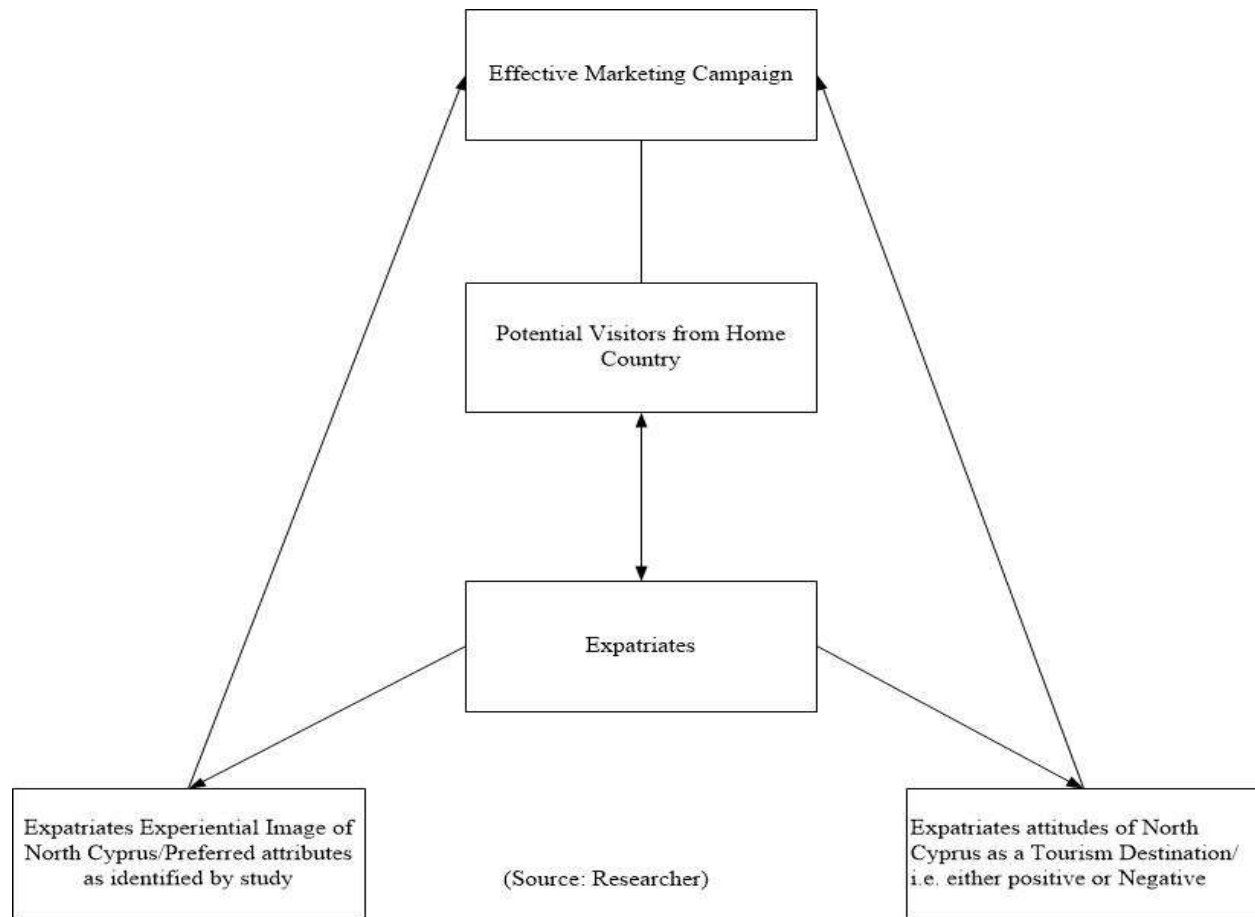


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

From the above, one can see the key propositions, assumptions as well as approaches employed by the study that was carried out. From the diagram (Figure 1), expatriates appear or serve as information conduits for tourism marketers enabling them to possibly reach as well as attract visitors from the countries of origin of the examined expatriates. The model also shows the approach to be taken when using expatriates, with key emphasis being placed in establishing both their Experiential Image as well as attitude of the host country as a tourism destination. By doing so, one should be able to derive key destination attributes that can be used to positively enhance the host country's tourism marketing initiatives. The model can be employed in any given setting, with the study exploring its possible application in North Cyprus.

## Literature Review

### An Emerging Role of Expatriates in Tourism

The global growth in the tourism industry has led to emerging topics, especially those that seek to further increase this expansion. One that is particularly paid attention to by this article is that of an existing role for expatriates in terms of improving the performance of tourism sectors for numerous destinations. There is however, limited literature on the subject a key prompt of conducting the study under the topic. Several researchers as well as publications have begun



examining the topic, concerning the role of expatriates in improving tourism. For instance, Tan, Chong and Ho, (2018), include expatriates as part of their study population and sample. Their study sought to examine destination loyalty and the factors that help understand as well as contribute to it, in foreigners such as expatriates in Singapore. Their approach becomes one of the few existing ones that have identified expatriates as a potential group in enhancing the tourism sector of a given destination. Additionally, their approach of examining perception, motivation and satisfaction, also show one of the techniques in which this group can be employed to help improve the performance of a tourist destination such as Malaysia in the case of Tan et al's., study (2018).

Another source that has examined this subject matter is Dutt, Ninov and Haas (2016), paying more attention to the issue of expatriates' knowledge of their destination. A key underpinning from the study is that of demonstrating a strong influence of "Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR)" on expatriate's knowledge about their destination. Such findings indicated that there is an increasing role of expatriate in a given tourism destination. For instance, not only does the VFR effect improve expatriates' knowledge about the tourism aspects of their destinations, but also increases their participation in the sector as visitors. Dutt, Ninov and Haas (2016), also show the link between expatriates and visiting friends and relatives as a key opportunity that destinations can exploit to grow their visitor numbers. Therefore, what can be derived fits with the overall topic and objectives of this article regarding expatriates having a potential role when it comes to improving the tourism performance of a given destination. Additionally, both sources affirm that is in the understanding of expatriates' perceptions, attitudes and images concerning the destination, that key strategies to improve the tourism sector are derived. This brings in the subject of destination image and experiential image, which are discussed in the sections below.

### **Destination Image**

Destination image (DI) is a key subject in the tourism sector owing to the fact that it has a strong influence on how this sector performs. Various efforts from the field of academia have been directed towards this subject matter with key studies having been carried out to better understand the concept of DI. For instance, scholars such as (Ahmed, 1991 ; Crompton, 1979; Dolnicar and Grün, 2013 ; Gunn, 1972; Echtner and Ritchie, 1991, 1993; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Gallarza et al, 2002; Govers et al, 2007). One of the most important issues to start with is to point out that DI can be understood as a "perceptions towards destination" according to major scholars in the field such as Ritchie and Echtner (1991) who made great efforts in trying to understand the concept of DI.

The image of a destination or how it is perceived is a vital component of any tourism sector and this because it mainly shapes or influences the overall performance of the selected destination (Ritchie & Echtner, 1991, 1993). Others that support this view include (Lubbe, 1998), who goes on to define DI as the general attractiveness of a destination and points out how this is vital element as it influences a visitor's decision of whether to visit a destination or not. Therefore, factors such as good climate, atmosphere, and clean environment have been critical in shaping the DI for both local as well as foreign stakeholders (Katircioglu et al., 2007). Considering that DI can help influence visitors especially in the case where a positive EI is created after they visit the destination, it is vital to understand how this aspect can be leveraged by the host destination. A key issue is how the Image of the destination as perceived and reflected by expatriates can have an effect on this objective (Tan & Ho, 2014). The sound assumption is to point out that a positive EI among these expatriates can be utilized by the destination's marketing initiative to attract more visitors from the expats home countries. This makes up the entire framework of the study as well as ties in the role of DI and how it is connected to expatriates.



In addition to this there are various aspects of DI that have also been reviewed by various studies that can help one better understand this concept. For example, according to the two studies carried out by Ritchie and Echtner (1991, 1993), DI is a construct dependent on various factors. From this, one can understand that DI is constructed, and owing to this it can be measured or ascertained. There are important factors that help one understand how DI is constructed. For instance, a destination's physical attributes such as weather, environment, and infrastructure are important as these help in constructing the DI. However, there are other non-physical factors such as hospitality and friendliness of locals or the price ranges of goods and services that also make up the DI. This demonstrates the continuums that Ritchie and Echtner (1991, 1993) talked about when trying to find the best approach to measure the DI.

After understanding that DI is a construct dependent on various factors, a proper area to proceed to is the formation process of this concept. Considering that there are various attributes to contribute to the DI, one must proceed to understand that there is a process that leads to the formation of this concept. Going by Crompton's definition that DI is "the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination", one can now understand how the destination image can follow a process for it to be fully constructed or established in a person's mind (Crompton, 1979). This then leads to one to look at the DI formation process which has also been studied with prominent literature coming from (Gunn, 1972). This and other studies looked at issues such as difference in the DI during pre and post visit as well as issues such as cognitive, affective and conative images during DI formation process and all these help to further understand this process (San Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008). Thus, after first establishing that DI is a construct shaped by various factors, this second subsection has briefly looked into the formation process of this concept.

This then leads the study to the final aspects of DI and that is its role as well as importance. The strong attention paid to this subject matter only goes to demonstrate a key factor about DI, which is its important role in the tourism sector. For example, as mentioned before DI can affect the performance of a destination and for this reason understanding all aspects of it is vital for any tourism sector. The way a visitor views a destination influences whether or not he or she will decide to visit, and in addition to this, the EI constructed after the visit also affects revisits as well as the perceptions the visitor will pass on to others through different kind of marketing's tools such as WOM either face-to-face or through social media as a result of the extended usage of internet and web pages services (Abubakar et al., 2017). Thus, DI is critical, and this section has strived to elaborate what it is, how it is constructed and most importantly, its importance or effects on a destination's tourism sector.

Relatively, and more specifically, the image of North Cyprus as a tourism destination as well as its tourism sector reveals limited efforts directed towards these issues with the studies that have done so being (Akhavan, 2012; Akis & Warne, 1994; Alipour & Kilic, 2005; Bouzari, 2012; Cansel, Bavik, & Ekiz, 2008; Esenyel et al., 2003; Ghaedi, 2014; Gilmore et al, 2007; Gosel, 2011; Harrill, 2004; Ismet & Abuhjeeleh, 2016; Kanol, 2005; Katircioglu et al., 2007; Mosedale, 2005; Oral & Whitfield, 2010; Sharpley, 2001; Sorun, 2009; Seyedimany, 2014). Under this subject, key issues such as the potential future of North Cyprus's tourism sector have also been looked into by studies such as sharply (2001), that went ahead to suggest increased efforts be directed towards building up existing markets. The image of the destination has been investigated and one of the best studies to refer is that of Bouzari (2012), who looked into how the attributes that constructed North Cyprus image as perceived by Iranian travellers are related and contribute to the final image for these visitors. This information process is necessary because it could be used to gauge performance of the sector by understanding how DI influenced revisit-intentions (Bouzari, 2012). Another perspective includes the weaknesses that the tourism sector of North Cyprus in



comparison to the Republic of Cyprus seems to be experiencing and this was covered in depth by (Alipour & Kilic, 2005).

There are other critical areas that are also present under this topic such as the DI formation process under which factors such as the cognitive image of the North Cyprus as perceived by foreign visitors was critically analysed by (Akhavan, 2012). Seyedimany (2014) examined the relationship that might exist between the destination image and the expatriate's culture as well as he studied the set of factors that might influence the adjustment of Cyprus by international faculty members (Seyedimany, 2014). The history of North Cyprus is also vital for understanding the tourism sector and has been looked into by studies such as Ghaedi (2014) who pointed out key issues such as the North having lagged back in development and a plausible solution being its reunification to the south. Still under this issue, the policy frameworks of North Cyprus, has also been an area of focus mainly because they can shape the performance of the sector especially concerning the application approach (Ismet & Abuhjeeleh, 2016). While these studies have strived to look at this issue, extensive research into the North Cyprus and its Image from a tourism perspective still lacks with only a few journals and theses being the majority of academic research effort directed towards this subject matter. Considering this issue, it is thus vital for this study to carry out and achieve the objective of properly covering this topic in order to enrich the pertaining literature.

### **Expatriates: a Great Potential Market Segment**

Expatriates find themselves in foreign countries for various reasons with one of the leading ones being economic, for instance employment. Key research has gone to point out that the global expatriate numbers have been on an upward trajectory. Some of the reasons given for this rise in expatriate numbers include increased globalization, rise in boundaryless careers and other factors that support this rise in expatriate levels (Abdellatif et al, 2015; Kim & Slocum, 2008; Michael et al, 2011; Seyedimany, 2014; Tan & Ho, 2014; Tanova & Ajayi, 2016; van Tonder & Soontiens, 2014). This increase when carefully analyzed can be identified as an opportunity especially when viewed from a tourism perspective. For example, according to Tan and Ho, (2014) Malaysia serves as the perfect example of how expatriates can have a positive influence in the tourism sector. Their study identified that a rise in expatriate numbers in the country boosted the tourism sector by causing a consecutive rise in the number of retirees who select the destination as their second home. The increased settlement showed a positive EI in the destination and in turn encouraged more visitors concerning making Malaysia their second or final home during their retirement period.

However, there are push and pull factors that go into shaping the dynamics that affect expatriate tourism as the existing literature suggests. For example, the study by (Tan & Ho, 2014) did point out that existing pull factors in Malaysia such as "political stability, good infrastructure and consistent economic growth." This is vital information because it first identifies some of the critical areas that a destination needs to work on in order to possibly increase their expatriate numbers and secondly, it shows the role of the destination attributes in influencing expatriates to come. In addition to this other study such as Tanova and Ajayi (2016); and Seyedimany (2014), have looked into the issue of cultural adjustment and how this also plays a significant role in improving the Experiential Image that expatriates develop concerning a specific destination. One key issue that arises from this is that the general culture of a destination can positively or negatively influence the decision to visit as well as stay in a particular destination (Tanova & Ajayi, 2016; van Tonder & Soontiens, 2014). For example, in the case where present culture is easy to adjust to then it is sound to expect higher numbers of expatriate. For instance, in the case of North Cyprus, which has been as a highly hospitable destination with friendly hosts (Bouzari, 2012; Ghaedi,



2014) it should have a high expatriate retention level. Therefore, it is vital to point out that culture largely affects this group of visitors by influencing their adjustment rates (Seyedimany, 2014).

While discussing the subject of expatriates it is also vital to look into a key clarification made by research of the two major categories of expatriates namely, Organisation Initiated Expatriates (OIE), and Self-Initiated Expatriates (SIE) (Tenova & Ajayi, 2016). It is vital to note that majority of destination target SIE's mainly because they are less restricted to which destination they should go as compared to OIE's, nevertheless it is vital to ensure the proper factors that attract both groups are in place in a destination. Thus, from the above several key issues have been mentioned relating to the subject matter of expatriates. First, it serves as a potential market that should be looked at by destination on account of its rising numbers; second there are key issues that affect this market segment that can be identified by looking at the destination image as well as the attributes that contribute. Finally, there are positive outcomes that result from paying attention to this sector with Malaysia being a proper example of this premise.

### Research methodology

As mentioned above the study is deductive in nature as it seeks to ascertain the theory of how expatriates can be leveraged from a marketing perspective by a destination in order to improve the tourism's sector performance. The descriptive part of it falls on the objective of trying to identify the destination image of North Cyprus as perceived by the expatriates located in Kyrenia city. A proper description of the perceived DI as by the expatriates will go a long way in aiding the paper recommend some of the key approaches that the destination's marketing approaches can employ, and this then constitutes the analytical part of this paper. To achieve all this, the study employed a quantitative approach involving the expatriates of Kyrenia city who were randomly chosen as a study sample. The expatriates, from different countries were surveyed using a structured English language questionnaire and were selected by random sampling from different public places such as malls and the Kyrenia Harbour. The structured questionnaire employed by this study comprised different parts such as demographic variables, questions about the knowledge of North Cyprus destination; other questions were about the perceived as well as well as the image of North Cyprus by its expatriates as a tourism destination.

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic variables profile

Variables	Category	Percent
<b>Gender</b>	Male	59.8%
	Female	40.2%
<b>Age (year)</b>	Less than 30	45.0%
	31 to 39	32.8%
	40 to 49	19.6%
	More than 50	02.6%
<b>Education</b>	Secondary	11.0%
	Bachelor	63.6%
	Higher education	25.4%
<b>Length of stay</b>	Less than 1 year	27.0%
	1 to 2 years	54.8%





	More than 3years	18.2%
<b>Nationality</b>	Asian	23.7%
	African	25.1%
	European	01.9%
	Russian	04.8%
	Far east	02.4%
	American	02.4%
	Turkish	36.6%
	Other	03.1%

Source: Primary research.

Understanding the essential demographic information of the study sample is a vital process and is always carried by similar studies (Bouzari, 2012). For instance, in the above table, one can clearly identify the nationality composition of the sampled expatriates indicating that the two largest groups come from Turkey, Africa and Asia (36.6%; 26.8%; 24.6 respectively). Studies that have looked at expatriates find this demographic analysis process vital for example; Tan and Ho (2014) sought to also identify the nationality composition of their expatriate study sample so as to also understand the leading source of their expatriates.

The other finding concerning length of stay is also vital because it can help identify any variance that is related to the length of stay for the study sample, with the findings indicating that a majority of the sampled expatriates had been in the country for a period of (1-2 years) (54.8%). Measuring this aspect is identified as a vital part of studying expatriates according to Kim and Slocum (2008). The education component is also vital as it helps understand the expatriates more, with a majority having attained a bachelor’s degree and above. Finally, age and gender are also vital as per studies that have looked at expatriates such as Tan and Ho (2014) and Kim and Slocum (2008) as it helps understand this group better.

**Table 2.** North Cyprus destination-attributes performance as perceived by expatriates

Attribute	Mean	Attribute	Mean
Atmosphere	6.11	Quality of services	5.10
Climate	6.02	Tourist information	5.01
Safety & security	5.96	Adventure/sports	4.81
Scenery	5.85	Infrastructure/transportation	4.63
People/hospitality	5.83	Things for tourists to do	4.57
Historical sites	5.73	Airport facilities	4.54
Nightlife	5.69	Good value for money	4.32
Beaches	5.55	Cleanliness	4.26
Cost/price levels	5.46	Accessibility	4.06
Restaurants/cuisine	5.35	Handicrafts/souvenirs	4.03
Religious sites	5.31	<b>Shopping</b>	3.53
Accommodation	5.19		
<b>Overall mean</b>			<b>5.08</b>

Source: primary research (note: results are presented here in mean rank). Means less than 4.0 represent negative image about North Cyprus; Likert scale from 1 to 7).



Identifying the Experiential Image of TRNC as perceived by the expatriates was also a crucial process. The approach of testing DI attributes sourced from Harahsheh (2009) among many others, helped identify the leading attributes that made the EI of TRNC as perceived by the expatriates in the study sample. The three leading attributes that described the perceived EI among the study sample were Atmosphere with a mean of (6.11), Climate (6.02), and Safety and security (5.96). These findings are similar to those of the studies that have looked into the DI of TRNC. For, instance, Bouzari (2012) ranked climate as one of the leading DI attributes of North Cyprus. In addition, Akis and Warne in their study of TRNC’s tourist also identified climate as the leading attribute for the DI. There are others that have similar findings which help identify the leading attributes of the EI of TRNC. The non-leading ones such as transport and infrastructure, accessibility as well as shopping have also been identified by studies such as Akis and Warne 1994, as the least selected in terms of DI attributes for TRNC.

**Table 3.** One sample T-test results and null hypothesis testing

T.Value	Mean	Sig.	Std.Deviation
59.604	5.08	0.000	0.37295

Therefore, to examine the null hypothesis stating that “expatriates of Kyrenia city negatively perceive the North Cyprus destination attributes”. One sample t-test was conducted to measure out the performance of north Cyprus destination from the international tourists from expatriate’s perspective. Therefore, sig. value was less than (5%), which means to accept the alternative hypothesis stating that the image of the destination image of north Cyprus as perceived by expatriates is mostly positive.

In the same context, results revealed that the overall experiential image of north Cyprus is positive (5.08). This can also be supported by the fact that a majority of DI attributes for TRNC scored positively concerning the study sample and only a few fell below a mean of 4, which would indicate a negative perceived EI. It also supports the general mean arrived at for the destination from an overall perspective thus, showing that expatriates did indeed have a positive EI of the destination.

**Table 4.** Match expectations with reality

<i>On the whole, did your experience in this destination....</i>	Frequency	Percent
Exceed your expectations	244	58.4%
Meet your expectations	165	39.5%
Not meet your expectations	9	2.2%
<b>Total N°</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Primary research.

Concerning the issue of whether the destination matched the expectations of the sampled expatriates, it seems that for the majority of the sample study it did with 39.5% stating that it matched their expectations while 58.4% stating that it exceeded their expectations. This support with the findings in table 4 above which identified a positive EI among the sampled expatriates; thus, justifying why the majority would agree to a large degree that the destination met or exceeded their expectations



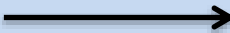
**Table 5.** level of satisfaction

<i>To what extent you are satisfied of your visit/stay at North Cyprus?</i>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Dissatisfied	2	00.5%
Slightly dissatisfied	37	08.9%
Neutral	130	31.1%
Slightly satisfied	152	36.4%
Satisfied	37	08.9%
Very satisfied	60	14.4%
<b>Total N°</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Primary research.

To ascertain the findings of table 5 concerning expectations the study also measured the satisfaction levels of the study identifying that the majority did find the destination satisfying. This too is in agreement with how the expatriates' expectations were met by the destination and explains the findings of this section.

**Table 6.** Atmosphere or mood expatriates have experienced while residing in North Cyprus

<b>Descriptors (whole sample (418))</b>			
<b>Negative (1)</b>		<b>Positive (7)</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Scary		Safe	6.00
Stressed		Relaxed	5.91
Predictable		Surprising	5.76
Unfriendly		Friendly	5.70
Unpleasant		Pleasant	5.26
Bored		Excited	5.18
Not stimulating		Stimulating	4.86
<b>Overall mean</b>			<b>5.52</b>

Source: primary research. (Note: The greater the mean the greater positive image).

The mood or atmosphere of the expatriates was also examined by the study with the findings indicating a strongly positive mood or atmosphere of the destination by the study sample. The attributes measured delivered an overall mean of 5.52 which suggests a positive mood of the tourist owing to their experience of the destination. It also agrees with the general findings of the study on how generally the perceived EI of the destination by the sampled group of expatriates is largely positive.

**Table 7.** The mostly recommended sites to visit (Respondents might choose as much as they can).

<i>Which of these touristic sites you recommend more?</i>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Kyrenia Harbor and Castle	411	1
Soli and Vouni	190	8
Mystical Mountain Castles ("Five Fingers" peaks)	256	4
Karpaz region and Golden beach	368	3
St. Nicholas Cathedral and Lala Mustafa Mosque	227	5
Salamis Ruins	224	7
Bellapais Abbey Monastery	225	6



Great Inn and Nicosia ruins	187	9
St.Hilarion Castle	378	2

The researcher also enquired on sites that the sample study would recommend for other visitors and the findings indicated Kyrenia Harbor and Castle as well as Soli and Vouni as some of the key sites that the study population identified as favorable. It all points out or support earlier findings of how climatic as well as environmental factors constitute the leading sites for the select city of North Cyprus.

**Table 8.** Nature of outgoing messages

<i>What kind of messages do you send about North Cyprus through different kind of social media?</i>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Neither negative nor positive	15	03.6%
Slightly positive	164	39.2%
Positive	161	38.5%
Very positive	78	18.7%
<b>Total N°</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>100%</b>

The nature of outgoing messages was also assessed, and the researcher was able to identify that a large composition of the study sample, over 90% had positive outgoing messages with regards to the destination, namely North Cyprus. This is also a reflective of the findings of the tables above, which identify a positive EI of TRNC as perceived by the expatriates sampled in the study.

**Table 9.** North Cyprus as a tourism destination (TD), (Respondents might choose as much as they can).

<i>How do you consider North Cyprus as a tourism destination (TD)?</i>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Whole sample N°</b>
Sun, Sea, and Sand TD	406	24.0%	1	418
Relax TD	360	21.0%	2	418
Leisure TD	353	20.9%	3	418
Gambling TD	278	16.5%	4	418
Cultural TD	197	11.7%	5	418
Adventure TD	39	02.3%	6	418
Medical TD	26	01.5%	7	418
Religious TD	16	01.0%	8	418
MICE TD	7	00.4%	9	418
<b>Total N° of frequencies</b>	<b>1682</b>	<b>100%</b>		

Finally, the overall Experiential image of North Cyprus was tested in the group and the findings indicated that Sun, Sea, and Sand, Relaxation as well as Leisure constituted the three major images that the sample study identified the destination with. These findings are similar to other studies that have looked at this issue such as (Akis and Warne, 1994, Bouzari, 2012; Ghaedi, 2014) among other studies. These findings support this identified EI of TRNC as it also coincides or agrees with the strong destination attributes identified by this and other studies such as climate, and environment among others.



**Table 10.** The image of North Cyprus as reflected by expatriates

Question N <sup>o</sup>	Means	T.Value	Sig.	Std.Deviation
Q1	5.87	40.286	.000	0.95307
Q2	5.47	28.374	.000	1.06189
Q3	5.85	36.400	.000	1.04272
Q4	4.52	6.457	.000	1.66658
Q5	5.45	27.830	.000	1.07034
Q6	6.17	45.072	.000	0.98860
Q7	4.56	7.926	.000	1.45012
<b>General Mean</b>	<b>5.41</b>			

The researchers were also interested in identifying what the expatriates reflect in terms of the image of North Cyprus and majority of the findings indicated a positive reflection of the image by the sampled group. This assures the fact that expatriates seem to be projecting a positive EI of the destination and this can be attributed to the fact that their experience has also been positive. For example, when asked on whether they consider North Cyprus as a second home, a mean of 6.17 was identified and this indicated that they strongly agreed to this question, which was measured using a 7-point scale. Thus, in general the sampled expatriates did seem to project want to project or are already projecting a positive EI of the destination.

**Table 11.** Cumulative destination image

<i>Experiential Image VS Affective Image VS Reflected Image: expatriates' perspective</i>	Mean	Study sample N <sup>o</sup>
Experiential image	5.08	418
Affective image	5.52	418
Reflected image	5.41	418
<b>Cumulative Destination Image</b>	<b>5.33</b>	

Based upon all above, this study resulted by three different integrated images of North Cyprus destination namely experiential, affective, and reflected image (table 11) with means (5.08, 5.52, 5.41) respectively. The means of the three images are close to each other which could be considered as a good indicator of the performance of North Cyprus destination. The cumulative mean is (5.33) indicating that the image of north Cyprus is generally positive. These results were supported by similar studies such as that of (Akhavan, 2012; Akis & Warner, 1994; Bouzari, 2012; Ghaedi, 2014; Katircioglu et al., 2007; Oral & Whitfield, 2010).

## General Discussion

The researcher was able to identify some of the key factors that were being sought after at the beginning of the study. The major factor identified is that a positive Experiential Image had been identified concerning the sampled expatriate group and this was verified and attributed and also proven by several factors. Some of the supporting evidence included the identification of key destination attributes that contributed to the positive EI identified by the study such as good climate, atmosphere as well as environment and natural as well as historic sites. In addition to this, there are other findings that supported the study findings. For example, various scales were employed to identify the extent of either positive or negative perceived experience as well as



image of the destination. The researcher enquired on how the respondents perceived as well as reflected the image of the destination and for both positive findings was arrived at.

All these were fundamentally important and led to the construction of a positive EI for the destination. For instance, destination attributes such as 'Sun, Sea, and Sand' which scored the highest clearly demonstrated that this was a key feature and greatly shaped the DI of TRNC. Thus, this can be a crucial factor in shaping the marketing tools that the destination may decide to act upon when it comes to employing this demographic. For instance, leisure and gambling were the leading influencers for the sampled group indicating that the destination was well suited for these activities and should look into them for improving the tourism sector. It also helps identify some of the key approaches that are necessary to effectively market the destination not only to the expatriate market segment but the larger tourism segment. This is complemented by the fact that key sites in Kyrenia city were also identified by the study showing how these can be used to better the sector and enhance tourism sustainability.

Therefore, using these as well as leveraging on the strong destination attributes such as climate and environment should help TRNC target all kinds of visitors to the destination. There is also the fact that the sampled study gave out a key response of the destination and how their image shifted from negative to positive, thus indicating that the destination and more specifically its sector has great potential. This was also looked into by the study, and the respondents identified positive factors such as the destination being safe, friendly among other positive indicators of a given destination. This could help in the appropriate marketing of the destination by identifying the strong and weak areas that the destination needs to look into to improve its tourism sector performance. In addition to this, going ahead to create proper channels that would strengthen WOM initiatives by expatriates is also another key approach that can add benefit to the tourism sector of TRNC as recommended by (Abubakar and Ilkan, 2013; Akis and Warne, 1994). The study did identify that an effective marketing tool as per the respondents was Word of Mouth, therefore, the destination must also make use of this and work towards improving sector performance by leveraging on this effective tool. Therefore, attribute wise as well as perception-wise, North Cyprus has a positive outlook from the findings of the study.

## **Conclusion**

Thus, in summary, a key finding is that the sampled expatriates seemed to both perceive as well as project a positive EI of the destination and this constitutes a beneficial asset to the marketing initiatives of TRNC. As earlier mentioned, the destination can leverage this positive EI of the expatriates identifying key aspects about it that can benefit the activities of promoting TRNC's tourism. For instance, the notion of Word of Mouth has been mentioned as key as well as effective marketing strategies by studies (e.g., Akis and Warne 1994; Bouzari, 2012) and the tourism stakeholders specifically those concerned with marketing should leverage on this key strength of a positive expatriate EI. It could also encourage TRNC to also expand its efforts concerning targeting more expatriate such as the approach that Malaysia is carrying out as per Tan & Ho, 2014 study.

There exist various possibilities for this destination in terms of making good use of this finding and if properly leveraged could help the destination improve the performance of the Tourism sector. There are several recommendations that this paper wishes to put out concerning the discussed subject matter.

First, the study recommends to the tourism sector of TRNC to identify ways and means of employing the positive EI of the destination by Expatriates into its marketing strategies. This can



involve activities such as identifying the core strength as well as weak attributes and maximizing on the strengths while reducing the weaknesses in order to improve the sector performance. For instance, increased marketing on destination attributes such as the beaches, historic sites among others.

Second, in addition to this, the sector can also increase its marketing efforts that are directed towards expatriates considering that this is also a growing market according to Tan & Ho, 2014.

Third, North Cyprus can find a marketing tool that uses the positive projected EI of the destination by expatriates to improve its tourism sector's performance. They can also use the recommended sites by Expatriates in table 10 in their marketing efforts as these have been identified as attractive destination sites in the city of Kyrenia.

Fourth, key stakeholders can work on improving the attributes that seem to score low in terms of positive or influential ability concerning expatriates and tourists at large.

Fifth, more efforts for online reputation management should be paid. Finally, more research should be done to identify key strategies that can make TRNC an attractive destination for expatriates.

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