

FACTORS AFFECTING COMMUNICATION SKILLS A CASE STUDY ON RESIDENTS OF PAMUKKALE, TURKEY

Nuray Selma Ozdipciner 

School of Social Sciences Vocation, Pamukkale University, Turkey

nselma@pau.edu.tr

Seher Ceylan

School of Social Sciences Vocation, Pamukkale University, Turkey

Muhammet Emin Soydas

School of Social Sciences Vocation, Pamukkale University, Turkey

Abstract

Communication ability in tourism spans a highly broad area. One of these areas is the communication between the tourists and local residents. Tourism industry is the most focused area of communication. Due to intense communication needs between the local residents and tourists, the economic, social, and cultural impacts of tourism are highly dependent on the interactions between the tourists and the residents of the touristic destination. The goal of this study is to determine the factors that affect the communication ability of residents of Pamukkale, Turkey. The resulting data were analyzed using the SPSS 15.0 software. Factor analysis was done to reduce variables. As a result of this analysis, 40 statements have been categorized under five factors: Positive communication, comprehension and expression, negative communication, communication errors, and enhancement of communication.

Keywords: Communication ability, local residents, factors, tourism, destination, Turkey

INTRODUCTION

Communication, as an essential element of human interaction, can be defined as the transfer process of knowledge, thoughts and perception between human beings (Tutarand Yilmaz, 2003). Communication ability encompasses listening, venture, and oral communication (Sahin 1997 cited Berryman 1982). It can further be defined as comprehension, self-expression, establishing eye contact, provoking conversation, oral praise and the use of non-verbal behavior (Omololu, 1984). The most important activity of communication is “consciousness” and it is affected by the values, behaviors, social status, education levels, experiences, knowledge, and the cultures of both the speaker and the listener (Price, 1991). To point out the importance of culture in the communication process, different cultures impact the society’s norms and behavioral molds. It is important to realize and respect the differences between the cultures (Kielbasiewicz-DrozowskaandRadko, 2006).

Tourism industry is the most focused area of communication. Due to intense communication needs between the local residents and tourists, the economic, social, and cultural impacts of tourism are highly dependent on the interactions between the tourists and the residents of the touristic destination. Tourists are often perceived as strangers by the local residents, and this result in minimal level of interaction from the beginning. Most issues arise from intolerances, language and culture differences as well as limited time of tourists for proper interaction with the residents (Rizaoglu, 2003). Despite all these issues and cultural differences, tourism has positive impact since tourists and local residents get to learn about each other, understand their differences, and develop a common sense as a result of social interactions(Berber, 2003).It is highly important for the touristic destination’s image to maintain positive interactions between the tourists and local residents (IlbanandKasli, 2009).This study aims to determine the factors that affect the communication ability of local resident of Pamukkale.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is not a direct study in the literature on assessment of individuals’ communication ability. Most of the studies to date try to determine the effect of demographic variations on communication ability of various groups (Kilcigilet et al., 2009, Ozerbaset et al., 2007, Black 2000). Here we summarize several studies that contribute to this field.

Rider and Keefer (2006), Smart and Featheringham (2006), and Rollnick, Kinnersley and Butler (2002) found that applied communication ability education is more effective than the theoretical education. Another study emphasized the importance of teaching communication ability in an applied setting (Beardsley, 2001). In another study on communication ability of

tourism students, the importance of multiple language skills was indicated (Cickovska, 2012). In a pilot study conducted on the service sector by Jain et al. (2009), it was found that non-verbal communication (body language) was highly effective on the image of the organization. It was mentioned that the businesses in the tourism sector should provide verbal and written communication education to their staff members. Sava and Coroama (2010) indicated the importance of communication education and language skills for the service personnel in rural touristic regions. Tavmergen and Meric (2002) concluded in their studies that the communication between the local residents, service personnel, and visiting tourists play an important role in satisfaction of tourist. They determined that various factors such as providing a suitable environment, proper planning, selection of a proper communication channel, considering the mental state of tourists, using simple terms, repeating essential messages, being an active listener, and valuing the tourists' feedback are important to improve communication with the tourists. Doganay and Keskin (2008) drew attention to the presence of individual goals and benefits of each side and mentioned that various society norms such as roles, rules, language, culture, age, gender, and other personal traits should be evaluated as a whole. Tayfun (2002) determined important differences between the perspectives of local residents in touristic and non-touristic regions. This study pointed out the differences of the residents in touristic destinations from the ones in non-touristic destinations with respect to foreign language skills, frequency of encounters with tourists. Yildiz et al. (2011) studied the economic, socio-cultural, and circumstantial effects of tourism on the local residents of Antalya. In their study of the impact of local resident support on enhancement of tourism (Jackson et al. 2006), they did not find any correlation between the negative attitude and demographic variables. However, they determined important correlation between the local residents' positive attitude and demographic variables, length of residency, and their relationships with the touristic businesses. They found out that the development of tourism is especially supported by the people in social groups. Sincovics and Penz (2009) studied the social detachment between the tourists and local residents and revealed that the conflict resolution between the tourist and local residents is crucial to enable economic development by means of tourism. In their social detachment study on Austrian residents and German and Japanese tourists, they determined that tourist were perceived in a similar manner in short encounters; however, the differences between the German and Japanese cultures prevailed in longer durations of encounters. For the local Austrian population, social detachment meant avoiding corrupt relationships where they hesitate communicating with Japanese tourists as compared to the German tourists. In their study, they provided various suggestions to international tourism businesses and managers to enable and improve social and economic interactions.

Most of the other studies on local residents are on their perception of tourism (Gursoy and Rutherford 2004; Kuvanand Akan 2004; Tayfunand Kiliclar 2004; Lepp, 2007; Caliskan and Tutuncu 2008; Wang and Pfister 2008; Huh and Vogt 2008; Vargas- Sanches et al. 2011). Some investigated the socio-cultural effects of tourism on local residents (Haley et al. 2005; Bertan, 2010; Al Haija, 2011; KaramanandAvcikurt 2011). There are several other studies in this area that concentrate on the positive and negative factors created by tourism and their perception of these factors by the local population.

Bertan's (2010) study is especially relevant since it was conducted in the same touristic destination. In their study to determine the relationship between the local support of tourism and the socio-cultural effects of tourism in the Pamukkale region, they concluded that the positive socio-cultural effects are possible via strong support by the local residents. They suggested education of local residents, tourism service personnel, shopkeepers, and municipal administration to reduce negative socio-cultural impacts of tourism as well as to improve the cultural transformation. They also mentioned that tourism can be a valuable tool to understand the visitors' culture and social lives as well as to express and protect our own culture.

Other studies are needed to repeat with a larger participation. And should be research between factors and some demographic variables. So we can improve our local community's communication ability.

METHODOLOGY

Pamukkale is located in southwestern Turkey, in the province of Denizli, next to ancient cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis. In addition to the historic sites, it is an important tourism destination due to its hot springs, geothermal areas, and health-care industry. There are a total of 17 geothermal sites with temperatures varying in the range of 35-100 °C. These sites have been in use since the ancient times. Travertines, mineral precipitates of carbonates, provide visual appeal to the area. Many tourists from various cultures visit this area every year that was declared a World Heritage Center by UNESCO and interact with the local residents. It is therefore of great importance to determine the factors that affect this interaction.

In this study that aims to determine the effects of these factors on the communication skills of Pamukkaleresidents, Ryan's (1995) formula was used to choose a sampling size (YayliandOzturk, 2006). Considering the time and resource limitations, the error margin was accepted to be 10% for a sample size of 95.

$$n = \frac{N P q}{\frac{Z^2}{(N-1) B^2 + P q}} = \frac{2214 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{\frac{1.96^2}{(N-1) B^2 + P q}} = 95 \text{ people.}$$

Where,

n= Sample size

B= Integrated error margin

N= Population universe

Z= Desired confidence level

P= Probability

q= 1-P

Based on the census data of December 2012, the population of Pamukkale is 2214 (<http://www.yerelnet.org.tr/belediyeler/belediye.php?belediyeid=128898>). According to the calculations above, a survey was conducted on a group of 150 people where 31 participants were ruled out since their responses did not conform to the criteria applied, leaving 119 valid responses. In the survey form, FidanKorkut's metrics were applied for evaluation of communication ability (www.rehberlikci.8m.com/olcekler/index1.htm). These metrics were adapted to the site residents by the authors. The confidence coefficient of the metrics was 0.76 with a consistency factor of 0.80.

Considering the individuals' interactions, a likert scale was used that consisted of five likert scales ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree. A preliminary survey was conducted on 20 individuals from Pamukkale to ensure proper implementation of the scale. The results from this pre-analysis did not suggest any changes on the original survey. The data was collected using a face-to-face surveying technique. The resulting data were analyzed using the SPSS 15.0 software. Using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov correlation, the research data were confirmed to show normal distribution.

As a result of the confidence test, the alpha value was found to be 0.82. A factor analysis, Barlett test, was applied to establish the data confidence (reliability), determine the variables, and reduce the number of variables. The result of this test was 2648.156 with $p < .001$ and the sampling value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin was 0.898, which is within the acceptable statistical range. In the factor analysis that was applied on the data, varimax option was used, and the analysis of the resulting screen plot, only the data with source values higher than one was included in the analysis.

When the screen plot (distribution of characteristic values) was analyzed, there were no changes in the data after the sixth value. When relative characteristic values were analyzed, 40 variables were determined under five factors with a total variation of 0.5178. This total variance is within the acceptable range. Table 1 shows the demographic variables while Table 2 shows the results of this factor analysis.

Table 1. Demographic Variables

Demographic Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Woman	30	25.2
	Man	89	74.8
Age	-25	33	27,7
	26-35	44	37,0
	36-45	29	24.4
	45+	13	10.9
Income	-999 TL	72	60.5
	1000-1999 TL	26	21.8
	2000 TL +	21	17.6
Education	Elementary school	33	27.7
	Middle school	29	24.4
	High school	37	31.1
	College	20	16.8

The demographic distribution of the participants is as follows: 25.2% of the survey participants were women and 74.8% were men. 27.7% of the participants were below 25, 37% were 26-35, 24.4% were 36-45 and 10.9% were over 45 years old. The monthly income distribution of the participants was determined to be 60.5% less than 999 TL, 21.8% 1,000 – 1,999 TL, and 17.6% over 2,000 TL.

The highest education degrees of the participants were elementary school at 27.7%, middle school at 24.4%, high school at 31.1%, and college degree at 16.8%. While the communication ability is affected by the demographic variables, gender, age, and income level, the education levels did not have any impact on the communication ability; therefore these data were not included.

Table 2. Factor Analysis

Factors	Factor weight	Value	Defined difference (%)
POSITIVE COMMUNICATION		6.290	14.628
I make the tourists feel comfortable when I interact with them	.515		
I pay attention if tourists are open to suggestions	.605		
I can effectively establish eye contact while speaking with tourists	.688		
I try to understand the tourists through their point of view	.513		
I can fully pay attention to tourists' needs	.540		
I reserve sufficient time to listen to tourists.	.601		
I feel that the tourists understand me.	.630		
I pay attention to my articulation when speaking to tourists	.688		
I respect the tourist's opinions even if I do not agree	.597		
It makes me happy to trust the tourists	.623		
I give tourists the right to speak	.749		
I repeat myself when tourists do not understand me	.589		
I try to understand the tourists	.596		
I welcome suggestions from tourists	.659		
COMPREHENSION AND EXPRESSION		4.140	9.627
I can adjust my intonation according to the subject.	.628		
I welcome each tourist with positive expectation	.419		
I try to understand problems of the tourists rather than their attitudes.	.617		
I feel happy when tourists understand me	.698		
I do not hesitate to be the first to communicate	.650		
I easily accept my wrongdoings and behaviors.	.691		
I try to understand if the tourists are willing to listen	.539		
I try to understand if the tourists are willing to talk	.675		
NEGATIVE COMMUNICATION		4.014	9.336
I do not like to be criticized by the tourists	.622		
I interrupt tourists while they are speaking	.797		
I feel bored when speaking with tourists	.801		
I can have outbursts that would harm my communication with tourists	.809		
I sometimes do not listen to tourists even if I'm looking at them	.535		
I judge tourists	.548		
It is difficult to apologize to tourists	.660		
COMMUNICATION ERRORS		3.030	7.046
I judge the behaviors of tourists	.450		
I feel uncomfortable when interacting with the opposite gender tourist	.707		
I feel that I do not have to listen to tourists	.769		
I think I am indifferent to tourists	.636		
I ask questions that make the tourists uncomfortable	.599		
ENHANCEMENT OF COMMUNICATION		2.830	6.582
I can admit that I am wrong at the end of an argument	.418		
I communicate my critics without insulting the tourists	.648		
I ask questions to better understand the tourists	.461		
I try to understand the tourists by putting myself in their shoes	.552		

Factor weights were in the range between 0.418 and 0.809. Variables that were below 0.40 were excluded from the analysis.

The percent difference value of positive communication factor was 14.628, comprehension and expression factor was 9.627, negative communication factor was 9.336, communication error factor was 7.046, and communication enhancement factor was 6.582.

The statements under positive communication were: "I make the tourists feel comfortable when I interact with them", "I pay attention if tourists are open to suggestions", "I can effectively establish eye contact while speaking with tourists", "I try to understand the tourists through their point of view", "I can fully pay attention to tourists' needs", "I reserve sufficient time to listen to tourists", "I feel that the tourists understand me", "I pay attention to my articulation when speaking to tourists", "I respect the tourist's opinions even if I do not agree", "It makes me happy to trust the tourists", "I give tourists the right to speak", "I repeat myself when tourists do not understand me", "I try to understand the tourists", and "I welcome suggestions from tourists".

The statements under comprehension and expression were: "I can adjust my intonation according to the subject", "I welcome each tourist with positive expectation", "I welcome each tourist with positive expectation", "I try to understand the problems of the tourists rather than their attitudes", "I feel happy when tourists understand me", "I do not hesitate to be the first to communicate", "I easily accept my wrongdoings and behaviors", "I try to understand if the tourists are willing to listen", and "I try to understand if the tourists are willing to talk".

The statements under negative communication were: "I do not like to be criticized by the tourists", "I interrupt tourists while they are speaking", "I feel bored when speaking with tourists", "I can have outbursts that would harm my communication with tourists", "I sometimes do not listen to tourists even if I'm looking at them", "I judge tourists", and "It is difficult to apologize to tourists".

The statements under communication errors were: "I judge the behaviors of tourists", "I feel uncomfortable when interacting with the opposite gender tourist", "I feel that I do not have to listen to tourists", "I think I am indifferent to tourists", and "I ask questions that make the tourists uncomfortable"

The statements under enhancement of communication were: "I can admit that I am wrong at the end of an argument", "I communicate my critics without insulting the tourists", "I ask questions to better understand the tourists", and "I try to understand the tourists by putting myself in their shoes"

EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND PERSPECTIVE

Pamukkale is located in southwestern Turkey, next to ancient cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis and is an important tourism destination due to its historic sites and hot springs. Many people of different cultures visit this area every year, which was declared to be a World Heritage Center by UNESCO. It is thus important to determine the factors that affect the communication of these tourists with local residents.

In this study, FidanKorkut's "Evaluation Metrics for Communication Skills" was used (www.rehberlikci.8m.com/olcekler/indexl.htm). The confidence coefficient of the metrics was 0.76 with a consistency factor of 0.80. The data were collected using a face-to-face surveying technique and were evaluated using a factor analysis.

As a result of the data analysis, forty variables were categorized under five factors with a total variance value of 0.5178. Factor weights ranged between 0.418 and 0.809. First factor was positive communication, second factor was comprehension and expression, third factor was negative communication, fourth factor was communication errors, and fifth factor was enhancement of communication. The conducted study was restricted due to time and resource limitations, so the generalization of the results may not be suitable. However, this study is expected to provide researchers with valuable insights for future studies. Other researchers can be investigate the effects of demographics on factors with a wider participation. Thus, according to results can be improved communication skills of local people.

REFERENCES

- Al Haija, A.A. (2011). Jordan: Tourism and conflict with local communities. *Habitat International*, 35, 93-100.
- Beardsley, R. S. (2001). Communication skills development in colleges of pharmacy. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 65, 307-314.
- Berber, S. (2003). Tourism and its effects as a catalyst for social transformation catalyst, *Selcuk University Journal of the Social Sciences Institute*, 9, 205-220.
- Bertan, S. (2010). Relationship between tourism support and tourism Impacts on socio-cultural in Pamukkale. *International Journal of Economics and Administrative Studies*, 4, 83-92.
- Black, K.A. (2000). Gender difference in adolescents - behavior during conflict resolution tasks with best friend. *Journal of Adolescence*, 35(139), 499-512.
- Caliskan, U. Tutuncu O. (2008). The Affects of Tourism on local people and An Application of Kusadasi, IV. Post Graduate Tourism Students Research Congress Antalya, 2008, p:127-148
- Cickovska, E. (2012). Research of service sector needs for and in academic language learning. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 44, 258 – 264.
- Doganay, U. and Keskin, F. (2008). A study on the interpersonal communication education in Turkey. *Culture and Communication*, 11(1), 9-32.

- Gursoy, D. and Rutherford, D.G. (2004). Host Attitudes toward tourism: An improved structural model. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(3), 495-516.
- Haley, A.J., Snaith, T. and Miller, G. (2005). The social impacts of tourism, A case study of Bath, UK. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 32 (3), 647-668.
- Huh, C. and Vogt, C.A. (2008). Changes in residents' attitudes toward tourism over time: A cohort analytical approach. *Journal of Travel Research*, 46, 446-455.
- Ilban, M. O. and Kasli M. (2009). A case study in Gönen: The issues with development of thermal tourism. *Ege Academic Reviews*, 9(4), 1275-1293.
- Jain, N., Sethi, A. and Mukherji, S. (2009). Impact of communication during service encounters on customer's perception of organization image. *Paradigm*, 1, 56-63.
- Karaman S. and Avcı Kurt C. (2011) The Affect of Tourism on Residents (Case of Samsun), *Samsun Symposium*, , p:1-11
- Kilcigil, E., Bilir, P., Ozdinc, O., Eroglu K. and Eroglu B. (2009). Evaluation of communication skills of students of School of physical education and sports of two Different universities. *Ankara University Faculty of Sport Sciences Spormetre*, VII. (1), 19-28.
- Kielbasiewicz-Drozowska, I. and Radko, S. (2006). The role of intercultural communication in tourism and recreation. *Studies in Physical Culture and Tourism*, 13(2), 75-85.
- Kuvan, Y. and Akan, P. (2004). Residents' attitudes toward general and forest-related impacts of tourism: the case of Belek, Antalya. *Tourism Management*, 26, 691-706.
- Lepp, A. (2007). Residents' attitudes towards tourism in Bigodi village, Uganda. *Tourism Management*, 28, 876-885.
- Omololu, C. B. (1984). Communication behaviours of undergraduate medical students before and after training. *British Journal Of Medical Psychology*, 57, 97-100.
- Ozerbas, M.A., Bulut, M. and Usta, E. (2007). The investigation of pre service teachers' Perceived communication skills level. *Ahi Evran University, Journal of Kirsehir Faculty of Education*, 8 (1), 123-135.
- Price, J.P. (1991). Effective communication, Preventing School Failure, 35(4), 25-29.
- Rizaoglu, B. (2003). *Tourism Behavior*. Detay publishing house. Ankara.
- Rider, E. A. and Keefer, C. (2006). Communication skills competencies: definitions and a teaching toolbox. *Medical Education*, 40, 624-629.
- Rollnick, S., Kinnersley, P. and Butler, C. (2002). Context-bound communication skills training: development of a new method. *Medical Education*. 36, 377-383.
- Sava, C. and Coroama, L. (2010). The role and importance of staff training in the sustainable development of rural tourism- improvement strategies of communication skills and mediation in foreign languages. *Agricultural Management / Lucrari Scientific Seria I, XII*, 165-170.
- Smart, L. K. and Featheringham, R. (2006). Developing effective interpersonal communication and discussion skills. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 69(3), 276-283.
- Sahin, F. (1997). The effect of group communication skills education on the communication skills of college students. Unpublished phd thesis. Gazi University Institute of Social Sciences, Ankara.
- Sincovics, R. R. and Penz, E. (2009). Social distance between residents and international tourists- implications for international business. *International Business Review*, 18, 457-469.

Tavmergen, I. P. and Meric, P. Ö. (2002). Recognition in Tourism and Public Relations. Turhan Publishing house. Ankara.

Tayfun, A. (2002). A study on interaction of tourists and local residents. Gazi University Journal of Faculty of Commerce and Tourism Education, 1, 1-12.

Tayfun, A. and Kiliçlar, A. (2004). The social effects of tourism and the public view of residents. Gazi University Journal of Faculty of Commerce and Tourism Education, 1, 1-17.

Tutar, H. and Yılmaz M. K. (2003). General Communication. Nobel Publishing House. Ankara.

Vargaz-Sanches, A., Porras- Bueno, N. and Plaza-Mejia, M.A. (2011). Explaining residents' attitudes to tourism: Is a universal model possible?. Annals of Tourism Research, 38(2), 460-480.

Wang, Y. A. and Pfister, R. E. (2008). Residents' attitudes toward tourism and perceived personal benefits in a rural community. Journal of Tourism Research, 47, 84-93.

Yayli, A. and Ozturk, Y. (2006). A study on the view of lodging facility managers at the physically-disabled customers. Anatolia, An International Journal of Tourism And Hospitality Research, 17(1), 87-97.

Yildiz, S., Celik Alan P and Ozcan, I. (2011). The scale of tourism's economic, socio-cultural and environmental effects on local people: Developing scale, reliability and validity study. Quality and Reliability (ICQR), 230-234, 14-17 September 2011 IEEE International Conference.