

**ETHICAL EVALUATIONS FOR VIRTUAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
APPLICATIONS OF TRAVEL AGENCIES: A RESEARCH ON  
CONSUMER DIFFERENCES**

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**Abstract**

*In this study, it is aimed to reveal the ethical perceptions of the consumers using Virtual Entrepreneurship (web-based marketing) applications of travel agencies.*

*Multivariate Variance of Analysis (MANOVA) was applied to the variables that included the level of evaluation of consumers' ethics expressions assessment levels. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine the differences in the ethical perception of consumers.*

*As a result, it can be said that is necessary for the agents to construct and apply their own ethical codes based on global ethical principles and to take some permanent precautions by public institutions by making the necessary supervision.*

**Keywords:** Travel Agents, Ethic Perception, Virtual Entrepreneurship, Kayseri

**JEL classification:** M21, M31

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**1. Introduction**

It is seen that a new economic order is formed in the world together with the rapid development of internet usage. Internet usage and realized services over internet have continued to tendency to increase around the world and the trend also has been reflection in the tourism sector. The use of internet and e-commerce more effectively in the field of tourism marketing has become inevitable because of increasingly impact on national economies of internet and e-commerce. It is seen that enterprises are intensively intent to use the new marketing approach for access to consumers and gain appreciation of consumers in marketing of enterprises's products and connected services. In

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addition to this, geographic boundaries have disappeared and the markets where the seller meets the buyer have gained a different dimension and sellers have transferred into their commercial activities to web-based systems because of they see as consumer all humans in the World (Civan and Bal, 2002: 1011). Thus, virtual entrepreneurship of businesses has become more important. This intensity and practices of enterprises bring about many controversial issues that arise between the parties. Some of the problems such as concerns about deceiving consumers, concerns about the confidentiality of their private information, making payments without seeing the product, and warranty services in between the parties are cause to consumers' fear (Akkılıç, 2004: 4; Soh vd., 1997: 217-228). For this reason, it is necessary that examine to web-based marketing applications used by travel agencies and evaluate to these practices in respect to ethics. In studies realized towards applications to web-based marketing in tourism are discourse on concepts such as role and importance of internet using and web-based marketing in terms of companies. In the literature, although many studies have been realized related to e-commerce ethics, there are few studies about perception of consumers, which related to e-marketing ethics in tourism sector and travel agencies.

## **2. Literature**

Tourism as an interdisciplinary subject is closely related many social and natural sciences. Many problems in tourism are related to ethical practices (Payne ve Dimanche, 1996: 997-1007). Fennell and Przeclawski (2003), which examining ethical models of tourism, argue that it is necessary examine tourism in terms of ethics. Fennell and Przeclawski (2003), which examining ethical models of tourism, argue that the socio-cultural, economic and environmental aspects of tourism can have many complex effects because of there are many stakeholders in tourism, which interested in different benefits. In this respect according to Fennell and Przeclawski it is necessary examine tourism in terms of ethics. Unethical situations in tourism sector generally remain obscure due to human factors' too much and at the highest levels communication with people. For this reason, one of the most important issues in the tourism sector is ethics because of it is very difficult to make the right decision (Whitney, 1992: 7).

In study called 'Tourism Vision 2020' of World Tourism Organization (WTO) is estimated that the number of tourists in the world will be 1.5 billion

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in 2020 (Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2006a:2). Therefore, the WTO has started a work on some principles that international validity on the purpose of minimize tourism industry's negative effect to cultural inheritance and environment and maximize benefit to derived from tourism. In WTO's General Assembly meeting held in October 1999 in Santiago were adopted the principles of global tourism ethics and were published the Universal Declaration on Tourism Ethics Policy (WTO, 2009).

According to the researches, it is seen that the highest level is tourism and travel sector among products and services of purchased via internet (Sarışık and Akova, 2006: 131). According to the study of Cunliffe (2000) internet is a major sales and marketing tool, which provides a direct link between travel agents and customers. Park (2002) states that Internet usage has basically five major advantages for travel agencies. These advantages include the fact that the Internet have a tool of international sales and marketing, characteristics to process in a sort of way easy and fast, a feature of data processing, an efficiency towards data-based marketing, and finally little cost of distribution and sales. Thanks to these advantages, travel agencies that choose to intensify their sales and have an interactive communication with their customers effectively apply internet usage. Law and Wong (2003) carried out a study to determine the factors, that would provide competitive advantage, for travel agencies that gain a place in the market via their websites. According to the results of the study, secure payment methods and specially programmed website services for the travelers in Pacific Asia are determined as the most successful elements.

### **3. Method**

The aim of the study is to examine the ethics perception of customers towards web-based marketing agencies in terms of basic components of marketing. Ethical attitudes of agencies that web-based marketing are consists of four dimensions, which ethics of product, price, promotion and distribution. Datas of the research were realized by face-to-face survey method. It was applied the survey to consumers residing in Kocasinan, Melikgazi and Talas, that three central districts of Kayseri, with convenience sampling method.

The survey form used in data collection was made by benefiting from scale items of the survey developed by Ören (2017). According to result of factor analysis, which was practiced to the work by Ören in the mentioned scale, the marketing ethics was identified to consist of "Product", "Price", "Distribution" and "Promotion" factors, which are four elements of the

marketing mix. This study was prepared by using these sub-dimensions and adapted for the purpose of the study.

**Table 1. Statements and Factors Contained in The Study**

|  |
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| <b>Faktor 1: Product</b>   |
| I think that the advertisements made on the agencies' websites are intended to inform the consumer.  |
| I think that they protect the confidentiality despite getting my personal information.   |
| I think the information in advertisements put on the website of agencies are suspicious and its usefulness is doubtful.                              |
| I think that agency indicated that it is a broker when buying service from it.   |
| Services available at the Agency's website caters to people of all income levels.  |
| <b>Faktor 2: Promotion</b>   |
| I think that agencies make misleading advertisement by asserting a exaggerated claims in advertisements put on the their website.                    |
| I think that agents give misleading information about the service that is being sold on the website.   |
| I think that unethical situations faced by travel agencies that doing web-based marketing damage the image of agencies.                              |
| <b>Faktor 3: Price</b>   |
| I think that agencies ridicule by insulting with competing undertaking, products, and commercial activities via advertisements put on their website. |
| I think that prices in agencies' website are high.   |
| I think that service in agents' websites sold far below the market price.  |
| I think that I can suffer damage in terms of economic, physical and psychological when I buy services from agencies' websites.                       |
| <b>Faktor 4: Distribution</b>  |
| I think that it is easy to understand the warnings and suggestions on the agencies' website.   |
| I think that it is given detail knowledge about service that I will buy in agency's website.   |
| I think that agencies service appropriates the policies put on their website.  |
| There is message "all responsibility belongs to the buyer" and "be careful" in agencies' website.  |

Source: (Ören, 2017: 9).

There is sixteen units of closed-ended question for participants' evaluation that towards the ethical practices of agencies that doing web-based marketing. The survey form designed to determine the ethical perception of consumers was prepared via 5s Likert-type scale. It is calculated that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients in the scale for detection the construct validity and reliability of the scale used in the study. Accordingly, Cronbach's alpha coefficients examined as 0,87 Product, Promotion 0.87, Price 0.69, Distribution 0.83 and attitude scale 0.92. Consequently, the values indicate that the scale is highly reliable (Kalaycı, 2014: 405).

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was applied by assigning four variables that consist of consumers' ethics expressions assessment levels (Product, Price, Place and Promotion) as the dependent variables; and demographic characteristics indicating variables (gender, age, occupation, income and education levels) as independent variables. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out to determine the differences in the ethical perception of consumers according to the number of visits for shopping on the websites of the travel agencies and their satisfaction with the service provided by the travel agencies on their websites.

#### **4. The Findings of Research**

The consumers', who participated in the research, gender, age, income, education and occupation must be determined. It is observed that respondents create a homogeneous mass in terms of their gender (women %56 and men %44). The sample in terms of age consists mostly of young people (35 years and less than 80%). The education level of the participants is quite high (Undergraduate and above 84%). Income levels are low (55% or less under 2000 TL). Occupation research in terms of participation in the group that most students (32%) and civil servants (30%) when creating the least participation group / housewives / retirees (10%) group.

##### **4.1. Multivariate Variance Analysis (MANOVA) In Terms Of Demographic Characteristics of Ethics Perceptions Towards Web-Based Marketing of The Participates in The Survey**

Variance analysis was performed to determine in terms of demographic variables to assessment levels of ethical expressions of the participates in the survey.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant differences in terms of demographic characteristics in ethics perceptions towards web-based marketing of the participates in the survey.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is significant differences in terms of demographic characteristics in ethics perceptions towards web-based marketing of the participates in the survey.

**H<sub>1a</sub>:** There is significant differences in terms of their ages in ethics perceptions towards web-based marketing of the participates in the survey.

**Table 2. Results of Variance Analysis That Showing of Difference in Perception of Factors In Terms Of Age**

| Name of Tests     | Value | Full F | Hypothesis Degrees of Freedom | Error Degree of Freedom | F Significance Value |
|-------------------|-------|--------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Hotelling's Trace | ,146  | 4,678  | 12,000                        | 1154,000                | <b>,000</b>          |
| Pillai's Trace    | ,133  | 4,499  | 12,000                        | 1164,000                | <b>,000</b>          |
| Wilks' Lambda     | ,870  | 4,599  | 12,000                        | 1021,552                | <b>,000</b>          |

According to the results of the analysis in terms of age, in the perception of factors have emerged difference. It is seen that difference between the age groups since F significance values are less than 0.05(Table 2). It is seen that differences about 'price', 'distribution' and 'promotion' in terms of age groups when the factors are examined one by one(Table 3). There was no significant a difference in terms of the product. Consequently, H<sub>0</sub> hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 3. Summary of Results of Variance Analysis That Showing of Difference in Perception of Factors In Terms Of Age**

| Variables    | Averages (Age) |        |        |        | F      | F Significance Value |
|--------------|----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----------------------|
|              | -25            | 26-35  | 36-45  | 46+    |        |                      |
| Product      | 2,5629         | 2,5571 | 2,4837 | 2,5677 | ,905   | ,439                 |
| Price        | 2,5982         | 2,4425 | 2,4186 | 2,4194 | 3,455  | <b>,017</b>          |
| Distribution | 2,7748         | 2,6354 | 2,6512 | 2,7984 | 5,077  | <b>,002</b>          |
| Promotion    | 2,7699         | 2,3973 | 2,3256 | 2,3387 | 10,175 | <b>,000</b>          |

It was observed that there was a difference in perception of price factor in terms of age groups. It is observed that the average of the age group up to the age of 25 (2,5982) is higher when the average of this factor in terms of the age groups is seen. It is possible to explain this result with the reason that they are more sensitive to price ethics in terms of age group because they are representing the young age by age group and not included in the high-income group according to other age groups.

It is seen that there was difference in perception of distribution factor in terms of age groups. When this factor is observed according to average in age groups, it is observed that the average(2,7984) is higher among those who are 46 and higher. This result can be interpreted as them being more sensitive to distribution ethics as they represent the middle age group, being more traditional than other age groups and because they are less likely to find what they are looking for since they do not use websites as often as other groups.

It was observed that there was a difference in the perception of the promotional factor for age groups. When the average of this factor is compared to the age groups, it is observed that the average age of those in the age group up to 25 years of age (2,7699) is higher. This result can be explained as them being representatives of young age among age groups, being more open to innovation than other age groups and being more sensitive to promotion ethics because they have difficulties in finding options that will address both their budgets and goals and provide continuity.

**H<sub>1b</sub>:** There is a significant difference in the perceptions of participants' ethics about web-based marketing according to their income

**Table 1. Results of Variance Analysis Showing Factors Detection Differences by Income**

| Name of Tests     | Value | Full F | Hypothesis Degrees of Freedom | Error Degree of Freedom | F Significance Value |
|-------------------|-------|--------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Hotelling's Trace | ,178  | 5,692  | 12,000                        | 1154,000                | <b>,000</b>          |
| Pillai's Trace    | ,159  | 5,416  | 12,000                        | 1164,000                | <b>,000</b>          |
| Wilks' Lambda     | ,846  | 5,571  | 12,000                        | 1021,552                | <b>,000</b>          |

According to multivariate variance analysis (MANOVA) results for income groups, a difference in the perception of factors occurred. Since the F significance values are less than 0.05, there is a difference between the income groups (Table 4). When the factors are examined one by one, it is seen that the difference arises in terms of all factors due to income groups (Table 5).  $H_0$  hypothesis was rejected in this case.

**Table 5. Summary Results of Variance Analysis Showing Factors Detection Differences by Income**

| Variables        | Averages (Income) |              |                |            | F          | F Significance Value |
|------------------|-------------------|--------------|----------------|------------|------------|----------------------|
|                  | -1000 TL          | 1001-2000 TL | 2001 - 3000 TL | 3001 TL+   |            |                      |
| Product          | 2,543<br>3        | 2,6429       | 2,45<br>23     | 2,540<br>0 | 6,0<br>38  | <b>,001</b>          |
| Price            | 2,580<br>6        | 2,5884       | 2,32<br>82     | 2,427<br>3 | 5,6<br>86  | <b>,001</b>          |
| Distributi<br>on | 2,762<br>5        | 2,7934       | 2,57<br>69     | 2,634<br>1 | 7,3<br>87  | <b>,000</b>          |
| Promotion        | 2,741<br>7        | 2,7117       | 2,18<br>46     | 2,334<br>1 | 14,<br>853 | <b>,000</b>          |

There was a difference in perception of product factor for income groups. When the average of this factor is compared to income groups, it is observed that the average of the income in the income group is between 1001-2000 TL (2,6429). It is possible to explain this result as being more sensitive to product ethics because they represent middle income as a result of their income group and their expectations about the product are not met.

It was observed that there was difference in perception of price factor in terms of income groups. When the average of this factor is compared to the income groups, it is observed that the average of the income in the income group between 1001-2000 TL (2,5884) is higher. It is possible to explain this result as representing the middle income by income group and being more sensitive to price ethics because of low quality or low-quality alternatives to their budgets.

There was a difference in perception of distribution factor for income groups. When the average of this factor is compared to income groups, it is



observed that the average of the ones in the income group between 1001-2000 TL (2,7934) is higher. It is possible to explain this result as representing the income group reputation in the middle income and being more sensitive to the distribution ethics as they have difficulties in finding both their budgets and the appropriate options in terms of time and place.

**H<sub>1c</sub>:** There is a significant difference in the perceptions of participants' ethics about web-based marketing according to their profession.

**Table 6. Results of Variance Analysis Showing Factors Detection Differences by Profession**

| Name of Tests     | Value | Full F | Hypothesis Degrees of Freedom | Error Degree of Freedom | F Significance Value |
|-------------------|-------|--------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Hotelling's Trace | ,174  | 5,593  | 12,000                        | 1154,000                | <b>,000</b>          |
| Pillai's Trace    | ,153  | 5,224  | 12,000                        | 1164,000                | <b>,000</b>          |
| Wilks' Lambda     | ,849  | 5,423  | 12,000                        | 1021,552                | <b>,000</b>          |

According to multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) results for occupational groups, there was a difference in the perception of factors. Since the F significance values are less than 0.05, there is a difference between the income groups (Table 6). When the factors are analyzed one by one, it is seen that the difference between 'price', 'distribution' and 'promotion' it is seen as per income groups (Table 7). H<sub>0</sub> hypothesis has been rejected according to this situation.

**Table 7. Summary Results of Variance Analysis Showing Factors Detection Differences by Profession**

| Variables    | Averages (Profession) |               |          |                                   | F      | F Significance Value |
|--------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------|-----------------------------------|--------|----------------------|
|              | Student               | Civil Servant | Employee | Not working / Housewife / Retired |        |                      |
| Product      | 2,5728                | 2,5282        | 2,5450   | 2,5762                            | ,589   | ,623                 |
| Price        | 2,6773                | 2,4160        | 2,4098   | 2,4206                            | 8,479  | <b>,000</b>          |
| Distribution | 2,7520                | 2,6688        | 2,6445   | 2,8095                            | 3,316  | <b>,020</b>          |
| Promotion    | 2,8480                | 2,3697        | 2,3739   | 2,4167                            | 13,464 | <b>,000</b>          |

It was observed that there was a difference in perception of price factor for occupational groups. When the average of this factor is compared to the occupational groups, it is observed that the average of the students in the occupational group (2,6773) is higher. This result can be explained as being more sensitive to price ethics because they have low income by occupational group.

There was a difference in perception of distribution factor for occupational groups. The average of this factor according to the occupational groups does not work / housewife / retired occupational group average (2.8095) is observed to be higher than the average. It is possible to explain this result as representing the middle-income and middle-aged people as the occupational group, being more traditionalist than other occupational and age groups and being more sensitive to distribution ethics due to the lesser use of websites.

There was a difference in the perception of the promotional factor for occupational groups. When the average of this factor is compared with income groups, it is observed that the average of the students in the vocational group is higher (2,8480). Due to the fact that they have low budget due to occupational group, not being in high income group according to other income groups, they are more sensitive to promotion ethics due to their difficulty in finding continuity and finding options to address their budget and wishes.

#### 4.2. Variance (ANOVA) Analysis of Differentiation Status According To Satisfaction Levels from Travel Agencies' Websites of the Participants' Ethics Perceptions for Web-Based Marketing

Variance (ANOVA) analysis was conducted that in order to reveal a significant in differentiation status according to satisfaction levels from travel agencies' websites of the participants' ethics perceptions for web-based marketing.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no difference in the perception of ethics about web-based marketing in terms of satisfaction level of the participants.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is difference in the perception of ethics about web-based marketing in terms of satisfaction level of the participants.

**Table 8. Results of Variance Analysis for Web-based Marketing Perception of Web-Based Marketing by the Participants' Satisfaction Levels of the Travel Agencies**

| Dimension s  | Satisfaction Level | KT        | sd  | KO      | f             | p           |
|--------------|--------------------|-----------|-----|---------|---------------|-------------|
| Product      | Between Groups     | 529,198   | 2   | 264,599 | <b>61,698</b> | <b>,000</b> |
|              | In-group           | 1672,563  | 390 | 4,289   | *             |             |
|              | Total              | 2201,761  | 392 |         |               |             |
| Price        | Between Groups     | 48,782    | 2   | 24,391  | <b>10,947</b> | <b>,000</b> |
|              | In-group           | 868,979   | 390 | 2,228   | *             |             |
|              | Total              | 917,761   | 392 |         |               |             |
| Distribution | Between Groups     | 557,112   | 2   | 278,556 | <b>38,984</b> | <b>,000</b> |
|              | In-group           | 2786,725  | 390 | 7,145   | *             |             |
|              | Total              | 3343,837  | 392 |         |               |             |
| Promotion    | Between Groups     | 280,931   | 2   | 140,465 | <b>54,360</b> | <b>,000</b> |
|              | In-group           | 1007,761  | 390 | 2,584   | *             |             |
|              | Total              | 1288,692  | 392 |         |               |             |
| General      | Between Groups     | 4850,897  | 2   | 2425,44 | <b>72,255</b> | <b>,000</b> |
|              | In-group           | 13091,413 | 390 | 8       | *             |             |
|              | Total              | 17942,310 | 392 | 33,568  |               |             |

When Table 8 is examined, the calculated f-value in the product sub-dimension ( $f = 61,698$ ;  $p < ,05$ ), the calculated f-value in the promotion sub-dimension ( $f = 54,360$ ;  $p < ,05$ ), the calculated f-value in the price sub-dimension ( $f = 10,947$ ;  $p < ,05$ ), the calculated f-value in the distribution sub-

dimension ( $f = 38,984$ ;  $p < ,05$ ) and the f-value ( $f = 72,255$ ;  $p < ,05$ ) calculated in the general perception of ethics, expresses a significant difference between the groups in the relevant dimensions at the level of 05 it is.  $H_0$  hypothesis was rejected.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Analysis results showed that there were significant differences in demographic variables in age, income and occupational groups. Regarding this analysis, it was observed that youth in age groups were more sensitive to the ethical practices related to price and promotion, while middle and upper age groups were more sensitive to the ethical practices related to distribution. McIntyre, Thomas and Gilbert (1999) examined the ethical considerations in terms of justice and honesty factors of the customers in the retail sector, and it was found that younger and less educated customers handled justice more rigorously (McIntyre, 1999: 43). In income groups, it was observed that the minimum wage level income group were sensitive to ethical practices related to product, price and distribution, and the income group below the minimum wage level were more sensitive to ethical practices related to promotion. In occupational groups, it was observed that students were more sensitive to ethical practices related to price and promotion, and those who were not working were more sensitive to ethical practices related to distribution. It is natural that each individual has different judgments when evaluate an ethical or unethical situation in a matter. Empirical studies that examining as a variable to perceived ethical problem show that this variable is related to many different concepts. Among these concepts, piety and personal moral philosophies stand out (Marta, Attia, Singhapakdi and Atteya, 2003).

An important one of the study's findings is satisfaction levels of participants from the travel agencies' website. As result of analysis of variance (ANOVA), according to only levels of satisfaction in consumers' ethical perceptions emerge different in four variables, which product, price, distribution and promotion. When the difference between the point averages of the general ethical perception is examined, it is seen that there is a significant difference malcontent participant with unstable and satisfied participants. According to this finding is significantly lower the general ethical perceptions of the participants who are not satisfied with the websites of the travel agencies than the unstable and satisfied participants about it. Customer satisfaction is one of the main factors determining customer loyalty (Chiou and Droge, 2006; Chiou, 2004). Researches have showed that customers, who

are satisfied with the product or service offered by a company, tend to repurchase behaviour and become loyal customers of the firm (Anderson and Srinivasan, 2003). Selnes and Pollach emphasize that ethical elements such as security, confidentiality and safety are priority for the customer's confidence in e-commerce (Selnes, 1998; Pollach, 2005). The results show that perceived confidence affects customer satisfaction positively (Chiou and Droge, 2006; Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

Based on the results, it can be said that necessary ethical issues should be given due consideration, agencies should establish their own codes of ethics in accordance with global ethical principles and should take appropriate action by adopting these codes of their employees, audits are carried out by the relevant public institutions and it is necessary to take permanent measures. According to this study's data on marketing and tourism ethics, especially travel agencies should review their ethical evaluations and develop appropriate codes of conduct by creating in-house ethical codes. Because unethical attitudes and behaviors will cause loss of customer will also interrupt tourism activities.

It is a limitation for the study that it only includes Kayseri city center. For further studies, it is important to be more inclusive and carry out different cases in order to draw attention to the issue. As a result of a thorough examination of the customer perception of marketing ethics, significant contributions could be made to both the industry and the field body of literature.

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