

Beach Management & Analysis of Visitors' Remarks

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Abstract

User perceptions can become vital especially at beach preferences as cleanliness, safety and amenities are some of the apparent factors that will affect. With the awareness of probable adaptation of beach users' demands into policy recommendations, a case study has been carried out at Black Sea Coast of İstanbul at Şile beaches. Şile has been chosen in this study purposefully as it is a touristic district of İstanbul which has aimed to earn Blue Flag award previously. Secondly, it receives high amount of visitors especially during the peak periods in weekends; as it has a very close location to the city, people are choosing here most of the time just for the day. In this research with factors about human use of beach and impacts like cleanliness and sufficiency of amenities (showers, toilets, changing cubicles, parks etc.) and the number of lifeguards are studied. Regarding the findings, the researchers consequently highlight recommendations for Şile beach management which could enhance the visitor experience.

Keywords: Beach management; beach user perceptions; visitors' remarks analysis; expectations from beach attributes

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1. Introduction

In order to facilitate public participation in the preparation of plans and policies for sustainable development, acquiring the perception of the public and community based planning became vital. Acknowledgement about perceptions of the end-users could lead the decision makers in adopting these thoughts in their policies and consequently can lead to content visitors.

Various authors have identified beach users' perceptions and priorities through questionnaires all through time. (Marin et al., 2009; Roca et al, 2009; Roca and Villares, 2008; Alipour et al, 2007; Coman and Golumbeanu, 2002; Morgan et al, 1993) This topic would continuously be a major concern as beaches have been dynamic places of choice by tourists. Why the beaches have been popular places all through out time can be explained with the mass usage of sun, sea and sand tourism.

The term "sun and sand tourism" was born, based on the assumption that the availability of beaches was a clear prerequisite for the development of tourism. Lozoya (Lozoya et. al. 2014: 397) underlined the traditional significance of economic impact in the coastal areas in his study. However, he emphasizes the protective, recreational and natural

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functions of sea, sun and sand tourism and the need of fulfilling the user expectations. This particular type of tourism became the most important model for mass tourism destinations. (Sarda et al, 2008: 159) and therefore it has continued to represent a main attraction and a primary resource for local economy in many coastal areas.

However due to mass consumption, it yet led to pollution in high used and poorly protected places and led to consumer disloyalty. Clearly human behaviours are the root causes of beach litter, but the factors drive these behaviours are poorly understood, hampering design of efficient intervention programs to reduce litter (Eastman et. al., 2013: 18). In conjunction with this fact Rabenold (2013: 295) added that coasts are also highly dynamic environments, subject to coastal processes that reshape coastlines and pose hazards to people, property, ecosystems, and economies.

Likewise a hotel preference or a destination preference of the tourists, beaches are the places where people choose according to their expectations and whether they have been satisfied once before. As Roca & Vilares cited (2008: 315) the quality of natural resources has been affected but also tourism has become more demanding with its recreational experience.

Beaches are also complex dynamic area where the residents of the city may prefer to choose according to the closeness and accessibility of the beach and the domestic tourists who come from other cities and international tourists from other countries. The complexity may further increase with the difference of users as hotel accommodated users and daily users. These users might be first time visitors or loyal users who frequently come. Usually during the weekends, the residents who live in the central parts of the city and work during the summer period will choose a nearby beach because of its proximity and might choose to go a specific beach for several times during one season. Domestic tourists who are in desire of sun, sea and sand will reserve an accommodation type which is available and use the beach with accompanying friends or family. Most of the time international tourists especially from “sun-desire” countries like Northern European countries will head to “sun-offering countries” like Mediterranean countries. However a Spanish tourist visiting Greek islands beaches may naturally occur as well. In overall, we can discuss about a complex beach user profile from different places, socio-economic backgrounds, with different wants and expectations.

Considering coastal management issues, consultation of beach users’ has increased in the last decades taking into account the need to better understand their behaviors, views and preferences. (Marin et al, 2009: 268) However there are central themes that evolve as to why particular beaches are used. These themes compass the existence of amenities, cleanliness, and environmental aesthetics, parking availability, space and presence of wildlife. (Gore, 2007: 737). As environmental issues have increased, perceptions about the environmental quality of the beaches or carrying capacity have also been studied and supported by researchers such as Coman and Golumbeanu (2002), Alipour et al (2007). Efforts have been made to improve assessment and management procedures, especially with reference to beach quality, as evidenced by Blue Flag regulations, the ISO 14000 standards, etc. Current beach management tools are based on classifying and rating several basic beach elements however one promising tool that has been poorly addressed in the literature is the collection of information from the public (Roca et. al. 2009: 598).

Rodney (2000: 496) revealed that in order to improve the quality of beach environments, we have to deepen our understanding of the many components that comprise beach environments. In spite of the fact that the recreational uses are prioritized in many cases, patterns in beach user's behaviors and addressing their attitudes and perceptions are missing (Roca & Villares, 2008: 315). But most of the time, in the questions of researchers, there are basic concepts that have been questioned within beach user perceptions which are clean water, clean beach, safety, parking area, access to the beach, comfort, good facilities (toilet, restaurant, changing cubicles, booth, rentals of deckchairs/sunshades), etc. We should also be aware of the fact that the social diversity and the differences between social groups may produce different outdoor recreation and leisure patterns (Roca et. al. 2009: 604). In analyzing participants' feedback, these differences should not be neglected.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Aim & Reason of the Study

In this study, Şile was designed as a case study and the researchers anged to pinpoint the views and preferences of beach users in Şile. The study is not only based upon perceptions of a good beach but also examining the views of the visitors of Şile beaches.

Ryan (1997) points out that beach also enable different experiences by reason of different geographies both natural and manmade and therefore the experience of the beach can be analyzed in terms of expectations, desires and zones of tolerance.

Several researchers were studied and hence a list of the concepts that would be placed in the questionnaire were enlisted as these attributes were revealed by the various authors (Roca et al, 2009; Roca and Villares, 2008; Ariza et al, 2008; Cervantes and Espejel, 2008; Alipour et al, 2007; Gore, 2007; Coman and Golumbeanu, 2002; Nelson et al, 2000).

2.2. Construction of the Questionnaire & Its Content Analysis

The researchers prepared a questionnaire of total 31 questions. (See Apendix for the complete questionnaire). Questions from 1 to 4 aimed to get demographic information like gender, age, educational level and their place of origin. Question 5 targeted to learn the type of transportation in reaching Şile and question 6 is an open ended question to learn the starting point of their destination. Question 7, 8 and 9 are multiple choice questions appended in the questionnaire with the aim of finding out what type of accommodation they prefer, and when do they prefer to come here and the amount of their visit.

Question 10 and 11 are also multiple choice questions with an aim to understand the reason of preference Şile beach and the sea. In these questions the researchers try to discover whether the visitors of Şile choose here for closeness, beach width, cleanliness of sea, etc. In recent years, the scope of beach management practices has broadened and a wide range of parameters (e.g. water quality, safety, public education, geomorphology and facilities) have been

integrated in the processes for assessing these practices (Roca et. al. 2009: 604).The researchers try to find exactly why they like to the sea of Şile among attributes of clean water, being warm, being without seaweed, see-through, etc.

Questions 12 to 16 are defined as on a 1 to 5 likert scale from very dirty to very clean asking about the cleanliness of toilets, showers, changing cubicles, sea and beach. Questions 17, 18, 19, 20, 25 contemplated to discover whether the users find “the necessities of this beach” (the number of toilets, showers, changing cubicles, deckchair/sunshades, lifeguards) in sufficient amount. Questions 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27 seek to find out whether the facilities (car park, game park, green areas and picnic areas, food and beverage facilities) are perceived as sufficient by the beach users. Question 28 and 29 are designed to figure out opinions of the users about the music and paddlers whether they are disturbed or in favour of them.

Question 30 intend to understand whether the users would think of coming back to the beach which can give an idea of their quality perception as users will not consider to visit the same place once again if they don’t correlate here with quality. Question 31 is an open-ended question in which the respondents are expected to write their own comments about the Şile beach and its environment. Statistical software package SPSS 16.00 was engaged for the analyses of the questions.

3. Empirical analysis and Data

3.1. Data collection

Totally 150 beach users were questioned during the weekdays with the questionnaires the researchers had designed. It is vital to draw attention to the fact that services are produced and consumed simultaneously with the customer actively participating (Lovelock, 1996: 562). In consequence the beach users’ perceptions were surveyed during their concurrent beach use in Şile.

3.2. Demographic Information of the Respondents

It has been observed that 50% of the respondents were women and 50% of them were male which brought a balance. As it could be detected from Table1, the data gathered were mainly from the age range of 20-30. 37.3% of the respondents were in the 20-30 age range. In the second rank with 25.3% were in the middle year age group between the ages 31-40. If these two groups combined, we can comment that 62.6% of those who benefited from the beaches occur in the 20-40 age range.

Table 1. Age of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
Less than 20	13	8,7
20-30	56	37,3
31-40	38	25,3
41-50	26	17,3
More than 50	17	11,3
Total	150	100

In the course of education level question (Table 2), 41.3% of the respondents were a graduate of high school and 22.7% were university graduate. Pending the university graduates and graduate and doctorate level respondents evaluated together, add up to 26.7%. The participants with high education level correspond to the ratio of 1/3 of all the respondents.

Table 2. Educational Level

	Frequency	Percent
Primary School	23	15,3
Middle School	25	16,7
High School	62	41,3
University	34	22,7
Graduate & Doctorate	6	4,0
Total	150	100

42% of those who benefited from the beach were single and 58% constitutes the married people. Consequently it can be claimed that Şile beaches are preferred both by singles and families. 19.3% of the respondents stated it was their first visit to Şile, while 80.7% asserted that they visited these beaches at least more than once. In district analysis it has been found that in the first place Ümraniye took the lead with 30%, those residing in Şile were in the second place with 14%. Kadıköy (6.7%), Kartal (6%), Üsküdar (4.7%), and Maltepe (4%) were the districts with relatively high participation as well. Not taking into consideration those living as a resident in Şile, 61.4% of the respondents were found to be residing on the Anatolian side of Istanbul. This result of geographical proximity of the beach is an important factor in the motivation of preferring Şile beaches. The second factor might be the usage of public bus as this service bus has stops in the above related districts.

When the method of transportation was questioned, it was found that 72.7% preferred to come to Şile by car and 17.3% had used the choice of urban bus. (There is a public bus service from Harem, Üsküdar to Şile which takes passengers in districts of Kadıköy, Ümraniye and Kartal as well) 10% of the respondents accessed to the beaches by foot.

The participants who prefer to come to the beaches during the week are 54%. 11.3% of the respondents prefer weekend as time of visit, while 34.7% have expressed as time of visit as both weekday and weekend. The reason why respondents might have preferred to come to Şile beached during the week is because as during the weekend it gets more crowded to swim and find a proper place on the beach.

Participants were asked about their type of accommodation and 53.3% of the respondents were not accommodating in Şile; they were daily visitors. 28.7% had their own house, 6.7% were staying with friends & relatives, 6% were staying in Hotel & Motel and 2.7% preferred pension and 2% preferred seasonal rentals, while 0.6% were on camp.

These results imply that Şile and its beaches are preferred by visitors who are from close neighborhood and who are mostly daily users.

3.3. Data Analysis

To understand the reasons of choice and motivational factors, the researchers asked the respondents to pick from attributes like “the proximity of the beach, water cleanliness, beach width, beach cleanliness, facilities and activities, affordability, preferred by families and safety”. Considering the results closeness was chosen by 67.3%, cleanliness of the sea by 36%, beach width by 8.7% and 6.7% emphasized the importance of beach cleanliness. (The participants marked more than one option therefore the sum is more than one hundred per cent.)

With reference to the question why the Sile sea has been chosen, answers were 22% warm water, 20.7% the seaweeds free, 18% being stone-free & sandy, 12.7% wavy, 62% clean sea. (Because the participants marked more than one option, the sum is more than one hundred per cent.) Properties like water temperature, warm water, seaweeds-free, being stone-free & sandy are linked to property of the sea and naturally there is no chance of human intervention or recovery in the case of disfavor. We inserted these factors to give information to the reader about the sea of Şile. Among all the questions only the question related to the cleanliness of the sea show how the beach users find the sea and 62% of the participants preferred Şile because of its sea water cleanliness. 62% respondents answered as the sea was clean, 23.3% response was very clean. These two answers making up to 85.3% of the participants who ascertain the Şile sea as clean.

When the cleanliness of the toilets, showers and changing cubicles are questioned, as 40% of the participants have not used them, answered as no idea. When the level of satisfaction had been observed, the respondents who noted the toilets as clean and very clean were 34.8%, the people who revealed the showers as clean and very clean were 42.5%, and the changing cubicles were evaluated as clean and very clean by 50 %. (Table 3)

Table 3. Data Analysis

	Beach Cleanliness		Cleanliness of Toilets		Cleanliness of Showers		Cleanliness of Changing Cubicles	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<i>Very dirty</i>	35	23,3	18	19,6	14	16,1	13	14,1
<i>Dirty</i>	36	24,0	17	18,5	11	12,6	11	12,0
<i>Moderate</i>	33	22,0	25	27,2	25	28,7	22	23,9
<i>Clean</i>	41	27,3	31	33,7	35	40,2	42	45,7
<i>Very Clean</i>	5	3,3	1	1,1	2	2,3	4	4,3
Total	150	100	92	100	87	100	92	100

The sufficiency of the number of toilets, showers and changing cubicles are as follows: The respondents who regarded the number of toilets as satisfactory were 34% where as the respondents who considered the number of the toilets as dissatisfactory were 44.7% and the ones who had no idea were 21.3%.

The respondents who evaluated the number of the showers as adequate were 32%, the ones who appreciated as insufficient were 43.3% and the respondents who marked as no idea were 24.7%. 34.7% of the respondents found the number of changing cubicles as satisfactory and the ones who find as unsatisfactory were %41, 3. %24 of the respondents answered as no idea.

About the car park capacity 69.3% predicated as sufficient and the ones who concluded as insufficient were 24.7%. (6% had no idea). As 72.7% of the respondents came to Şile by their own car, the sufficiency of the car park has been an essential factor. Especially for the families with children, one of the crucial attribute was whether there was a sufficient game park in the place that they have been for leisure- holiday-picnic purposes. 24.7% had found the game park as adequate and the ones who find inadequate were 62%. (13.3% had no idea). In conclusion the users of Şile beaches are included to think that they do not have enough game parks for their kids.

55.4% of the participants contemplated that there was enough security in the beach while 35.3% of the respondents conceived that the beach security was insufficient. The ones who commentate that the beach was not enough in terms of security was more than 1/3 of the total respondents. (9. 4% had no idea) With reference to the number of the lifeguards, similar figures like the security results have been detected. While 52.7% of the participants appraised that the number of the lifeguards was sufficient, %34 stated that the number of the lifeguards were not satisfactory. (%13, 3 had no idea)

The general assumption is that for a beach to attract people especially a youngster there is a need of beach and water activities. 68.7% of the visitors polled evaluated the beach activities as insufficient. Only 24% believed that there are sufficient activities and 7.3% didn't mention any comment. Based on the question of green and picnic areas sufficiency, 45.3% answered as sufficient, 45.3% answered as insufficient and 9.3% had no idea. There are also contrasting ideas about the young tourists visiting beaches and their expectations about beach activities. Carr (2002:51) highlighted that in terms of holiday behaviour, young tourists who visit beach-oriented destinations seem to behave in a 'passive' manner and avoid 'active' leisure pursuits when they are on vacation. Indeed, Clarke (1992) claimed that young (16-29 years old) tourists who take holidays with age group of 18-30 have little wish to involve in active pursuits such as sport and physical activity while on holiday. In our survey, most of the respondents were between age group of 20-30 and contrastingly they answered as they were expecting beach activities.

67.3% of the respondents stated that they wouldn't be bothered about the peddlers at the beach, 28.7% claimed that they would be bothered and 4% didn't comment about this issue. The music played at the beach was favored by 78%. 21.3% disliked the music played and 0.7% didn't point out any idea.

One of the very imperative questions in this study was whether the visitors would come to this beach again. Pertaining to the question 78% replied as Yes, 16% said No and 6% answered as no idea. This intensifies that the beach users would prefer to visit Şile for their probable plans at other times as well.

4. Findings

Regarding the visitors' remarks that have been gathered, there were some components that the beach users were content about and there were some attributes which they specified as rather adversely. After analyzing the answers for the question with respect to beach cleanliness, there were deprecating remarks of the visitors. The respondents who counted upon beach as clean were 27.3% while those who assessed as very clean remained at 3.3%. In this case, those who appraised the beach as clean, was only 30.6%, while those who thought dirty and very dirty, was 47.3%. (Table 3)

Regarding the results of the questionnaires, it could also be noted that almost half of the beach users who answered the questionnaire defined the number of the toilets, showers and changing cubicles as insufficient. When asked about the number of the deckchair/sunshades, 82% have answered as adequate and the ones who find as inadequate are 14.7%. (2% had no idea)

68.7% asserted that the beach activities were insufficient. The lacking of this attribute is one of issues that the administrators of Şile district should reevaluate and find a solution for. Furthermore the users of Şile beaches are considered that they did not have enough game parks for their kids.

There were also attributes that the visitors selected as positively. 62% of the participants preferred Şile because of its sea water cleanliness. The music played at the beach was favored by 78%. And 78% of the respondents indicated that they would be willing to visit the beach in the future as well.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

Şile as a close district of İstanbul is a favorite stop by İstanbul residents and near by neighborhood visitors and tourists. With its wide, endless beach and clean water of Black Sea, it will continue to attract mainly local and international tourists in the coming years as well. Nonetheless there are still certain issues that need to be considered to improve the users' satisfaction level and provide a high quality beach experience. Most of the Şile beach visitors come to Şile because they concieve and actified by the fact that Şile sea is clean, (and of course it is close by) however they have criticisms about the beach management and its environment, too. Half of the participants found the beach dirty and very dirty. Participants partially presumed the number of the toilets, showers and changing cubicles as insufficient. The results of cleanliness of showers and toilets were also not satisfactory for Şile beaches.

As the researchers had an open-ended question in the study, the participants' suggestions were examined as well. These recommendations which were noted by participants and that needs to be taken into consideration by the authorities are listed below:

- Beach and environmental cleaning should be given more attention,

- Parking area and children's play areas need to be increased.
- Beach activities can be diversified.
- The pet entrance to the beach should be prohibited.
- The service personnel and the sales staff in the environment are expected to be kinder and act with more positive attitude, lifeguards and employees need to be trained and the number of trained people needs to be increased.
- The car parking area need to be extended.
- Rather than only sea activities the garden areas need to be created.
- There are a great number of deckchairs on the beach. They need to be lessened.

The researchers pronouncing the relevance of above suggestions, they accompanyingly added their own suggestions to enhance the quality of Şile beaches and enlight for future research:

- The vehicle “beach cleaner” can be used to sift over beach sand to remove rubbish and other foreign matter. The service personnel in the beach can use manually hand-drawn devices to drag and sift rubbish like cigarette butts.
- Litter boxes can be increased.
- Leaflets about keeping environmental green can be handed out to beach users at the beach or at the public buses that run through here.
- A staff is needed to clean up the toilets and showers through out the day.
- Rather than raising the number of sunshades, the number of trees can be increased. Under the trees sitting areas and gardens can be built in harmony with the environment.
- Security staff can be placed especially during the peak periods, weekends to enhance security expectations of the beach users.
- Tourism graduate staff can be employed to manage the beach and a commentary box should be placed to keep informed about the beach users’ perception. Regular surveys can also be handled by the authorities to keep up with the users’ comments.
- As 62.6% of those who benefited from the beaches occur in the 20-40 age range water activities, beach activities, sport activities need to be diversified.
- Public bus routes from other parts of İstanbul can be put into service to address all İstanbul residents.

In the case of beach management the merely prosperous solutions would be to embrace the beach user in the planning segment of any beach management scheme. This study can be repeated in the following years to see whether the perceptions of the users have changed. In this study it is essential to highlight that especially the cleanliness of the beach has been a major problem. Taking necessary precautions concerning this matter would alter these perceptions in a positive way.

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Appendix

Study on Perceptions of Şile Beach Users

This questionnaire about Şile beaches will be used as data in an academic research.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

1) Gender

Male Female

2) Age

less than 20 20-30 31-40 41-50 more than 50

3) Marital status

Single Married

4) Educational level:

Primary School

Secondary School

High School

University

Post Graduate: Masters/Doctorate degrees

5) How do you access to Şile? Your method of transportation:

On foot

By car

By urban bus

By tour bus

Other.....

6) Habitual place of residence

.....

7) How many times have you visited this beach before?

First time More than once

8) Your type of accommodation:

Hotel/Motel Pension Habitual residence Seasonal rented home

Camping Daily visitor Home of friends /family

Other.....

9) Preferred time of visit

During the week During the weekend Both during the week and weekend

10) The reasons why you have preferred Şile. Reason of choice. You can pick more than one choice.

Closeness Preferred by families

Water Cleanliness Safety

Beach Width Affordability

Beach Cleanliness Other.....

Facility & activities

11) I like the sea of Şile because,

Water is warm Shallow

Without seaweed Wavy

Sandy Calm

Clean Other.....

See-through

	Clean	Very Clean		Very dirty	Dirty	Moderate
12) Cleanliness of toilets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13) Cleanliness of showers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14) Cleanliness of changing cubicles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15) Cleanliness of water	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16) Cleanliness of beach	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17) Sufficient number of toilets:

Yes No No idea

18) Sufficient number of showers:

Yes No No idea

19) Sufficient number of changing cubicles:

Yes No No idea

20) Sufficient number of deckchair/sunshades:

Yes No No idea

21) Sufficient car park capacity:

Yes No No idea

22) Sufficient place of Game Park for children:

Yes No No idea

23) Sufficient water and beach activities:

Yes No No idea

24) Sufficient beach security:

Yes No No idea

25) Sufficient number of lifeguards:

Yes No No idea

26) Sufficient green areas and picnic areas:

Yes No No idea

27) Sufficient food and beverage facilities:

Yes No No idea

28) Your thoughts about the peddlers at the beach.

Don't bother Get bothered No idea

29) What you think about the music played at the beach?

Like Dislike No idea

30) Would you come to this beach again?

Yes No No idea

31) Your suggestions to improve the beach and its environment.