Istanbul Study Tour Report

February 1 – February 9, 2014
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1. Introduction

By Karin Althaus, Anna Casagrande, Dmitry Shpagin

At the end of the study curriculum of the faculty of Masters in International Tourism the students organize a study tour to their desired destination. The class is subdivided into several groups and each group is responsible for a day of the study tour program, with the reference to a specific topic. The study tour is an academic travel with aim of helping students understands how the knowledge acquired in the program can be applied in real life situations. Its aim is to enable meetings between the professionals already working in the industry and students that are presented as experts. The mind-set of the study tour is firstly academic with the focus on students being able to think critically in regard to various issues, presented by the professionals. The knowledge gained within the time of the study curriculum makes each individual student an expert in the field of International Tourism enabling them to critically and innovatively view the current issues that a specific destination is facing. This in turn enables a fruitful argumentation between the professionals and the experts that may result in new creative and innovative ideas.

In February 2014, students of the Master program in International Tourism organized a travel to Istanbul under the supervision of the Director of the Master’s Program Dr. Rico Maggi and his assistant Reka Taskai. The study tour lasted for 6 days with each day carefully planned by a subgroup of students that was divided in advance. Each group had a leader and four main topics were to be addressed which were: DMO/DMC’s or destination management companies or organizations, Hospitality was the second topic, the third topic was the Transportation and finally the 4th topic of the study tour was Culture and Attractions. During each of the day, the subgroups of the class organized meetings with various professionals in respect to the assigned topic. In addition to that, a special group was dedicated to Logistics that organized all movements of the group until their final arrival back at the University. During the planning and the execution of the meetings, several problems were faced in organization and execution of the meetings.
1.1 Challenges

One of the main challenges that each group had to face was that the meetings had to be organized with professionals in the industry that knew that they would be talking to knowledgeable experts ready to criticize as well as help provide some solutions to current problems. It was problematic to explain to the industry professionals that the group they will be meeting is not simply awaiting a presentation of the tasks and organization of a company but rather have both the experts and the professionals engage in a discussion that could bring through fruitful results and conclusions for both of the parties.

In addition to that one more challenge arose from the size of the class and the consequent high need for communication between the different groups. Another challenge some groups faced due to their assigned topic, were difficulties to find the right companies, as well as the appropriate speakers. From some of the companies it was also hard to get suitable and timely responses. Another crucial challenge that was faced while organizing the study tour is destination specific where the challenge described above could occur anywhere. The challenge specific to Istanbul as a destination for the academic travel was the language barrier. Communication problems occurred during all stages of the study tour, in the virtual get there or the planning phase, as well as the real get there and the live there phase. The tourism industry in Istanbul is still undergoing major changes and the language problem seems to be tackled well by some organizations where others still need to improve and create a more globalized environment that the whole world is undergoing today with various technological innovations, which make internationalization a crucial aspect of a destinations success.
Furthermore, there were various issues with Logistics that had to be addressed at the spot and could not be planned in advance. One of the major issues was the congestion; it was hard to estimate the exact travel time and delays since there was a lack in the familiarity with traffic times. Istanbul is a heavily congested city that created large problems for all the groups due to the time frames that were established in advance. However, it is crucial to understand that Istanbul is one of the largest cities in the world depending on an individual’s perspective: “Determining the world’s largest cities depends on which definitions of "city" and "size" are used, and how those definitions are applied.”¹ Thus, these issues could be faced in any large city of the world.

¹ UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund), SOWC statistics 2012
### 1.2 List of meetings

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*Detailed meeting schedule not shown.*
2. Istanbul as a Destination

By Sara Coppola, Tosca Codiroli

Greece and Bulgaria to the west, Armenia and Azerbaijan to the east and Iran, Iraq and Syria to the south are the border neighbours of Turkey. The country, whose capital is Ankara since the modern Republic of Turkey was established in 1923, has a population of above 73,722,988 inhabitants. Turkey is a Non-permanent member of the United Nations Security council 2009-2010 and in 2005 began negotiation process with the EU and became a candidate for the European Union. To the country, member of UNESCO belongs a unique heritage built in Anatolia since ancient times.²

Istanbul, known in past time as Constantinople, is the main industrial, financial and cultural centre of Turkey and the largest one in Europe with a whopping 14 million inhabitants.³ The city, defined as the Turkey’s door to the West, is strategically located between Europe and Asia. Istanbul that is the only metropolis in the world situated on two continents is divided by the Bosphorus strait, which connects the Black Sea and Sea of Marmara. With its long history dating back to 300 thousand years before, the city combines multiple different civilizations and cultures that merge together in harmony. The former imperial capital has managed to become today a world-class centre of trade business and tourism that is successfully growing.⁴

This image of a city that works as a cultural hub between East and West can be easily confirmed by looking at the international arrivals at the Atatürk Airport, the most important one in Turkey. In 2012 it has been ranked the 6th busiest airport in Europe and the 17th⁵ one in the world with people coming from different nations as the graph below shows.

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2 Official tourism portal of Turkey: www.goturkey.com/
3 Turkish Statistical Institute, “The Results of Address Based Population Registration System, 2013”.
4 Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality
5 Wikipedia: Aeroporto di Istanbul-Atatürk
In 2012 the MasterCard Global Destination Index ranked Istanbul 6th out of 20 cities for the number of international overnight visitors and 3rd for the level of air-travel connectivity, better, for both the scope of city connection with other cities and for the frequency within each connection.\textsuperscript{6}

The particular charm of the city, divided into 27 districts, each one with its own history and attractions, attracted almost 11.6 million foreign tourists, making Istanbul the 10th best destination out of 100 worldwide touristic cities in 2012\textsuperscript{7}, and one of the top European destinations in 2013\textsuperscript{8}.

One of the most important areas of the city is the historical one, situated on the southern part of the Golden Horn, the world’s largest natural harbour. Starting from here, tourists can visit Sultanahmet, by far the most important borough of the historical part of Istanbul. It’s a central location from which the Hagia Sophia, the Blue Mosque, Topkapi Place, the Hippodrome and the Basilica Cistern can be reached easily.

Even if the historical part has a lot of interesting sites to offer, neglecting the modern part of Istanbul would be a pity. It still has a fair amount of must-see sightseeing spots and is the place to be if you’re in for shopping, wining and dining or a great night out. The modern part of Istanbul is the area north of the Golden Horn and consists of boroughs such as Beşiktaş, Galata, Karaköy, Nişantaşı, Ortaköy, Şişli, and Taksim.

When it comes to food, culture and wine, also in this case Istanbul has a lot to offer to tourists. Turkish food is one of the great cuisines of the world and to be found in abundance throughout Istanbul, with a great variety of restaurants and eateries for all pockets and delicious fresh street food.

From the point of view of culture, the city offers an important festival, the Istanbul Biennial, held every two years since 1987. While its early incarnations were aimed at showcasing Turkish visual art, it has since opened to international artists and risen in prestige to become among the elite biennales, alongside the Venice Biennale and the São Paulo Art Biennial.

The information provided until now has been useful in order to start shaping an image of Istanbul as a destination in the mind of the second year master students of the University of Lugano. But, in order to reach a deeper sense of place and to explore the central point of Istanbul, its planning and architecture, the Sunday activity has been crucial.

\textsuperscript{6} HEDRICK-WONG Y., \textit{Top 20 Global Destination Cities in 2013}.
\textsuperscript{7} Euromonitor international, \textit{Travel and Tourism in Turkey}.
\textsuperscript{8} Best destinations in Europe.
2.1 Sunday activity

By Alexandra Grammenou

2.1.1 Concept of the task

On Sunday morning the class gathered at the lobby of the hotel and was given a task to fulfill by the professor and his assistant. 6 groups of 5 to 6 students were formed with the main goal to explore the cityscape of Istanbul by visiting the main attractions and using different means of transport to move around. The same itinerary had to be followed by all groups based on the guidelines that were given, but each group had to represent a different tourism segment of their choice and as a result to produce the tourism experience according to that.

The itinerary starting from Titanic Hotel (point A) included the following points of interest: the heritage tram from Taksim square to Tünel (point B to C), the Egyptian Bazaar (point D) and Topkapi Palace (point E). In each point the groups had to provide answers to the questions that were asked for each attraction. The questions were related to the name of the attraction, as only a picture of it was provided in the guidelines, the year of construction, UNESCO or the functions of the attraction. Electronic devices for the research of information were forbidden. However, the groups were free to follow any route they preferred to reach the points, stop and visit other attractions along the way as well as use any means of transportation they found most suitable, based always on the tourism segment they had chosen.

Apart from the attractions that were indicated in the itinerary, the groups were asked to visit two more attractions of their choice in the surrounding area. The task lasted around 6 hours and by 5pm all groups had to be back in Titanic hotel to discuss the results of the task.

2.2 The results

During the meeting, each group leader was asked to share with the rest of the class the tourism segment they represented, their experiences during the day, the precise route they followed, the additional attractions they visited, the reasons why they chose those, what kind of transportation they used and the implications they faced while fulfilling the task. Despite the fact that the itinerary was the same, the way each group produced its experience varied completely due
to the level of knowledge and the value of time that was different for each segment.

### 2.2.1 Group Results

**Group 1:** The segment was retired people with low value of time, high value of money, and mid-high knowledge. Starting from Taksim Square they took a ride with the historical tram avoiding walking. At the end station, they came across the Dervish Mevlevi Museum. Being interested in culture, they spent 1 hour there. Moreover, on the way to the Egyptian Bazaar they stopped at Galata Tower for coffee, reading information from their Lonely Planet guidebook about the building. Due to time constraint and the long queues, they could not climb up the tower. In order to avoid the costs of transportation and since they had still some time they continued to the Egyptian Bazaar on foot. Finally, they walked to Topkapi Palace, where they abandoned the initial idea of visiting the museum, as they could not stand waiting in the long lines. Feeling exhausted because they were old people, they took a taxi from Topkapi back to the hotel.

**Group 2:** The segment was travel writers with high knowledge, low value of time and high value of money. They used only public transportation to move around to feel like a tourist. First, they took the heritage tram to have a look at Taksim Square and the effect of politics in the area. Then, they visited the Galata district and the fish market and headed on foot to the Egyptian Bazaar. They stopped in the New Mosque and continued to Topkapi Palace, which was not visited due to time constraint. Finally, curiosity forced them to take the underground rail tunnel of Bosphorus from Sirkeci station to Üsküdar in the Asian Part. Tourists making photos in front of the station was a sign that the new tunnel has become an attraction for many. They took the boat to enjoy Bosphorus and then by funicular came back to the hotel.

**Group 3:** The segment was retired people (over 65) with low knowledge, low value of time and medium income. The group caught a taxi from Taksim Square to reach Topkapi Palace in order to avoid all the confusion on how to buy bus tickets and which is the right bus to take to get there. They visited Topkapi museum and enjoyed its interior. Then they walked to the New Mosque and also entered the Egyptian Bazaar for some shopping, as it was really close. They decided to stop to have some rest and then they took the Tram T1 to climb up the Galata Area. From the tram stop to Galata Tower they were strolling along the

![Illustration: The Egyptian Bazaar](image)
way observing this area. This is where they came across the old heritage Tram to Taksim.

**Group 4:** The segment was a family (2 parents and 3 children), with high availability of time and low knowledge. They preferred to use a lonely planet guidebook or ask people around for information. They reached Topkapi on foot, but did not enter, as the children were impatient to wait in the lines. They continued to Gulhane Park, which is close by. Free entrance and green zone with lots of benches – perfect way to spend some time to rest. Egyptian Bazaar was a paradise; parents bought Turkish delights and spices, while the children had fun with the “ice-cream man” show. Since they could not climb up Galata Tower due to the tourist congestion, they decided to enjoy a similar panoramic view from a patisserie next to the Tower. On the way back, they had a ride on the old Tram to Taksim square. The driver allowed the children to drive the tram with him.

**Group 5:** The segment was cruise tourists with high value of time, low level of knowledge and high value of money. They had only one afternoon to see the top attractions of Istanbul. Public transportation was avoided. From the harbour they took first a taxi to go to the Egyptian Bazaar due to the low cost of it and considering that it was much faster. Grand Bazaar and Sultanahmet square were also visited. They admired Aya Sofia and the Blue Mosque but only from the outside since the queues were too long to enter. The same problem was faced in Topkapi Palace. Final point was that of Istiklal street, where they could watch the old heritage tram passing by. However, it was too crowded and slow, so due to the time constraint they decided not to take a ride with it.

**Group 6:** The segment was backpackers with low value of time and high knowledge. First, they strolled through the Istiklal Street and came across Galata Tower where they enjoyed a cup of coffee in its square and learned some historical facts. They continued their walk under the sun, crossing the Galata Bridge, where they venerated the locals fishing and got to the Egyptian Bazaar. Later unrelentingly, they continued to the Topkapi Palace, which was full of tourists, therefore, they decided to relax in the garden rather than stand in the queue. Lastly, they had some Doner Kebap and headed to the historical tram, where they managed to speak to the driver finding out information about the built date and the stops the tram makes, but did not take a ride. No means of transport were used.

**2.3 Further observations**

A general discussion was held on common observations on the city of Istanbul as a
destination, based on the group’s shared experiences with the guidance of Professor Maggi. The following topics were covered:

**Istanbul Destination Marketing:** The issue of how the city of Istanbul could be marketed as a whole was brought up. On the one hand, Istanbul offers an immense amount of historical attractions and can certainly be marketed as a historical place. On the other hand, the trend is towards more growth with high flow of investments that will make the city a global center like any other in the globalized, western world. The plan of organizing mega events in the city such as the Olympic Games and the Euro Football Cup is in the agenda of Turkey for quite some time. Based on these facts, a common marketing strategy for Istanbul seems a big challenge since it can offer so many different tourism products.

**Transportation:** High congestions all over the city and an unusual transportation system were common observations. The transportation system is a lot different from what has been experienced in other European cities. For example, the trams stops and funiculars function as Metro stations creating confusion among tourists. However, in a city with so much traffic, the public transport system, especially the trams, were perceived as a fast, cheap and safe way to travel around the main attractions, as well as a sign of incredible progress to manage congestion. Buses are extremely congested and therefore not preferable among tourists. Taxis are the easiest to use but there is always the risk of fares fraud. Other issues that were observed were first the lack of daily ticket cards and discounts. For every ride in tram, subway or boat, a new 3 TL ticket should be purchased that leads to time and money loss. Second, in the case of the Taksim-Tünel heritage tram there are no clear tram stops. The tram can stop anywhere on the street in order to avoid traffic, making it difficult for tourists to know where they should wait.

Attractions: Lack of heritage interpretation was experienced in almost all the attractions of the itinerary that was given. Apart from some signs in the Egyptian Bazaar that explained briefly its history, it was very difficult to answer to the questions of the task without using a guidebook or asking people on the streets, both tourists and locals.

Regarding the question about the date of inscription of Topkapi Palace as UNESCO World Heritage, it was very interesting to see that only one out of 6 groups managed to find a sign that mentioned that while visiting the site. UNESCO signs were generally absent from the historical area of Istanbul. Long lines and human congestion in all the attractions brought up the issue on how it would be best to handle and guide the tourists. Finally, the matter if Taksim square can be a new attraction due to the recent political events that took place there, was raised.

Cityscape: Signage to guide tourists in the city seems to be missing, however it was agreed that it is not needed since the topography is very good with shopping streets, bridges, sea, hills and many viewing points, which function as natural signs, always helping to orientate oneself. Tourists can have a rest, eat and drink in one of the many districts such as the Galata Tower area or next to the New Mosque. Istanbul is definitely a car city, absolutely uncomfortable for pedestrians. More pedestrian streets would certainly enhance the experience for those who prefer to walk and stroll around. Regarding the architecture, too many ruins and dead buildings were observed. There is no interest to invest on conservation; they rather prefer investing on new 5 start hotels that will bring more growth. The issue of gentrification is evident in most areas of the city; the question is if it will pass. The above issues were a first introduction to Istanbul as a destination and had to be kept in mind during the meetings in the week that would follow.

3. Destination Management

By Luca Bagiante, Lisa Beck, Marianna Dounavi

Monday the 3rd of February was the first of five days devoted to meetings with professionals. The topic of the day was Istanbul and Destination Management Organizations as well as the MICE sector. This day was planned to convey, on one hand, the big picture and to look at Istanbul as a destination, to find out what the city offers, what makes it special, who the target market is, how
the promotion is organized and what its challenges in Istanbul’s destination management and marketing are. On the other hand, this day aimed at focusing on Business Travel and Istanbul’s position as one of the world’s leading MICE destinations: which initiatives enhance Istanbul’s attractiveness for MICE and which are the challenges the city faces regarding the MICE sector?

3.1 Lonely Planet

The first meeting of the week was a Skype meeting held in one of the meeting rooms of Titanic hotel. The speaker was Mrs. Virginia Maxwell, who is based in Australia and works as a travel writer and a book reviewer for Lonely Planet. She is the author of Lonely Planet’s Istanbul city guide, the pocket guide, as well as the Istanbul chapter of the Lonely Planet’s Turkey guide.\(^9\) Lonely Planet is one of the first travel book publishing companies and has become the largest guidebook publisher in the world. The company was founded by Tony and Maureen Wheeler in 1973 and now occupies around 450 employees and approximately 200 authors\(^10\). As Mrs. Maxwell mentioned, she has to spend about seven to eight weeks every year in Istanbul since it is a fast changing city and the guidebooks have to be updated as well as new editions published. For her, Istanbul is a very European and liberal city in comparison to other cities in Turkey, it is "where the new Turkey" is. Also according to the speaker, locals’ recommendations are invaluable when writing guidebooks for tourists. Turks respect their history and culture and want tourists to appreciate them as well. Moreover, Mrs. Maxwell thinks that the citizens want to develop and make Istanbul a modern city but a lot of money still has to be invested for heritage restorations, infrastructure and for solving the traffic problem. In addition, considering the current political situation, she mentioned that as an author of a guide, you have to be neutral and very careful on how to describe a situation, namely in giving an overview of the situation and showing both sides of an argument. An interesting example she provided was the Armenian genocide, where she had to write in a balanced way in order to describe the situation. For such situations, Mrs. Maxwell mentioned that Lonely Planet trusts the expertise of its authors. Furthermore, answering the question why Lonely Planet still writes about Istanbul and not about other places that are “more lonely”, the speaker answered that there is the need to sell books where people want to go: businesses need money and “lonely places should stay lonely”.

\(^{10}\) Lonely Planet (2014a): The Lonely Planet Story
3.2 Istanbul Convention and Visitor Bureau

For the second meeting of the day, the class was brought to the Haliç Congress Center, a new structure inaugurated in 2009, hosting many national and international events\textsuperscript{11}. Here the students first met Dr. Özen Dalli, an Executive Committee Member of the Istanbul Convention and Visitor Bureau (ICVB) and Nihan Esen, the Sales and Marketing Coordinator of the ICVB. The ICVB is a non-profit destination marketing organization established in 1997, which works as a branch of the Tourism Development & Education Foundation (TUGEV)\textsuperscript{12}. The ICVB acts as an impartial clearinghouse and contact point for requests for proposals and offers services for both destinations and meeting planners, supports in preparing bids, in finding venues and consulting and advising in general, helps with site inspections, promotion materials, and calendars. Dr. Dalli and Ms. Esen presented Istanbul as one of the most important logistic areas of the world where the geographical location plays a strong role as point of attraction. The congress and convention industry in Istanbul he described as very competitive, with hotels as the preferred choice of venue for meetings and because of this the large investment in hotels. Apart from hotels and convention centers, universities and unusual venues such as heritage sites are used for meetings and events. Seasonality plays a strong role in the MICE industry, spring and autumn being the preferred seasons from corporations to hold events. According to Dr. Dalli, characteristics of Istanbul as a destination are the easy accessibility when arriving, the low barriers so delegates have easy entry and the local support. Local support might be given from the government, strong marketing and reputation-building campaigns.

3.3 Haliç Congress Center

Next, the students met Zeynep Göncü, the Sales Executive of International Accounts of the Haliç Congress Centers. Ms. Göncü presented the Haliç Congress Center as one of the most popular of the seven existing ones in Istanbul with easy access, also by water. In the area (Golden Horn) a gentrification of sorts has taken place, it is an investment area and creates a unique selling proposition for the Haliç Congress Center. Ms. Göncü explained that there is no cooperation between the Congress Center and the hotels. The Congress Center is aiming to catch the majority of meetings and incentives but is not yet managing. The different convention centers however create networks between each other, but are strongly competitive. According to Ms. Göncü, the center does not have enough international congresses and works mainly on national events, which account

\textsuperscript{11} Haliç Congress Center (2013): About.

\textsuperscript{12} ICVB (2013): About us.
for around 80% of the income. For 2014 the Haliç Congress Center hosts 8 international congresses. In the marketing strategy a multitude of channels are used: international channels are i.e. global fairs such as IMEX and GIBTM, membership of ICCA and MPI and others, investigation, proactive search, ads in magazines and newspapers. Local channels are the 3 large congress centers in Istanbul, mailings to around 6000 contacts, social media, their website, virtual tours, familiarization trips and more. National competitors were named by Ms. Göncü as the city of Antalya, international competitors are i.e. Prague, Barcelona, Vienna and London.

A tour of the site concluded the visit at the Congress Center and it became clear to the students that the whole visit had been mainly about the large building instead of the strategy and plans to integrate the site into the city’s event sector. The market segment of the congress center was not clear and a huge competition with the hotels in the city became evident, where the hotels are integrated in the international event sector while the congress center is mainly used for national events or wedding receptions.

3.4 Omar’s Destination Services Turkey

After the Haliç Congress Center, students moved to a neighborhood of Yeniköy along the Bosporus, where the office of Omar’s Destination Services (ODS) is located. ODS serves as a local DMC partner, professional congress organizer and event planner throughout Turkey that addresses well-known main destinations such as Istanbul, Cappadocia, Ephesus, Antalya, Kusadasi and Bodrum. Today, they operate mainly in the MICE sector (70%), while 30% of their business focuses on individuals and groups. According to Mr. Muzaffer Komek, the G&I Assistant Department Manager, it is a long procedure to prepare such events, since millions of emails might need to be exchanged in a 2-year preparation phase (e.g. Russian clients have a 6-month preparation phase, while for American customers this can take up to 2 years). Moreover, the ODS team thinks that Istanbul is easy to be sold as a MICE destination since both business and entertainment can be combined. Despite this, they try to combine other destinations with Istanbul. As Mr. Komek and his colleagues mentioned, one of the company’s main competitors today is booking.com where the customers organize their trips by themselves. In order to be competitive in such a market your responses to requests have to be fast, which is why the company offers a live chat system that makes the communication with the clients faster. Lastly, they mentioned that in order to grow you have to keep your clients and find new ones as well, which is why ODS participates in fairs in Las Vegas, Frankfurt.

3.5 Destination Management Turkey Ltd.

The DMT (Destination Management Turkey Ltd.) as a local DMC was presented in the last meeting of the day by Karin Paquay, owner and managing director of DMT Destination Management TR. Ltd. She is originally from Belgium but moved to Istanbul in 1989 when she decided to take up the offer of an incoming agency in Turkey as Sales and Marketing Manager. During the meeting Mrs. Paquay explained her decision to, after almost 10 years of experience, set up her own agency in Istanbul in 1996. Her experience during the last twenty-five years helped us understand how Istanbul changed first as a city and second as a tourism destination, attracting more and more tourists for different reasons and facing different and more complex requests from the demand side as well as providing an example of a person coming from abroad and having success in this city in the tourism field. The company has nine employees, and offers incentive travel, motivational travel, conferences and meetings as well as VIP travel services. They are mainly focused on Istanbul (90%) and partially on the Turkish coast (Antalya, Bodrum, Kusadasi) and Cappadocia. Main markets are from the Benelux states, Spain, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Mexico and the US. The company nowadays identifies around 2700 agents in Istanbul, among which they consider around 10 as direct competitors.

During the meeting, the discussion covered several topics such as the increasing importance of Istanbul and Turkey as a whole as a MICE destination and therefore the success of the company DMT in this field. DMT provides personalized and professional DMC-service to all sectors of the corporate travel and meetings industry. Thanks to the large number of activities offered, the company, as explained by Mrs. Paquay, has earned an excellent reputation in Istanbul and the country as a whole. Among the several services provided, they are leaders in: incentive programs, executive meetings, conferences and events throughout Turkey and promoting the country as an ideal destination.

DMT has linked heritage with meetings and incentives as was shown in a video and slogans shown during the meeting: “the timeless city” and “love of continents” both show how lifestyle and overall attractions of Istanbul can constitute a plus when choosing the city as destination for meetings or incentive programs.

Main challenges in this field are represented by the growing numbers of tourists and

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14 EIBTM (2013): DMT.
15 DMTCMT (2013): What We Do Best.
therefore the need to adapt or change offers according to their needs. Several political issues that continue to afflict the country are taxes on alcohol, prohibition of alcohol or the Gezi Park protests that force the company to spend more time editing bookings cancellations. Finally, the change in markets after the financial crisis affects the budgets of clients, the demand for more creativity at lower cost and more DMC’s approached for the same project.

3.6 Conclusion

The first day with five meetings held a lot of challenges for the class, a very strict schedule and needed a lot of energy and concentration. It was however an invaluable day for the students to get a first overview of how the city is organized, how different perceptions about Istanbul and its challenges can be, what companies and organizations have implemented to their success and which elements for a successful adaption to the future of Istanbul as a MICE and large tourism destination are still missing.

4. Hospitality in Istanbul

By Alexandra Banjac, Carlotta Busatta, Fanny Caloz

The second day of the study tour has been dedicated entirely to the hospitality topic due to its significant relevance for tourism and especially for Istanbul, where the sector has experienced a boom over the past years. Therefore, having an insight of what is going on in Istanbul in terms of accommodation, food and services offered is highly important in order to understand how the industry functions and to gain certain knowledge of their hospitality management. Moreover, it has to be remembered that a destination is also about what it is offered and how it is offered in terms of welcoming, receiving, hosting or even entertaining guests. As hospitality involves several businesses, an overview of different types of accommodation, restaurant and as well institution have been selected and approached.

4.1 Culinary Arts Center – Yemek Sanatları Merkezi (YESAM)

Culinary art has become an important point of tourism. For the last 10 years, there has been a focus on food. From the food culture of minorities to the regulated street food, Turkey offers a very rich and diversified gastronomy. However Europeans often reduce Turkish cuisine to kebab (which is by the way a cooking technique!). This wrong perception of Turkish heritage is being deal with by
the Culinary Arts Center whose mission is to educate tourists as well as Turkish people about the Turkish gastronomy.

The Culinary Arts Center (YESAM) was established by the Turkish Cultural Foundation (TCF), which was created in the year 2000. TCF is a public charitable organization, which is completely funded by private donations. It was initially created in order to promote Turkish food and culture in the United States as to build cultural bridges between the US and Turkey. To this day TCF has offices in Boston, Washington DC and Istanbul, Turkey.

The Culinary Arts Center dedicates its activities to preserving Turkey’s culinary heritage, researching traditional dishes and developing educational models to pass on the traditions to the future generations.

The meeting took place at the Culinary Arts Center, which is located in ARMAGGAN Nuruosmaniye. This store is mostly famous for hosting producers of Turkish crafts, leather goods and jewelry. The conference was presented by Banu Özden, project Executive of YESAM. Among the many activities conducted by the Culinary Arts Center, the most important one is probably the researching, recording and applying of the cooking techniques of provincial Turkish cuisine as well as the historical Ottoman cuisine. The basic research is conducted in Istanbul, and then expands beyond Turkey. YESAM also organizes many educational activities directed both to Turkish people as well as to foreigners. The visit ended with a demonstration of the creation of a famous Turkish sugar candy, which was shown as an entertaining touristic attraction.

4.2 Pera Palace Hotel Jumeirah

The second meeting of the day took place at the Pera Palace Hotel Jumeirah, a luxury museum hotel located in the Pera district in the heart of Istanbul. It was built in 1892 for the purpose of hosting the passengers of the Orient Express and officially opened in 1895. During the years, Pera Palace Hotel has been a prominent symbol of Istanbul’s urban culture. Celebrities like Ernest Hemingway, Alfred Hitchcock, Agatha Christie, Mata Hari, King Edward VIII and many more have stayed at Pera Palace Hotel over the years.

The visit included the guided tour of the Agatha Restaurant, the Kubbeli Lounge and Tea Room, the Patisserie de Pera and the Orient Bar and Terrace, but also of the historical elevator. Last but not least, one of the key point of our visit was the Museum Room 101 of the leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who stayed several times at Pera Palace. This museum including a collection of Atatürk books, magazines, postcards, and other personal items.

Since 2012, the famous Jumeirah Group manages the Pera Palace Hotel with the promise to
delivers memorable and unique experiences in culturally connected environments. Furthermore, during the meeting the students and the speakers discussed the unique selling proposition, competitive advantages and challenges of Pera Palace Hotel Jumeirah. Moreover, the importance to be part of the hotel chain Jumeirah Group and the differences in comparison to the period before the entering in Jumeirah hotel chain have been mentioned. A focus has also been put on the architecture as a distinctive element of their offer and the importance of the human resources. Additionally, it is very important to take into consideration the political situation of the country and its impacts on tourism and hospitality sector in order to adapt their offer.

4.3 Peradays

The 3rd meeting of the day took place in the Peradays Hotel. Located in the historic district of Beyoglu, this nine bedroom hotel privately owned and managed contrasted a lot with the previous meeting due to the “proximity” of the two owners who made the students feel like home. *You should not be professional, you should be real or we are real people hosting real people* were immediately put as their motto. Even if claiming not being knowledgeable about management strategies, the two owners definitely proved they were really clever businessmen with a lot of experience.

The whole concept of this hotel is built around its unique architectural style: The building used to be a Levantine house before becoming a family apartment and later on, a hotel. The inside part of the building itself and the rooms amazingly but differently arranged provide a real and incomparable experience. As le Corbusier mentioned “Construction is about standing correctly, architecture is about moving oneself”. Indeed, the use of different materials really expresses a story as modern and design elements (metallic stairs, high-tech devices) are combined with those from the past (stone wall). The students were definitely able to feel that atmosphere while visiting the rooms as each of them provides comfort but a unique style along with past and modern elements.

From the outside, there is definitely no possibility to know that a hotel is located in the building due to the lack of signs and specific elements that usually belong to hotels. The reason of this non-marketing strategy has been well thought by the owners: they do not aim to attract *anyone* explicitly also because of the limited capacity of the hotel. Even if it was not mentioned, the two owners’ usual target market are tourists, in their mid-30 with low value of money.

As a conclusion, is it possible to say that the kindness, the knowledge and the professionalism of the two owners made the students better understood what tourism and, more precisely, hospitality *really* meant: It is about people! Their simple entrepreneurship, strong management competencies along with their long term and sustainable strategy made possible for Peradays to be
ranked in the top place on TripAdvisor. Next time the students will be in Istanbul, they will surely consider this option for a stay.

4.4 The Pudding Shop Lale Restaurant

The fourth meeting of the day took place at the Pudding Shop Lale Restaurant. Founded in 1957 by Idris Çolpan and his brother Namih with the name of “Lale Pastahanesi”, it became popular in the 1960s as a meeting place for hippies and other travelers on overland route between Europe and Asia, called the “hippie trail”. The restaurant got its name as a result of the “word-of-mouth” from numerous foreign travelers that could not remember the original name, but they remembered the wide and popular selection of puddings sold there and thus referred to it as the “Pudding Shop”. In its first few years, the pudding shop was the only place in the area where direct transportation to Asia and tourist information on Turkey were readily available. Moreover, they offer a vast number of traditional Turkish dishes.

The students met Mr. Adem Çolpan, the owner and the General Manager of the Pudding Shop. During this meeting different topics were touched, such as the historical relevance of the hippie trail and, then, the key points of success of the Pudding Shop to become a meeting point of the Hippie Trail, their changes since 1957 in order to be always competitive and their future plans and challenges. The discussion took place in a warm and welcoming atmosphere, drinking tea and tasting the different selection of puddings.

During the meeting, students had the opportunity to understand the competitive advantage of Pudding Shop, their unique selling proposition in comparison to their competitors and the keys of its success. Moreover, as a one of the main stops of the Hippie Trail during late ’60s and early ’70s, the Pudding Shop is considered as a sort of “nostalgic” place. In fact, some people visit it, after 40 years, with their families and children in order to live once again this unique experience and listen some stories and see pictures of the past.

4.5 Recap Session with Prof. Dr. Sükrü Yarcan

The speaker Prof. Dr. Sükrü Yarcan is a lecturer in Nisantasi University, a private, non-profit educational institution founded in 2012. Over his career, he has taught in the Tourism Administration Department, as well as had working experience in the private sector where he undertook various management responsibilities. He is also the founder and coordinator of the Travel Management Program at Bogaziçi University.

He highlighted different tourism-related topics:
• **Economic growth of Istanbul:** His speech highlighted the growing importance of the place from an economic perspective. On the destination level, Istanbul competes with Paris, London and partly Athens. Being so central, it also attracts visitors from the Middle East, as well as Germans, Russians and Ukrainians that are the main markets for Istanbul. The tourist demand increased tremendously in the last 4 years. He underlined that occupancy and capacity increased strongly.

• **Characteristics of the market:** Each type of tourists has different characteristics and Istanbul welcome the following tourists: 10% culture tourists, 33% recreational tourists, 18% business travellers, 11% relatives & families tourists and 9% shopping tourists

• **Lodging:** Accommodation as well as infrastructure (metro, tram) develops fast to welcome the mass of visitors. Concerning accommodation there are two tendencies: the international hotel chains that are situated on the Bosphorus and the small hotels that are located near Taksim square and the historical center.

5. Transportation

*By Evgeniya Chernysheva, Anna Lumbroso, Fabia Roos*

5.1 Atatürk Airport – TAV Airport Holding

Atatürk Airport is one of the two international airports connecting the city of Istanbul with a high number of international and domestic destinations. The rapid growth of Istanbul can also be seen in this airport – today more than 1’000 aircrafts in a 500’000m2 area are handled and more than 1’200 flights are served with approximately 150’000 passengers per day.

An important factor that influenced the rapid growth of this airport is the cooperation with Turkish Airlines. The airline plays an important role boasting Turkey’s image all over the world as a flagship carrier and exchanging important data with the airport. The airline has shown a remarkable growth in the last 10 years in terms of transfer passengers, destinations to fly to and as a consequence, revenue. This cooperation between an airline and an airport is exceptional, as airports, which are no longer public structures, have different interests from the airlines that interfere, for example, with the goal of the airlines to minimize the waiting times for its passengers.

Istanbul Atatürk Airport is not only the biggest airport of Turkey, but also welcomed with respect throughout Europe; with its architecture, speed of passenger flow and services. It has been built by TAV Airport Holding, a private company operating 10 other airports placed both in Turkey. As the
winner of the public bidding, TAV also got the rights to operate the airport for several years, after that period of time they will give the management back to the government. For different airports management they use the same models and systems but it is influenced a lot by the passenger capacity.

During the site visit, the students have been informed about TAV Istanbul Operations that include the following different departments:

- **Information Technology (Software and development):** TAV uses their “in house” developed operations systems for all the 11 different airports they operate.

- **Security operations:** This department is very much influenced by governmental decisions and laws. For example, the luggage check at the entrance of the airport is a governmental regulation.

- **Operations management:** This department controls all the different information thanks to the FIDS (Flight Information Systems) about the flights taking off and landing in Atatürk airport. From the presentation the students found out that the biggest challenges faced are human errors and bad weather.

- **Food and beverage:** Operating by a company called BTA, which works under TAV for the Food & Beverage sector; there are 68 areas with different operations serving 22,000 customers per day, 24/7. The main focus is on international and Turkish cuisine. BTA operates all the food facilities except for strong brands such as i.e. Starbucks.

- **Duty free:** Atatürk Airport has the biggest duty free space in Europe covering a 3000m² area. The duty free area is not comparable with a normal shopping center as a lot of information about customers is available from the boarding cards (shown when doing a purchase) in order to decide about the product ranges. The main purpose of the duty free stores is to give better and faster access to the products and narrow the walk through. Therefore, there are no specific entrances and exits – the area is open and as a consequence, there is little control over theft due to high control costs. The aim is to reach the needs of both customers with and without time serving both luxury and general goods. Some examples of factors affecting how the airport designs the duty free stores were mentioned during the presentation:
  - The type of passengers going through the area (e.g. luxury goods and stores are all placed nearby the luxury lounges and the 1st class customer services)

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- Product level increases with the passengers’ spending levels, e.g. new luxury stores especially for Russian customers
- The “service scape” is designed to have no lines blocking your view while in the stores
- Best seller products e.g. cigarettes are strategically placed in front at the entrance in order to get also travelers without time;
- There is also always one “local” section dedicated to customers that would like to bring home souvenirs

- **Lounges management**: In the whole airport, there are 10 different lounges with different rules, services and as well different type of customers. The lounges cooperate with different companies also from the meeting sector to accommodate the companies’ customers during their stays at Atatürk Airport. There is no single lounge per airline anymore – lounges operate individually catering the needs of different stakeholders at the same time. The Business model is based on the idea of “membership”. An interesting fact shared at the presentation was that 90% of the revenues of the lounges derive from the general service (entrance fee). Apart from those, some extra services are being offered, such as visa arrangements, skipping the waiting lines, meet & greet services, car services or other personalized services.

5.2 **Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality – Department of Transportation – Directorates of Transport Planning and Traffic**

The meeting included a presentation of the activities of the Department of Transportation and a visit of the Traffic Directorate.

Mrs. Neriman Erünsal, who is a civil engineer at the transportation planning department, started her presentation by introducing their focus on the production of transportation master plans, the development of road networks research projects and studies on transportation demand management with the collaboration of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which provides the cooperation with technical expertise.

The study called “Integrated Urban Transportation Master Plan for İstanbul Metropolitan Area” (IUAP) started in response to the request of the Turkish Republic with the technical cooperation of the JICA in June 2007. The objectives of the present study are to formulate an urban transport master plan for the City of Istanbul that consists of a long-term perspective plan (the target year of 2025), a medium-term plan, a short-term plan (the target year of 2012), and an
implementation plan for these three plans\textsuperscript{17}. In order to cope with the chaotic situation on the streets of the capital the Department of Transportation developed different projects. The ultimate goal is to reduce the motorized traffic and shift from private to public transportation. The class learned about a study the department conducted based on a household survey with 90,000 inhabitants of Istanbul questioned, from which they developed a SWOT analysis to come up with the following ideas both on network improvement and traffic demand management.

- Highway tunnel
- Underground metro (Marmara project)
- 3rd bridge for train
- High occupancy vehicles support (carpooling)
- Introduction of a charge for parking in the old European area on entrance gates
- Introduction of a mobile application for checking the availability of the parking lots
- Redesigning areas, to separate cars and pedestrians

Moreover, all the projects are planned to develop Istanbul, while keeping the cultural and historical identity of the city. An interesting addition was that most of the projects (especially for traffic demand management) are firstly tried on social experiences, on a small scale to be evaluated and then transferred to bigger areas.

While visiting the Department of Transportation, the class took the opportunity to have a guided tour in the Directorate of Transport Planning and Traffic, which is located in the same building. The Traffic Directorate collaborates with the traffic control center Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) in order to control Traffic in a metropolis such as Istanbul, in terms of cameras, sensors, VMS, LCS, web and mobile traffic applications. Some of the tools being used by the department are: their own radio station, a mobile application (which provides with the shortest and fastest route to the destination), 800 cameras installed with 100 sensors in order to fine cars and to react quickly in case of an accident.

5.3 Conclusion

The transportation day gave to the class a valuable insight into the challenges the city of Istanbul faces in the near future bearing in mind the rapid growth of the city. The visit of the airport Atatürk was a good example to get an insight into an organization that tries to adapt to this situation and to changing regulations of the government. However, currently, the airport is not capable to

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{17} IUAP (2014). Definition / Context of the Project.}
provide fluidity – it is hard to find ones way through it. A third airport is currently planned in Istanbul (the management of the Atatürk airport just lost the fight in the bidding process), so the Atatürk airport will face fierce competition in the future and will have to fight to get the main flow of passengers. In this battle, Turkish Airlines as a cooperation partner will play a crucial role.

Next to the rapid growth, the city of Istanbul fights against its overcrowded streets and the limited capacity of the public transportation. Even though car ownership in Istanbul might still be low at the moment with 144 cars on 1’000 inhabitants (compared to 520 cars on 1’000 inhabitants in Switzerland), the city already has to deal with huge traffic problems. The expected high growth will have as well consequences on the car ownership and will further worsen the situation, which might trigger a collapse of the whole transportation system, as the capacity for public transportation is limited as well. At the moment, there are for approximately 15 million inhabitants (not taking into consideration the tourists) only a few metro lines, a small historical tram more frequently used by tourists doing sightseeing rather than inhabitants, metro buses running in dedicated lines in the middle of the street and official overcrowded buses which cannot live up to the increasing demand. The municipality’s Traffic Demand Management System only partly helps to overcome the dramatic situation – the newly built Marmara metro line is already overcrowded, just a few months after its inauguration. Regarding the traffic, the focus should rather be on pricing (i.e. more expensive parking prices) instead of guiding the car drivers towards the free parking spaces with the help of an app and signs. Furthermore, the increase of road infrastructure does not solve the problem; on the contrary, it even induces more traffic due to improved access – citing Professor Maggi: “You cannot build your way out of congestion”.

Overall, it can be said that Istanbul’s strategic location let the city become an important hub. This hub was a particular and interesting example for the class of International Tourism to study, as there are plenty of opportunities to be exploited by the city regarding transportation such as the Marmaray project in order to deal with the congestion problems, which will worsen in the future.

6. Culture and Attractions of the European Part

By Federica Aldi, Isabelle Seiler, Thomas Schwendener

Istanbul was once the capital of the Byzantine Empire for the Greeks, a city called Constantinople for the Roman Empire and the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the vivid city is full of cultural attractions. With more than 2’000 years of political, religious and artistic events,
Istanbul still fascinates nowadays and managed to position itself among the most visited destinations. For a tourism point of view, it is highly relevant to know all those particularities in order to be able to understand the importance of culture for the city itself.

6.1 Guided Tour

6.1.1 The tour and the attractions

The aim of the guided tour, located in the historical peninsula, was to find out more about the main cultural attractions of the city, as well as to understand the main issues related to tour guiding and the importance of cultural tourism in Istanbul. The tour, guided by Mr. Kagan Kosagan, covered some of the main attractions of the city, mostly situated in Sultanahmet, the neighbourhood where the majority of monuments, museums and historical sites are located and where, according to Mr. Kosagan, 90% of tourists decide to organize their sightseeing. This feature makes Sultanahmet a congested area, where tourists and locals mingle in the crowds and outside mosques. More precisely, the attractions visited were the Blue Mosque, The Hippodrome, Aya Sophia Museum, the Basilica Cistern and the Grand Bazaar, this latter situated in another district.

- **The Blue Mosque**: built at the wish of Sultan Ahmet I, with the purpose of rivalling and surpassing the nearby Aya Sofya in magnificence and beauty, this mosque, still in operation, can be considered one of the most important and visited attractions of the city, as well as a significant element of Istanbul’s cityscape. Due to the fact that the mosque is still in function, managing visits to the site faces some important challenges related to the privacy of those who pray inside it, reason why it is open to the public only at fixed times of the day. Even if this mosque reflects the beauty of most of Istanbul’s mosques, it can still be considered worth a visit, given its spectacular architecture, which is dominated by the blue color. Furthermore, being the mosque open both for locals and tourists, the visit gives tourists the possibility to immerse themselves in the local culture, even if with some restrictions (no big group visits allowed during pray time). The Blue Mosque can still be considered a symbol of Istanbul from touristic point of view, being it one of the most frequently displayed buildings in the city’s postcards and in tourists’ pictures.

- **Aya Sofia**: built by Justinian and consecrated as a church in 537, converted then in a mosque by Memhet the Conqueror in 1453 and later transformed in a museum by Atatürk in 1935, Aya Sofia, with all its magnificence, can be considered the most famous monument of

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Istanbul. According to Mr. Kosagan, this is the most important building of the city and cultural attraction, given its grandeur, which allowed it to be the largest building in the world for a thousand years and given its particularity from a religious point of view. In fact, Aya Sofia is one of the only places in the world where it is possible to admire representations of Allah, Mohammed and Mary holding the Infant Jesus all together. After a visit to the church/mosque/museum, you can be sure that this image will be etched in your memory forever. Mr. Kosagan, who considers Aya Sofia his favorite building in the city, has been able to explain this particularity to students very well, bringing them to reflect and understand what this image represents for Istanbul today: it is a perfect summary of the present culture of Istanbul, which has formed over thousands of years and shaped by different cultures and religious beliefs.

- **The Basilica Cistern:** the cistern, built under Justinian in 532, is the biggest existing Byzantine Cistern in Istanbul. ¹ What makes it particular, beside the symmetrical architecture and the huge number of different columns, is the particular atmosphere inside: you find yourself walking underground, observing hundreds thousands of history, in an environment where lights and shadows play with the backwater to give a unique visual experience. According to Mr. Kosagan, however, the importance of the cistern in the city’s history comes from the correlation between the construction of Aya Sofia and the creation of the cistern. In fact, as he explained, the cistern was initially born as an excavation for the subtraction of construction material needed to build Aya Sofia, becoming only later what it is still today.

- **The Grand Bazaar:** built in 1461 by order of Memhet the Conqueror, this colorful and chaotic market which houses thousands of shops of various types is a must see of Istanbul, both for its function and its particular architecture, characterized by vaulted ceilings. ¹ The Bazaar gives the opportunity to walk through thousands of shops and perform “the bargaining art” typical of the local culture.

### 6.1.2 Tour guiding in Istanbul

Mr. Kosagan is not a conventional guide, with the aim of listing a series of historical data and facts that often fill tourists’ minds but remain in the memories for short time. On the contrary, his aim is to transmit the passion for his culture by enriching the sites’ visits with interesting anecdotes, curious facts and useful advices, inviting visitors to engage in active participation of the visit and its meaningfulness. His strategy works very well for the type of segment targeted by its business, meaning knowledgeable tourists who seek for less predictable guided tours, where some formal
descriptions may be put aside to leave the room for the real in-depth knowledge of the local culture that can be only provided by a host. As explained by Kagan Kosagan, in a competitive environment such as the tour guiding industry in Istanbul, his main goal is to differentiate himself from the competition, by offering to clients a unique and memorable experience that other tour guides would not be able to offer. This ability, which characterizes all the tour guides of his agency, allows him to play on the market at much higher prices than the competition. These statements made the students think about the importance of the suitability of different types of tour guidance for different segments. In fact, such a strategy would probably not work for a less knowledgeable segment, at the same manner of which the segment considered would not appreciate a more formal tour guide. Even more, according to Mr. Kosagan, the particularity of their approach to tour guiding made it possible for them to base and run their business on word of mouth, Facebook, Trip advisor and similar online travel recommendation platforms.

6.2 FEST Travel & “Spotted by locals”

The student’s second meeting of the day took place at the office of FEST Travel with General Manager Zekeriya Şen. FEST travel describes itself as “a cultural organization and a travel agency offering a complete travel experience...Turkey’s number one specialist in cultural tours, both inbound and outbound.” In addition to being the General Manager of FEST Travel, Zekeriya Şen is also a contributor on “Spotted by Locals,” a website consisting of a series of blogs, mobile (iPhone, Android) & PDF city guides with up-to-date insider tips by locals, and thus informed the group of his

19 Fest Travel (2014). About Fest Travel.
20 Fest Travel (2014). About Fest Travel.
contributions there.

**FEST Travel**

FEST Travel is a travel agency offering inbound & outbound tours with a concentration on offering cultural, religious, educational, and study tours. They Organize tours to more than 110 different countries around the world with at least 210 different itineraries every year, including history, archeology, arts, music, and study tours. In Istanbul alone, they offer about 170 different itineraries, as well as 140 more in the rest of Turkey. In addition of offering “Genuine cultural experiences,” FEST advocates responsible tourism, investing in countries and working together with local partners where they offer tours. This includes having local guides and local supplies; all of which contributes to a more genuine cultural experience.

The General Manger, Zekeriya Şen was able to give the students important and informative information about his company and how his company differentiates itself from other travel agencies. The study tour group learned the main focus of FEST travel is on cultural tourism, with a particular importance on organizing outbound cultural tours. For all forms of tours however, he emphasized the importance of knowledge of the place and culture, since their target segments for both inbound and outbound tours consist of better educated, more well off clients mostly interested in culture. Although educated, these guests generally have a high value of time, and thus outsource their itinerary planning to FEST. Interestingly, Zekeriya stresses the importance of his clients having good knowledge before coming on tours, and are given information packages about the destinations before departing. In addition, because of nature of their tours being in a higher price bracket, ages have traditionally been in the 45+ range, however he has seen recently an increase in the 30+ range.

In the case of inbound tourism, Zekeriya claimed that Turkey (in particular Istanbul) is generally a mass tourism destination, and that only the main cultural highlights are visited. For this reason, tourists do not generally get to experience what the city genuinely has to offer. FEST Travel does not have anything to do with the mass tourism segment, but concentrates on segments interested in thematic cultural tours; segments which originate largely from America. Outbound tourism is the company’s most important offering, with most business being generated here. Emphasis is again placed on culture, with tour guides having to invest much time to become well educated about the destination; sometimes even first traveling to those destinations beforehand, in order to prepare for tours. Groups can vary in size from 15-26, plus one guide. For outbound tourism, Zekeriya sees much potential for bringing Turkish people to Europe.
Marketing both inbound and outbound tourism relies heavily on internet and word of mouth. Zekeriya informed the students that because of their particular target segment of “Internet type people,” or more educated clients, much of the company’s marketing efforts are internet based. Also, because of the heavy reliance on repeat clients, word of mouth and good customer service is also needed.

“Spotted by Locals”

Spotted by locals are city guides with insider tips by locals in 56 cities, comprised of a series of blogs, mobile (iPhone, Android) & PDF city guides with up-to-date insider tips by city locals. Zekeriya Şen contacted Spottedbylocals.com after identifying there was no Istanbul guide, and was promptly hired to write about his city, mostly sharing and dealing in its cultural aspects. In his profile he writes: “I am devoted to culture; to experience the “other” ways of living, eating, observing and travel. I believe that mutual language is to understand the culture of others. I am a devotee for travel, music and photography. I love to experience world music as well, the music out there that opens up the minds and crushes down boundaries.”21 He tries to make updates to the blog monthly, adding cultural, historical, gastronomic and other “local’s tips” online. In his opinion, Spottedbylocals is a guide meant for people who have a high value of time, and are interested in knowledge of city, such as in its cultural aspects of other so called insider knowledge, and want to live the city as a local does.

6.3 Bosphorus Night Tour

At the last meeting of the day the Operations Manager Senol Seker at Bosphorus Tours22 informed the Study tour class about the Company’s activities since 1999 and about the importance for tourism of the winding Bosphorus strait that separates Europe and Asia and connects the Black and Marmara Sea. Along the 32km natural channel the shores offer a mixture of past (rustic stone fortresses) and present (modern hotels). The Bosphorus has always had a strategic importance for Istanbul and Turkey in general for trading or military reasons.

For tourism, the Bosphorus is perceived as a great opportunity. In high season, around 200 kinds of these boats are driving around the Bosphorus daily. Moreover, every year approximately 48’000 ships, boats and ferries pass through this strait, meaning that the activity is three times denser than the Suez Canal traffic and four times than the Panama’s one.

21 Spotted by locals (2014), Istanbul.
22 Bosphorus Tours (2009) Great value Bosphorus Tour.
Nowadays, several companies operate along the banks in order to offer cruises, tours and activities related to the waterway. However, this company has the competitive advantage as they operate as well in winter season. The toughest competition they have is with their own services they deliver. Meaning, they compete with its two offers “Dinner Cruise & Night Show program with alcohol (58 Euro per person) and one without alcohol because of religious reasons (45 Euro per person)”\(^\text{23}\). Bosphorus Tours is one of the largest cruise operator company on the Bosphorus with 35 employees offering different cruise activities, like Sightseeing day and night tours including Lunch or Dinner, private boat rentals as well as Conferences and meetings venue. They cooperate as well with tour operators and tour organizers by providing services such as discounts, credits and possibilities to combine cruise tours and attractions. They are proud to say that they are the only company that operates as well Night cruises in the winter. In addition to that, in Summer time they rent boats every day not only for cruises but also for private parties such as weddings.

Considering the Night Tour, the study class was not perceived as the right segment for this kind of entertainment boat tour because it was obviously to the class a “staged authenticity”. But being there allowed the class to observe the other participants who were considered as the matching segment. Even though receiving an introduction about the Bosphorus itself and the company, the responsible did not explain further attractions around the route, or emphasizing what the participants could look at.

The Bosphorus is a crucial economic resource that brings huge income to the city, however due to multiple regulations imposed by the government some of the revenues are eaten up. The boats have to be licensed. In addition to that it’s hard to operate the cruise since it requires high fixed costs and these are expensive. (The price of one boat with no equipment is approximately 500'000 euros.) To rent a boat would cost around 3000 Euros a day. Mister Seker explained that next to some regulations for the emissions, being sustainable is not a concern for the near future.

The tours are organized and the services delivered always in customer-driven way. Mostly there are tourists from the Middle East as well as Russian nationals. The other large groups of tourists interested in the cruises are the Europeans in Particular the German tourists.

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\(^\text{23}\) Ibid.
7. Culture and Attractions of the Asian Part

By Fabienne Bögli, Marila Tinelli, Alejandra Verduzco Conde

7.1 Guided tour in the Asian Part of Istanbul

The designated program for the second cultural day was a walking tour in the Asian part of Istanbul. This side of the city mainly consists of residential areas, for this reason it is not considered a touristic attraction for most of the visitors and it is an unknown product for most of the travel agencies.

The meeting and starting point of the day was at the “Haydarpaşa Gar” train station, the choice of starting our day-tour at the station was because of the important role it played regarding transportation history in Istanbul in addition to the beauty of the architectural structure. Haydarpaşa station first opened in 1872, however due to the increasing rail traffic, a new and larger building was required, and in 1906, the construction started, increasing the initial area of 2,525 square meters to 3,836 square meters. The construction was led by two German architects: Otto Ritter and Helmut Conu who chose a neo-classical structure. German and Italian stonemasons crafted the facade embellishments of the terminal, there are wide U shaped corridors and large high-ceilinged rooms located on both sides of these corridors, the roof of the building is wooden and very steep and covered by slate, a big clock in Baroque style stands on the roof level of southern façade. In 1979 a burning ship on the Bosphorus damaged the terminal building, the windows and historical stained glasses were broken, but everything was eventually restored. Since 2012 Haydarpaşa Gar train station is no longer in use due to a major project to upgrade the train system.

Regarding the group experience, “confusion” was a shared feeling among most of the group members when the class arrived at the station; there wasn’t anybody apart from cats. The group associated it to the fact that it was early morning, everything was shining clean, and working TV screen were placed around the place as well as an ATM. The students were expecting trains to start arriving and departing anytime. However, after the guide’s explanation everyone realized that the station was closed since 2012 which was very surprising. Moreover, a majority of the class strongly believes that this extraordinary location by the Bosphorus has a great potential as tourist attraction because of its uniqueness and beauty. Additionally it is an opportunity to see the other part of Istanbul and disperse tourists from the already congested areas such as the Sultanahmet Square.

Afterwards the tour continued and it mainly consisted in walking through the residential
areas, the class stopped to see the place that used to be a warehouse for vegetables in ottoman times which now has been transformed into a fine arts school. Moreover, the class briefly visited an orthodox church where it was possible to appreciate some religious icons. The students also learnt that Istanbul is a place of tolerance of religion and culture that is why within a single city you can find mosques, synagogues and churches. Finally, the class appreciated from outside the theatre where many important plays take place. 24

In conclusion, it was interesting to visit the Asian part of Istanbul although the information the guide provided was not enhancing the students’ experience. Because of the fact that for the chosen tour guide a visit of the Asian part is not an attractive product, it seemed that they had no clear objective of where to take the class or what to explain.

7.2 Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV)

For the second meeting of the day the class went back to the European part of Istanbul and visited the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (Istanbul Kültür Sanat Vakfı, IKSV) where Tuna Ortaüly, coordinator of International Projects, provided an insight into the foundation’s organization and activities.

Seventeen businessmen and art lovers under the leadership of Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı founded this foundation in 1973 with the idea of organizing an international arts festival in Istanbul. First, they mainly focused on classical music but with increasing interest from the public, additional program highlights such as film screenings, theatre productions, jazz or ballet performances were added. 25

IKSV is a non-profit and non-governmental organization. Therefore, the financial support from the government accounts for only 1%. Most of the foundation’s money comes from sponsorships.

The main goal is to offer “the Turkish public opportunities to experience the finest examples of cultural and artistic production from around the world and learn about new initiatives and movements”. 26 Furthermore, IKSV aims to educate the world about the Turkish culture as well as the country’s artistic assets. The foundation takes an active role in the development of cultural policies. As a multidisciplinary foundation, it engages in festivals, biennals and events in Turkey but also contributes to the conservation of traditional art and cultural heritage. However, according to Tuna

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24 Lale Kosagan, Tour guide
25 Istanbul Foundation of Culture and Arts. About Us. History
26 Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts. About Us, Main Objectives.
Ortayli, the activities dedicated to cultural heritage count as the weakest points since the foundation is mainly focusing on a Western orientation. This means that IKSV is putting more effort into the promotion of events in Western Europe rather than promoting Turkish cultural heritage.

The meeting certainly enriched the students’ knowledge of festivals and events taking place in Istanbul. However, it became clear that in a first step it would be important to define what culture is. Is it about heritage, arts, music or a combination of all of them? In addition, Tuna Ortayli emphasized in her presentation the importance of tradition and heritage and how crucial it is to promote those, especially abroad. However, IKSV is still mainly focusing on promoting events that is not entirely in line with the declared objectives of the foundation.

7.3 Cemberlitas Hamami-Istanbul

After 2 days of full immersion into the Turkish culture and a deep comprehension and admiration of Istanbul’s main and secondary attractions, the students could not leave the city without experiencing the traditional rituals into the Hamam or most widely known as Turkish bath. This represents a distinctive social aspect of their culture since the period of the Ottoman Empire domination. The Hamam offers still today an opportunity to socialize with people of the same sex, to relax and to deeply purify the body with scrub and cleaning practices. During the Ottoman Empire many Hamam were built and the one the class visited, the “Cembertitas Hamami” is among the oldest, built in 1584 located in the middle of Istanbul’s greatest monuments of the European ancient part. 27

The class was welcomed by Miss Gonca Sususz, manager of women department. She gave a short overview regarding the main segments, curiosities and challenges. Most of the people come from Europe, especially Germans and from Middle East countries. Their main desire is to experience a traditional ritual in such a great city as Istanbul; the combination between the historical building with its simple architecture from outside, shaped like a square but with a polygonal structure inside, the authentic product and services make the whole experience unique. But the added value is provided by local masseurs that use their smiles and gesture as communication tools, leading guests with their hands from one ambience to the other. In this context language skills are not an issue anymore, as a matter of fact the authenticity would be lost if staff spoke English - it is a place where communication through words is unnecessary, but gestures are essential. The way they treat the guests is part of the experience.

27 Cemberlitas Hamami official website.
The majority of visitors of the Hamam are international tourists and only 20% of them are locals. For foreigners the Turkish baths represent an experience that should be done at least once in a lifetime and this is confirmed by the fact that they do not complain about the high cost of the treatment; on the other hand, locals consider the ritual expensive for something that for them is not a novelty anymore. However, the Hamam is part of their lives and culture and they cannot live without it, practicing it as it is always the first time.

The Cemberlitas Hamami is open all year around, with a maximum of 600 people capacity per day. Generally it is not possible to book the whole Hamam for groups in case of corporate incentive activities or special requests. However, even though the staff does not speak English or any other language, the website is available in 8 different languages, presenting useful information regarding the history of the building; services offered, prices, how to reach the place, etc. 28

The students had the possibility to learn something new, at least for the majority of them who had never tried such things before, not only theoretically but also practically because they personally experienced the rituals in the bath with satisfactory results.

8. Conclusion

*By Yuquin Jin, Zélie Kössler, Isabelle Molo, Daria Zora*

Istanbul was chosen as the destination for the study tour of the Master students in International Tourism after the proposal made by a colleague, Alexandra Grammenou, supported by other members of the class, during a meeting with the director of the course Professor Maggi concerning the organization of the travel. The class agreed that the city of Istanbul would be an interesting case study for its current economic and thus touristic expansions; in addition to that, the class members were attracted by the fusion of cultures in a place where Asia and Europe meet. The students were also curious to discover the reality of a city and a country, which is facing political changes that might have important impacts on the tourism industry of Turkey and potentially other countries in the region. Therefore the planning phase, with the students divided into six groups with different tasks and topics, started. In an evaluation survey taken by all participants of the study tour after returning to Switzerland (See pp.40-51), the pre-departure phase was considered by the majority as a good learning experience concerning the “organization of meetings”, “working in a team” and “Istanbul as a destination”.

28 Cemberlitas Hamami official website.
The study tour to Istanbul had several objectives, most importantly the organized meetings between tourism professionals and the students allowing the application of the theory and knowledge acquired during the lectures to real professional work cases, as well as to critically analyze and to have a better understanding of Istanbul as a tourism destination. As previously mentioned, the students of the Master in International Tourism chose Istanbul as an interesting case study because of the fast growth the city is facing during these last years as a global center and as a tourism destination. Actually, Istanbul was recently ranked in the top ten European destinations\textsuperscript{29}. This trend is attracting always more investments that interest also the tourism sector. In fact, these new investments became evident in the majority of the tourist sectors the students studied during their time in the city, like in the case of transportation, MICE and accommodation. Moreover, Istanbul was a stimulating case study for the vast variety of tourism activities that visitors can undertake; in fact, the city can be defined as a cultural, historical, gastronomic, shopping, business, modern and booming destination at the same time. Finally, the students took into account the peculiar geographical location of Istanbul between two continents and the implications with its tourism industry.

On Monday the first topic treated by students was related to destination management organizations and the MICE sector that helped to get a deeper knowledge about the destination, its strengths and challenges. Thanks to the Skype-meeting with Mrs. Virginia Maxwell, travel writer for Lonely Planet, the students had a complete overlook on Istanbul, including its potential as a modern city continuously changing, the importance of locals and their willingness to host tourists and how a travel writers develops their job within a destination, which also faces political problems and other challenges due to the unsustainable growth, such as the traffic and the need to further develop the public transportation.

Regarding the MICE sector, the students visited the following companies Halic Congress Center, Omar’s Destination Services Turkey (ODS) and Destination Management Turkey Ltd, where they received information about the importance of Istanbul as a core logistic destination and the important possibility to link business with entertainment. This fact was especially highlighted in the ODS meeting, which was voted as the third favorite meeting by the students in the finale evaluation survey. All these elements together add value to Istanbul as a MICE destination. On the other hand, this sector faces some challenges as in the case of fierce competition between DMCs (Destination Management Company) and the competition of more consolidated and structured MICE

\textsuperscript{29} Best destinations in Europe.
Tuesday was the day dedicated to the analysis of the hospitality sector, including the accommodation and the gastronomic sector. The visit of the Culinary Art Center, the historical Pera Palace Hotel Jumeirah, the bed and breakfast Peradays and last but not least The Pudding Shop Lale Restaurant gave an optimal overview of those services aimed to host tourists. Istanbul presents abundance of luxury hotels, and apparently, the offer of luxury accommodation services will increase severely in the future, but the students found it useful to visit different categories of hotels, with different standards, and with different management strategies, in order to provide an overview of the accommodation offer within the city. Regarding the Turkish gastronomy, the students learnt that there are initiatives to give more value to the Turkish cuisine in Turkey and around the world to gain a higher reputation. On the other hand, the students wanted also to visit a place that was famous for being a “hippie legend”: The Pudding Shop, which nowadays reports few signs of the hippie time, but it is still a restaurant of success for its strategic location. In addition to that, Professor Dr. Sükrü Yarcan, during the recap session on the hospitality day, pointed out how the planning of the construction of new accommodation buildings is taking place in a specific borough of the city, while smaller hotels are located mainly in the historical center.

In the finale evaluation of the study tour the meeting with the Peradays Bed and Breakfast ranked first in the “favorite meetings” category in both learning and enjoyment categories, whilst the day was considered the second most enjoyable day. These positive evaluations where also highlighted in the answers given most frequently by students when asked to describe Istanbul’s hospitality: “Welcoming, Friendly, Generous, Open-minded.” This great Turkish hospitality, especially during these challenging times, was considered a very positive surprise by the class.

On Wednesday the class was able to get an insight into Istanbul’s transportation sector, its accessibility from outside as well as inside and the challenges the city has to overcome due to its rapid growth. The visits with the TAV Airports at Atatürk Airport Istanbul as well as with the Department of Transportation of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality were ideal examples of institutions trying to adapt to the challenging circumstances, facing tremendous difficulties to create effective solutions to a seemingly insoluble problem of congestion. The importance of Turkish Airlines, as an ambassador of a whole country, almost returning to the flag carrier principle, as well as the need to change from a demand oriented, to a supply based traffic demand management in Istanbul were two of the main findings the day brought. With further growth in the population and their wealth the problems of the transportation structure on the streets of Istanbul do moreover not appear to become less pressing in the future. In the evaluation survey the three words most used to
describe Istanbul’s transportation where “Chaotic”, “Congestion” and “Traffic”, thus underlining the students perspective and understanding of these difficult transportation issues.

In order to understand the hugely important cultural tourism aspect of the ancient city of Istanbul both Thursday and Friday of the study tour week were allocated to explore firstly the European and secondly the Asian part of the city. Istanbul is often marketed as the place connecting two continents and its cultures and thus the class and organizers naively expected to find the two parts, only separated through the Bosphorus, to be very different in its cultures, architecture and structures. This idea was contrasting to what they found in this urban reality: upper-class residential areas on the Asian side, where locals choose to live apart from the other hectic side of the cultural and touristic European regions, with tourism mainly concentrated in the Sultanahmed and Beyoğlu areas. Other parts of this vast city offer possibilities for touristic niche markets to be discovered by repeat- as well as high knowledgeable visitors, interested in an unusual tourism experience. Istanbul is clearly a large urban space with differently developed and culturally diverse areas and cannot be separated along these narrow “European” and “Asian” cultural outlines.

Another aspect highlighted by the two “cultural days” and its different tours is the relevance of guidance for tourists in a big city, ideally lead by a guide which can give the feeling of being a host as well as making it a personalized experience for their clients. There is an important potential for this kind of specialized and personalized guiding tours still to be developed in Istanbul. The importance of the type of guidance was also visible in the finale evaluation survey where the “European Cultural Day” ranks as the most favorite day overall, whilst the “Asian Cultural Day” can be found at the end of the list. In the finale recap meeting it became clear, that this result was to be expected, mainly due to the difference in the two guides leading the group through the cultural days. Nevertheless, one thing making the tourism experience in Istanbul as attractive is the possibility to roam through its chaotic cityscape without knowing where you will end up. The guidance is hence just one aspect of an interesting tourism experience.

Further meetings with cultural organizations and tourism firms during those days made it clear that Istanbul is undisputedly the cultural center of Turkey and is further developing an important cultural hub of the world. Combining customs and traditions of different earlier empires as well as the modern democratic times, many representatives are currently trying to make Istanbul become a hub for international events in culture and arts, as well as promoting the city by its wide range of culinary arts. Different institutions try to promote Turkish culture to people outside of Turkey as well as educating Turks inside the borders on their own cultural diversity in order to preserve this important, strategic tourism asset. There is no sole identity that could be applied to
Istanbul, which is much more than what its main comparably small touristic areas can cover. Therefore future possibilities to market the city as a tourism destination should not be using a completely cohesive approach trying to market everything as a whole, but rather vary in its promotion according to different categories which are in demand with Istanbul’s visitors.

Istanbul is a liberal city, oriented towards the West but currently undergoing violent transformations due to its extreme growth, which are leading to increased political unrest and hence certain image problems affecting the whole country and its tourism business more or less heavily. The students learnt that the adoption to the changes mainly due to the rapid growth of the city and the wealth of its population and the therefore resultant constant transformation will also be the main challenge of the future from a tourism perspective. But seen that innovation in all economic fields arises from competition, which is currently increasing in Istanbul’s tourism sector and its great “sleeping” potentials, one could state that this beautifully divers city will see even brighter touristic days in the future.

The study tour 2014 in Istanbul has shown to be a great success, with an average satisfaction mark of 8.32 out of 10 given by the participants. The class used many words to describe Istanbul but some of the most mentioned were “Culture, Lively, History, Multicultural, Diversity, Beautiful, Vibrant and People”, all descriptions supporting this overall great perception of the study tour. The trip was furthermore considered an important learning opportunity for the students, who wanted to discover the potential of a city that is strengthening and transforming itself during the current difficult times. The class, as tourism experts, wanted to experience and learn about the efforts made by people, firms and organizations involved in different fields of tourism in Istanbul, all trying to add their city to the “tourism map” of Europe as a major destination like Paris, Barcelona or London. The recaps at the end of the days were considered useful by all of the students to better understand the issues Istanbul as such a tourism destination in facing.

Overall, the study tour offered a valuable insight into the working environment of an important and still not matured European urban tourism destination. The meetings with the industry professionals helped the class with a better and multifaceted understanding of the internal connections, functioning and challenges of this divers tourism industry and created new and inspiring knowledge for possible future ventures.
9. Annex

9.1. Evaluation of the Istanbul 2014 Study Tour

By Jessica Caverzasi, Fabio Flepp, Evgenia Panagiotidou

In order to collect the impressions of the students and to evaluate the performance of the Study Tour, a survey was distributed within the class between 20\textsuperscript{th}, March and 25\textsuperscript{th} March. The survey had six different sections, dedicated to the following topics:

- Pre-departure phase
- Istanbul
- Groups, group leaders and choice of groups
- Recaps
- Logistics
- Overall evaluation

All the sections of the survey were developed around a series of closed questions and an open question dedicated to comments and suggestions. The questionnaire was successfully answered by all the 31 students of the class. An overview of the responses will be presented in the present chapter with an explanation of the data and the respective graphic representations of the answers. In order to facilitate the evaluation, positive answers were coloured in green and negative answers in red.

Section 1: Pre-departure

The first section was dedicated to the pre-departure phase and it was composed of 3 grid questions and 1 open question for comments. The first question was investigating the learning activity during the pre-departure phase. From the chart below, it can be seen that the overall evaluation was positive. The majority of the students seemed to have learned about all the proposed issues. The students learned more about organizing meetings. 14 agreed and other 13 strongly agreed. “Istanbul as a destination” and “Working in a team”, collected 27 and 25 positive answers. Lastly, 21 students learned about cultural and language misunderstandings, while other 10 disagreed about this aspect.

The second question was related to the challenges that students faced during the
organization phase. Most of the students’ answers confirmed the presence of challenging situations such as time restrictions (stated by 23 students) and lack of responses from Turkish partners (stated by 19 students). On the contrary, some situations were not considered challenging by the majority of the respondents. This is the case of language barriers (not a challenge for 18 students) and budget restrictions (16 students).

The third question was related to the challenges faced by students within the group. Most of the students were satisfied with the communication (23 respondents) and the cooperation (25 respondents) among group members. 8 students were not clear about their tasks. More controversial were the responses related to the even distribution of work among the group members: almost half of the students experienced an uneven distribution of the work.

Only few students left additional comments related to this section. All of them were rather negative towards some aspects of the pre-departure phase such as the communication among different groups: “No real communication between the logistic group and all the class until the day before the departure[...]”; the distribution of work within the group: “Some members of the group had absolutely nothing to work on and some others on the other hand had to take responsibility of the whole meetings resulting to uneven distribution of work[...]” and the ability of work together on a common project: “Work within my group, as well as between the groups I perceived as unstructured and chaotic. Lack of communication and leadership. A good platform (not just an online excel) would have been good [...].”

Section 2: Istanbul

This section was dedicated to the activities and the meetings in Istanbul. The first question was evaluating the task organized by Reka on Sunday, February 2nd, the first day of the Study Tour. Almost all the respondents had a positive opinion about the “discovery tour”. 29 students agreed or strongly agreed about considering this activity useful to get to know the city. Most of the students did not have suggestions for this day, while 9 of them suggested some minor changes, mainly related to using different means of transports, choosing different attractions, more challenging itineraries and tasks.

In the second and third questions the students were asked to evaluate each single meeting from the learning and the enjoyment perspectives. The relative results are presented entirely in the following two graphs. In both cases the three most positively rated meetings were:

✓ “Peradays” (learning average mark: 8.5; enjoyment average mark: 9.2),
✓ “Guided Tour with Kagan Kosagan (Europe)” (learning average mark: 8.2; enjoyment average mark: 8.9)
✓ “ODS Turkey” (learning average mark: 7.8; enjoyment average mark: 8.6).

What concerns the negatively rated meetings, the results were different across the two perspectives. Regarding the learning perspective the three meetings that received the lowest marks were:

1. “Cemberlitas Hamami” (learning average mark: 4.2)
2. “Bosphorus Cruise” (learning average mark: 4.8)
3. “Prof. Sukru Yarcan” (learning average mark: 5.0)

Considering the enjoyment perspective, the three most negatively rated meetings were:

- Prof. Sukru Yarcan” (enjoyment average mark: 3.3)
- Halic Congress Center (enjoyment average mark: 5.4)
- Istanbul Convention & Visitor Bureau (enjoyment average mark: 5.5)

In order to have a better understanding of the data, the average marks of each single meeting were compared in the third graph. In most of the cases learning and enjoyment characteristics were closely interrelated in the students’ evaluations as the marks followed the same tendency. In other words, most of the meetings that received positive marks from the learning perspective, they also received positive marks from the enjoyment perspective. There was a short distance between the two marks related to the same meeting (around 1 point). Some remarkable exceptions were the cases of “Cemberlitas Hamami” and “Bosphorus Cruise” meetings which were appreciated from the enjoyment perspective but not perceived useful for learning. On the contrary there are two meetings (Prof. Yarcan and DMT) that have a bigger gap between learning and enjoyment ranking. And the learning mark was higher than the enjoyment mark, with a difference of more than one point.
In the fourth question, the students were asked to express their overall preferences choosing the three favourite meetings. The results reflected what emerged from the previous questions, as “Peradays”, “Guided Tour with Kagan Kosagan (Europe)” and “ODS Turkey” were selected as the top meetings. In the sixth question, “Culture 1, Europe” was chosen by 13 students as the favourite day.

**Top 3 meetings**

- Peradays: 24
- Guided tour with Kagan Kosagan (Europe): 22
- ODS Turkey: 16
- Culinary Art Center: 7
- Fest Travel and Spotted by locals: 7
- Ataturk airport: 6
- Lonely Planet writer: 5
- Pera Palace: 3
- Pudding shop: 1
- Cemberlitas hamami: 1
- Guided Tour with late Kosagan (Asia): 1
- Bosphorus Cruise: 1
- Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Art: 0
- Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality: 0
- DMT (Karim Paquay): 0
- Prof. Sukru Varcan: 0
- Halic Congress Center: 0
- Istanbul Convention & Visitor Bureau: 0

Only four comments regarding this section were written by the students. Most of the comments were suggesting some ideas for improving the Study Tour activities concerning topics: “for culture and hospitality: I would have liked to see something about “real local tours” / “Air BnB” / student tours / bar tours / hip-neighbourhood tours”; and organizational methods of groups: “it could be useful if all the groups chose some research question about their topic and try to construct a meeting that could answer to the question. In this way the questions are more structured and the meetings could be easier to follow.”
Section 3: Groups, group leaders and choice of groups

In the first question the students had to give their opinion about working with the preselected groups. According to the results, the majority of 71% of the class (22 students) found that way of forming groups quite efficient, in contrast to 23% of the students who disagreed and 6% of them who strongly disagreed, as they would have preferred to create their groups.

The second question came to verify the findings of the first one, as generally the students were consistent in their responses. When they were asked if they would have preferred to choose their groups members on their own, the majority disagreed.

As the topics were also pre-decided for the groups, the students were asked which topic they would have selected in case they had the chance to do so. The results show that the topic preferred the most was “Culture”, being chosen by 42% of the class (13 students). “Hospitality” ranks seconds and would have been the preference of 35% of the class (11 students). The least preferable were “DMO” and “Transportation”. Only one student each voted for them. 13% of the class (4 students) would have chosen the “Logistic” group, while the one student left would have chosen “Another” topic.

The fourth question was to be answered only by the group leaders, who were actually asked to evaluate their competencies for their role. Only one group leader did not feel to have the right competencies (14%), while four of them agreed (57%) and the two rest (29%) strongly agreed on being suitable for the role of group leaders. (There are seven answers of group leaders, even though there were only five topic group leaders.) In the fifth question the group members were asked to evaluate the competencies of their group leader. Three out of four group members found their group leader suitable for this role, 25 percent of the students disagreed about that.

The sixth question was asking to the students if they would ever have proposed themselves for being group leaders. The class seemed divided in two parts: half of the students replied positively, while the other half would not have liked to be a group leader.

In the open comments about the groups only two statements were negative. One colleague stated that it was difficult to work with no leader or several leaders respectively and another person criticised the group leaders in general and hers/his especially as she did not help anything in the organisation.

Others thanked the logistic team that helped to solve all kinds of problems and tried the best and a big part of the comments was positive about the groups, the group choice and mixture of characters in general. A study trip could be a great occasion to choose students as group leaders who are usually more in the background. But group leaders should be informed and asked
beforehand.

Section 4: Recaps

The value of the recap meetings was clearly confirmed in the survey’s results. In the first question concerning the recaps and the role they play in understanding the issues studied, there was no negative answer. More precisely, 52% of the respondents agreed that the recaps are useful and 48% strongly agreed.

![Recap Meeting Usage](chart1.png)

When it came to the satisfaction concerning the structure of the recaps, the majority (84%) gave again positive answers, agreeing or strongly agreeing with the current structure, while the rest 16%, which refers to 6 students, was not satisfied with this structure.

![Recap Meeting Satisfaction](chart2.png)

Various suggestions and comments were made concerning the recap meetings. There were few students who proposed that recaps should last for just an hour, while there was also the suggestion that each day’s group leader should initiate the discussion in the recap and then hand over to professor Maggi.

Section 5: Logistics

The part of logistics in the survey consisted of questions about the accommodation and the transportation means plus the level of satisfaction acquired by using them.
Only one student was extremely unsatisfied and two more were unsatisfied with the accommodation. The vast majority of the class stated that was extremely satisfied or satisfied (45% of the students respectively).

Students were also asked whether they would recommend other types of accommodation. Nearly half of the class (15 students) would again choose a Business hotel. However the majority of the participants would choose a different kind of accommodation. Twelve students would recommend a local B&B, three students a budget hotel and one student would recommend a youth hostel.

Students were free to give their comments about the hotel and the main remark was that by choosing a less luxury hotel an amount of money could have been saved and used for other activities or expenses during the trip.

Flying to Istanbul the class experienced the services of Turkish Airlines, which was awarded "Best Airline Company in Europe" in the year 2013. When asked if the students experienced the best level of service, a majority of 64% (indicating 20 students) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. The other eleven students either disagreed or strongly disagreed, meaning that their expectations
from "Best Airline Company in Europe" were not met.

All participants were satisfied with the bus transfers in Istanbul. 58% of the students agreed and 42% strongly agreed that they were satisfied.

Moreover, students were asked whether they would have liked to use more means of transportation during the study tour. The majority of the class would have liked to, while nine students would not have liked to use any other means of transportation. The two transportation means that participants missed the most are the Marmaray metro (13 students) and the boats (12 students). Walking and the trams were selected by nine and seven of the students respectively. Six students would have liked to use also Taxis and Metro busses.

Students’ comments about the logistics mentioned the fact that the communication between the logistics group and the class should have been more regular and also gave the credits to the bus
transportation as the safest and most efficient way to move as a class from meeting to meeting.

**Section 6: Overall evaluation**

The last section of the survey was dedicated to the overall evaluation of the study tour. Firstly, the students were asked to look back at the study tour and to choose the number of class dinners they would have preferred to have organized if the study trip would be redone. The answers range from “none” to “all”. The average was 2,84 dinners.

The second question was dedicated to the importance of the class unity during a study tour. Most of the respondents (19 students) consider the class unity “very important”, followed by 9 students who found it “important”. Only 3 students out of 31 evaluated the class unity “not important” for the study tour experience.

In the third question, the students were asked to evaluate the role of the Master Assistant and her contribution to their experience. The majority of the respondents (14) perceived the assistant role as unclear, suggesting that her/his role should be better defined in the future. 12 respondents suggested that she/he should participate actively in recap meetings while other 6 prefer she/he would stay in the background. Furthermore, 7 respondents suggested that another professor should replace the assistant. Lastly, 12 respondents considered the assistant’s contribution valuable for the overall experience.

Question number four was dedicated to the overall satisfaction of the students with the study tour. The level of satisfaction was overall good: the majority of the respondents gave the mark “9” out of 10 to the study tour and mark “8” was also chosen by a large group of students. The study tour was not sufficiently evaluated only by two students which gave “5” and “4”. The average mark was 8.32.

In questions five to eight the students were asked to define “Istanbul”, “Istanbul’s culture”, “Istanbul’s transportation” and “Istanbul’s hospitality” with 3 keywords each. Many different keywords were written. Some of them more than once. The results presented in the “word clouds” below, which are giving greater prominence to the words that appeared more frequently in the answers.

- Istanbul in 3 words:
• Istanbul’s culture in 3 words:

• Istanbul’s transportation in 3 words:

• Istanbul’s hospitality in 3 words:
The students got asked twice in an open question to name their best study tour experience, once as a ‘tourist’ and the other time as a ‘tourism expert’.

‘Tourism Expert’ Answers:

Remembering the week as an expert the majority of the class mentioned the meetings, the opportunity to get to know stakeholders and seeing how people active in the tourism industry work. 9 students said this on a general level. Others chose a favourite meeting, for example the airport got mentioned five times, but also Peradays and ODS were among the favourite meetings (3 and 4 quotes). Culinary arts centre and Fest travel got mentioned once each and so was the planning and logistic process. Also “bad” experiences were among the best (learning) experiences as tourism experts. Some learnt the most from a guest professor, the Bosporus Cruise and by realising that not everyone has a plan or strategy what they do. The other five students decided that the learnt facts and reflections on the (tourism-) development and transportation issues that Istanbul has to face were the best experiences as experts.

‘Experience as a Tourist’ Answers

There are plenty of things a tourist experiences during nine days in a foreign city. Accordingly difficult was it for many to decide on one specific moment. Most of the open question answers could be put in a group that we called „Bazaar & Locals“ (10). Many enjoyed the Turkish hospitality and the interactions they had with locals on the street and while bargaining. 7 of us had best experiences that could be grouped as „Walking & Exploring“, who enjoyed strolling, seeing, smelling and discovering neighbourhoods by foot. The tasty Turkish Cuisine got mentioned in 4 answers. 7
colleagues reported a single attractions or event as their best tourism experience, including the guided tour, Peradays, the nightlife, a visit to a mosque, a visit in a barbershop, the treatment in the Hamam or a ride with the red old tram. We assume that if we gave more space that some of us would expand their answer, because we had so many different experiences as tourists in Istanbul, as one colleague summed it up: “Everything was new and we experienced so many things from crazy taxi drivers to a ‘caramel show’. “

The last question related to the overall evaluation was asking the students to express an opinion about the outcome of the study tour in terms of: how happy they were with the destination, how relevant the content of the trip was for their master studies and how much they learned and enjoyed the study tour. All the issues were positively evaluated by almost all the members of the class with very few exceptions. The strong majority of the class (28 – 30 respondents) agree or strongly agree about all of them. Only two students had negative remarks related to the destination choice, the content and the enjoyment of the study tour.

In the very last open question box „anything else you want to tell us?“, nearly all comments were cheerful and thankful for the study tour being a great success. People loved it, enjoyed it, and say it was unforgettable. Thank you quotes go to the whole class and to Professor Maggi in special, who „is the coolest professor ever“, and who’s intervention on the last meetings day was „really appreciated“. That the class was not working as a team and the lack of interest of some people in the meetings got criticised in two statements and the third critical statement said the opposite, as this person thinks the study tour was too much group focused.

Last but not least: All participants remembered the true meaning of kebab.
9.2. Thank you letters – Example

By Ana Vela

From : Ana Vela Gajon
Email : ana.vela.gajon@usi.ch
Date: 13.02.2014

Mrs. Neriman Erünsal
IBB Ek Hizmet Binası, M. Nezihi özen
Mah. Kasim Sok. No 62
PC 34010 Merter- Güngören
Istanbul - Turkey

Dear Mrs. Erünsal

On behalf of the students of the Master in International Tourism from the University of Lugano, I would like to thank you for the time you dedicated to us during our study tour to Istanbul.

As you know, the trip aimed to take students out of the classroom in order to gain insight into certain tourism issues on site. Due to your presentations and the interaction with the students, we had the unique possibility to learn directly from tourism professionals.

I would like to thank you once again for your support.

Kind regards,

Ana Vela Gajon
Assistant Master International Tourism

(Picture of the specific meeting)
Master in International Tourism – Study Tour Istanbul 2014
References

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