

Exploring the Role of Egyptian International Students as a Generator of VFR Tourism to Turkey

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Abstract *This paper explores the importance of Egyptian international students in stimulating VFR tourism to Turkey. Particularly, it seeks to examine the travel behavior and the economic impacts of VFR tourism induced by Egyptian students. Primary data have been collected from 176 Egyptians studying at Turkey's universities through an online survey. Chi-Square test has been used to examine how the travel behaviors of VFR stimulated by Egyptian international students can impact Turkey's economy. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between the purpose of the trip and VFR length of stay and the season of their visits. Furthermore, the findings revealed an evident relationship between the type of accommodations used by VFR travellers and their length of stay in Turkey. Accordingly, the results clarified that Egyptian students have a potential impact on Turkey's economy through domestic and VFR tourism they induced. The research ends up with significant marketing implications for accommodation providers, destination marketing organizations and the Council of Higher Education in Turkey.*

Keywords: *International Students, VFR Tourism, Economic Impact, Egyptian International Students, Turkey*

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, the number of international students has gradually increased all around the world. They decided to leave and study abroad for different reasons. Previous literature reviews show that during and outside the study period of international students, they have received not less than one visit by friends and relatives (Lee & King, 2016). Those students become the main reason which attracts the visit of their friends and relatives, at the same time they consider a good opportunity to the destination marketing organizations (DMOs) (Liu, 2019). This confirms the assumption of some authors who mentioned that tourism becomes so attached to people not only to places (Schanzel & Yeoman, 2015). Students have a double effect; they can host VFR visits and also induce them to come and visit their study destinations (Tham, 2006; Hunter-Jones, 2008; Sho, Hayato & Tomoyuki, 2018).

Previous studies pointed out that VFR tourism as a worldwide market is till now underestimated (Lehto et al., 2001; Tham, 2006; Backer, 2012; Shani & Uriely, 2012; King & Dwyer,

2015). On the other hand, few researches have addressed VFR tourism, this market stayed a neglected topic in tourism research due to different reasons; firstly, the difficulty of collecting data about this market as till now some countries don't consider it a distinct market, secondly, there is a shortage in the international tourism organizations which follow the data of VFR market (Seaton & Palmer, 1997; Baker, 2007), thirdly, distinguishing the VFR typologies is hard and complicated (Tham, 2006), fourthly, many researchers confirmed that VFR tourism occurs naturally in the host destinations so there is no need to promote it, finally, VFR is not impacted by normal marketing campaigns, its mostly influenced by their friends and relatives who help them to make their travel decision (Backer, 2007; Shani & Uriely, 2012). VFR tourism induced by international students is an interesting area of research (Shanka & Taylor, 2003; Liu & Rayn, 2011). Many authors mentioned that there is noticeable indirect evidence, which proves the high participation in VFR from international students as a host or even as a traveller (Shanka & Taylor, 2003; Taylor, Shanka & Pope, 2004; Liu & Rayn, 2011). VFR travellers induced by international students follow the academic calendar in

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their visits; so, several studies have mentioned the possibility of attracting this market in the low-high seasons (Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2007; Hunter-Jones, 2008). In another word, this segment can be considered a distinguished niche market (Lee & King, 2016).

Due to geographical, cultural proximity, the decrease of travel expenses particularly the cheap flights, which are offered by low-cost carriers between Egypt and Turkey, the number of Egyptian tourists who visited Turkey quadrupled between 2000-2018 from 31.848 to 148.943 visitors (Turkey Institute of Statistics, 2019). Furthermore, the increasing trend of hosting foreign students in Turkey can be considered as potential opportunities in the Turkish tourism sector to generate a flow of VFR tourism.

Therefore, this research aims to explore the importance of Egyptian international students in stimulating and attracting VFR tourism to Turkey. In addition, it seeks to determine the trip characteristics of the VFR market induced by Egyptian international students to Turkey. Specifically, the purpose of this research is to examine the travel behaviors of VFR stimulated by Egyptian international students that can impact Turkey's economy.

Recently, despite the increase of international students in Turkey, it's noted that there is a shortage in the researches which addresses the contribution of those students to the tourism sector. On the other hand, it is important to mention the growing trend of VFR tourism globally and in Turkey particularly. Furthermore, VFR tourism was often neglected and underestimated. Most of the studies have focused on VFR tourists (demand side) while, they did not give more attention to the supply side and the role of the host to attract this demand to the destinations. Furthermore, many researches spotlighted the VFR induced by migrants in many destinations whereas; the studies ignored VFR tourism generated by international students. In addition, few studies examined the VFR market induced by international students, until now there is an urgent need to carry out further researches on students from different nationalities to investigate their travel behavior and their roles in their study destinations as tourism drivers. Accordingly, this study considered as the first attempt to explore the importance of Egyptian international students to stimulate VFR tourism to Turkey and investigate their impacts on the tourism sector.

In this respect, the research questions can be summarized as follows:

What are the socio-demographic characteristics of Egyptian international students studying in Turkey?

What are the trip characteristics of VFR tourism generated by Egyptian students in Turkey?

What is the economic impact of VFR generated by Egyptian international students in Turkey?

LITERATURE REVIEW

International Students

Despite the worldwide importance of international students, until now there is a debate about the definition of the international student. UNESCO's definition is considered as the most recognized and accepted one. UNESCO (2009) defined "students [that] leave their country or territory of origin and move to another country or territory to study" (p. 36).

International students are considered as a fruitful market for the tourism industry. Accordingly, tourism marketers give increasing attention to this market due to the growth, the scale, and the impacts of this phenomenon on the tourism sector (Mggeogr & Rancâne, 2019). The literature reviews on international students and tourism focused on various aspects; travel behavior of international students (e.g., Michael et al., 2003; Blaha, 2012; Gardiner et al., 2013; Zhu, 2016), the differences in trip characteristics between international and domestic students (e.g. Bonn et al., 2005; Glover, 2011), the factors influencing international students in choosing a study destination and a university (e.g Maceachern & Yun, 2017; Nicholls, 2018; Paulino & Castaño, 2019) the international students and the perceived destination image (e.g. Ayad & Shujun, 2013; Ghazarian, 2016; Mun et al., 2018). However, there is a shortage in the studies which focus on the role of international students to stimulate VFR tourism in the most popular educational destinations for example (e.g., Taylor et al., 2004; Bischoff & Lewis, 2007; Hunter-Jones, 2008; Liu & Ryan, 2015; Munoz, 2018; Kashiwagi et al., 2018). Depends on this basis, it's obvious that international students have various tourism potentials. These opportunities include firstly, encouraging international students to travel pre, during, and after their education in the destination; secondly, exploiting international students as ambassadors to motivate others to travel to Turkey; thirdly, potential visits in the future even if the student has come back to his home country; finally, attracting different types of VFR tourism to visit them in Turkey (Davidson et al., 2010). This shows that the interest of international students is not only learning but also discovering the study destinations and benefiting from tourism facilities and services (Glover, 2011).

Overview of VFR Tourism

VFR tourism is associated with the migration and worldwide movement of many societies (Dwyer, Seetaram, Forsyth & King, 2014). Historically, VFR tourism has been recognized in the countries that host a big number of immigrants, for example, Canada, the USA, and Australia. VFR studies have focused on western travellers (Backer, 2012; Griffin,

2013; Cohen & Cohen, 2015). Many researchers defined VFR tourism from various points of views, most of them focused on the reason of the visit and the accommodation they use, which vary from other forms of travel (Seaton & Palmer, 1997; Pennington-Gray, 2003). Baker (2007) defined VFR travel as “a form of travel involving a visit whereby either (or both) the purpose of the trip or the type of accommodation involves visiting friends and/or relatives” (p. 369). Moscardo et al. (2000) clarified that VFR can play one of three roles in travel, VFR as a reason to travel, VFR as an activity in travel, or VFR as a trigger for travel. Baker (2008) mentioned that although VFR can be a purpose to travel the appealing of the destination may affect the length of stay. Baker (2012) classified VFR into three categories:

The First Type (PVFRs): They are real VFRs, who are spending nights at their friends and relatives' homes, they came mainly to the destination to visit them.

The Second Type (EVFRs): They stay with their friends and relatives but they visit the destination for other purposes such as business, leisure and holidays or other reasons. So, they only benefit from their friends and relatives for accommodation.

The Third Type (CVFRs): They are choosing the destination for visiting friends and relatives purposes but they stay in commercial accommodation (Tham, 2006; Liu, 2019).

It can be said that VFR tourism is related to persons than places. Initially, it targets human interaction combined with leisure activities (Seaton, 2017).

Role of International Students in VFR Tourism

Understanding the roles that international students can play in VFR tourism is an essential prerequisite to maximize the related market opportunities (Munoz, 2018).

As noted by Shani and Uriely (2012) hosts can be classified into four categories ambassadors, talkers, magnets, and neutrals. Indeed, ambassadors and magnets draw in a big number of VFRs while the ambassadors attract more VFRs by word of mouth and recommendations. Besides, talkers and neutrals are not able to host many VFRs but talkers are powerful to give recommendations and host their guests. Concerning the economic impact of the host to the destination, talkers are more effective hosts among four types then ambassadors, neutrals, and finally magnets. International students have various roles as hosts before and during the visit of their friends and relatives. Many researchers (Liu & Rayan, 2011; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Munoz, 2018) identified these roles as follows; source of information, decision-maker, recommender, adviser, tourist guide, translator, and host.

Source of Information: International students as hosts are the main source of information for their friends and

relatives who come to visit them. They give them all the information about the destination such as the most famous tourist attractions, the different kinds of transportation, and the most popular tourist activities. International students as hosts have the secrets of their study destination so; they are the best information provider for VFR travellers (Shani & Uriely, 2012; Liu, 2019).

Decision Maker: International students as hosts share with VFR the decision making before and during the trip, they give them advice and recommend them some places, cheapest way to book the flight ticket. Sometimes, international students are dominant in taking the decision as they have all the information about the destination (Shani & Uriely, 2012).

Tour Guide: International students as hosts feel responsible for the entertainment and the tourist experience of their guests. Accordingly, they prefer to accompany them in the sites and tourist attractions to provide their guests the feeling of security and safety (Backer, 2007; Liu, 2019).

Translator: One of the most vital roles the host can play is to be a translator for their guests especially in the destinations they are not able to speak their languages (Liu, 2019).

Contribution of International Students VFR Market to the Local Economy

Various studies Rogerson & Hoogendoorn (2014); Glover (2011) and Yousuf & Backer (2017) argued that there are different types of VFR hosts for example; second home owners, temporary migrants, destination's residents and international students. The economic impact of this segment depends mainly on the role of the host to direct VFR in their expenditures, activities, places they will visit and travel patterns (Capistrano, 2013; Yousuf & Backer, 2017, Munoz et al., 2017). International students play an important role in the study destinations particularly when they start to receive visits from their friends and relatives. This market has a significant impact on the destinations pre-trip, during the trip, and after the trip. Firstly, VFR travellers depend mainly on the students to choose a destination; they take their advice into considerations (Backer, 2007). Secondly, concerning participation in leisure and tourism activities Lee et al. (2005) highlighted that VFR is distinguished by the high rate of expenditure especially on transportation, shopping, and entertainment in the destination.

Thirdly, VFR is characterized by a high contribution in the local economy through their purchasing rate for services and local products; this can create a relatively high tourism income multiplier and this means less rate of leakage effect (Asiedu, 2008). Fourthly, commonly, it's acknowledged that VFR travellers induced by international students are not an important market segment for the hotel industry as they are

not staying at hotels, indeed, VFR travellers are substantial purchasers of nights at hotels particularly commercial accommodation (Lehto et al., 2001; Baker, 2007; Shani & Uriely, 2012). Also, this segment classified as holidaymakers come to visit the students and combine their visit with a holiday. Accordingly, their length of stay is longer than other visitors as they can stay at students' houses (Munoz, 2018). Moreover, Jang, et al. (2003) mentioned that VFR travellers have an impressive impact through their recommendations by word of mouth. It's very important to emphasize that VFR travellers driven by international students are expected to revisit the destination (Backer & King, 2017).

In this perspective, they are less sensitive to seasonality and they can visit their friends and relatives all around the year (Baker, 2008; Shani & Uriely, 2012). VFR travelers target different cities in the destinations this means that the hotspot areas are not the only places benefiting from them (Asiedu, 2008; Shani & Uriel, 2012). On the other hand, it is evident as Asiedu (2008) referred that VFR travellers don't give so much attention to the image and the political circumstances in the destination they visit especially in developing countries. Additionally, the importance of VFR tourism is the significant contribution of the host in the tourism sector and hospitality industry (Young et al., 2007). VFR travellers spend a long period with international students in the destination, and a lot of expenditures occur during this period, this definitely may increase their economic impact (Shani & Uriely, 2012). Also, international students as hosts for VFR visits have an important role economically as they consume almost all the tourism activities with their guests during their stay- combined expenditures - such as visits to tourist attractions, shopping, eating outside (Backer, 2007; Backer & King, 2015). Consequently, hosts can inject funds to the local economy through participation in these activities or their expenditures as a part of hosting duties. These additional expenses are sometimes considered as the "invisible 'multiplier effect'" (Seaton & Palmer, 1997; Young et al., 2007; Asiedu, 2008). Furthermore, Bischoff and Koenig-Lewis (2007) highlighted that the hosts spend on many other items more than activities which they share with their visitors, for example buying souvenirs and eating local food.

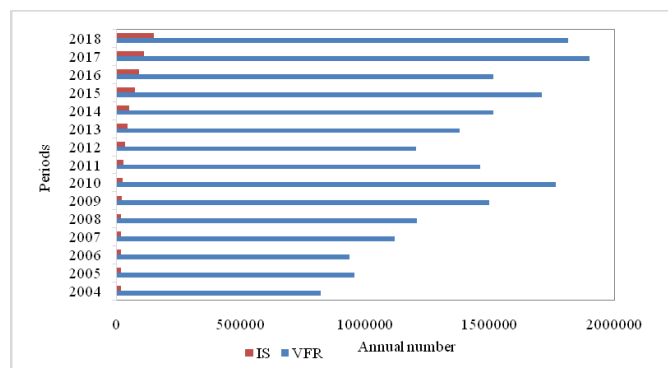
International Students in Turkey

In recent years, Turkey has become one of the most important destinations for international students. In 2018, Turkey received 148,868 international students (CoHE, 2019). Turkey adopted a new strategy seeking internationalization in education. Accordingly, the Turkish government put a target to attract 200,000 international students in 2023. To achieve this goal in 1992 Turkey's government launched The "Grand Student

Project" to increase the number of scholarship programs that it offers (Yilmaz, 2018) however, the international students started to flock to Turkey particularly since 2009 (Yaylı, 2015). In 2012 Turkey provided various incentives to achieve the goals of the internationalization strategy (Eurydice, 2015; Findik, 2016). For example, in 2014, the government changed the budget allocated to international students to be 96 million dollars. Also, many Turkish universities started to present several programs in English to attract international students to come and study in Turkey. In conjunction with the increasing number of scholarships offered by Turkey, the government made an expansion in the number of universities to be 112 public universities and 74 private universities in 2018 (CoHE, 2019) This means that Turkey has the potentials to be one of the most attractive educational hubs for international students (Ozoğlu, 2015). This internationalization is considered as a significant aspect to enhance the competitiveness and the quality of the educational system in Turkey. Indeed, hosting an increasing number of international students not only achieves academic benefits but also it has potential economic impacts for the destination (Kondakci, 2011; Ozoğlu, 2015). Due to the distinctive geographical location of Turkey as it is situated between three continents, many international students prefer to come and study there. This demand mainly comes to Turkey from neighboring countries such as Syria, Iran, Egypt, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Iraq, Libya, Somali, Afghanistan, Greece, Bulgaria, Germany, Kenya, Uganda, and Nigeria. Recently, there is a growing trend of international students from the Middle East especially for higher education in Turkey (Snoubar, 2017; CoHE, 2019). According to CoHE (2019) statistics in 2017/2018, most of the international students are studying in Istanbul, Ankara, Eskisehir, Bursa, Konya, and Izmir.

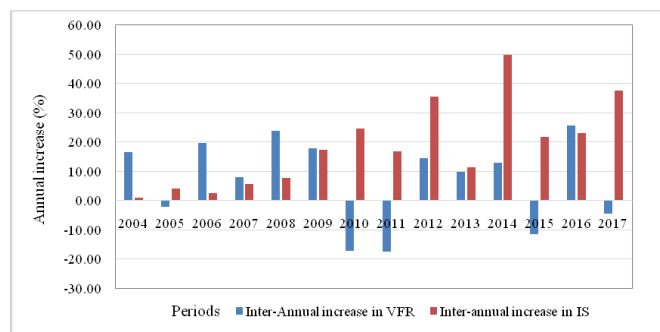
Trend of International Students and VFR in Turkey

Fig. 1 shows the total number of international students and inbound VFR tourists in Turkey for the period 2004-2018. Notably, there is an increase in international student's numbers from 15,298 in 2004 to 148,868 students in 2018, which may be considered as potential opportunities for more growth in the tourism sector for the country. As shown in Fig. 2 between 2004-2010, the annual average increase of international students in Turkey was 8.9% while this increased rate was 28% during 2011-2018. Similarly, between 2004-2011, the annual average increase of VFR was 14.11% and it decreased to 4.54% during 2011-2018. However, during the period 2011-2018, the decline of VFR tourists in Turkey could be explained as a result of the Arab Spring revolutions in the Middle. Similarly, in 2016 Turkey experienced a decrease in the number of VFR tourists due to economic crisis and political issues and this may impact negatively the tourism sector.



Source: Adapted from Turkish statistical Institute "TUIK", 2019.

Fig. 1: Number of International Students and VFR Tourists in Turkey between 2004-2018



Source: Adapted from Turkish statistical Institute "TUIK", 2019

Fig. 2: Increase in IS and VFR in Turkey between 2004-2018

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A quantitative approach was used in this research to collect data, as it is the most appropriate approach to the research subject. A questionnaire was conducted to realize the study objectives and to answer the research questions. The questionnaire was sent online through some groups and pages on social media of Egyptian students who study higher education in Turkey. A total of 206 questionnaires were received from Egyptian international students who study in Turkish Universities and who had received VFR visits before 30 questionnaires were excluded as the respondents had no previous experience of hosting VFR in Turkey so; the total valid questionnaires for analysis was 176.

The questionnaire was divided into four main sections to explore the role of Egyptian International students in inducing visits from their friends, family, and relatives to Turkey. The first section is about the trip characteristics of visits hosted. It

has consisted of twelve questions explored whether the student had received any VFR visits from Egypt or even from other Turkish cities, type of VFR visitors, the purpose of VFR travel, the season they come to visit the student, the type of accommodation, the duration of stay in Turkey and the number of cities they visited.

The second section is about the roles of Egyptian international students in VFR tourism.

It involved nine questions. It focused on the hosting experience of VFR, which is responsible to make the travel arrangements, the main role of the student during the VFR visit, the activities undertaken during the VFR visit, which is responsible to organize the activities during the VFR visit. Moreover, this section addressed the economic contribution of VFR tourism; the items VFR spent money the most, the way that students and VFR shared out the costs involved in the visit, and the average of their expenditure per visit.

The third section included two questions about the overall experience of the visit of VFR, and whether they will recommend it as a destination for other friends and relatives.

Then, the last section is socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents such as; gender, age, marital status, educational level, city of residence, the source of income and the length of the stay in Turkey.

Descriptive statistics were used to explore the socio-demographic characteristics of host Students and some other aspects while Chi-Square test was used to examine whether there were any significant relationships between VFR trips characteristics that may highlight the economic impact of VFR market induced by Egyptian international students on Turkey's economy. For example, the purpose of travel and its relationship with the length of stay of VFR in Turkey and seasonality, the VFR length of stay in Turkey and its relationship with the type of accommodation used by VFR, and the overall experience about Turkey and the ability to recommend other VFR. Accordingly, the results of Chi-Square test were examined through contingency tables at 1% and 5% significance level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The results showed that the majority of the respondents were males (63.64%) while (36.36%) were females, (38.07%) of the respondents' age ranged between 22-25 years old, (85.23%) were single and (81.25%) of the respondents

were undergraduate students. Approximately (35.23%) of the respondents live in Istanbul and (18.18%) live in Ankara while (11%) live in Konya. Accordingly, most of the respondents study at Istanbul University, Istanbul Sehir University, İstanbul Bilgi University, İstanbul Gelisim University, Ankara University, Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University and Selcuk University. These results are in line with the study of CoHE (2019) which indicated that the majority of international students are males, they study bachelor programs and most cities, which host international students, are Istanbul, Ankara, Eskisehir, and Konya.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that most of the respondents (78.41%) stay for more than two years in Turkey. Regarding the main source of income, (47.16 %) students mentioned that their parents are the main source of income in Turkey, while (28.41%) stated that they work in Turkey and their job is the main source of income, (20%) depend on scholarship as a source of their income (see Table 1). This is consistent with the study of Davidson et al. (2010) who identified that family is often the main source of income for international students. However, sometimes some of them work and depending on themselves to live and study.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Host Students (N=176)

Characteristics		Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	112	63.64
	Female	64	36.36
Age	18-21	55	31.25
	22-25	67	38.07
	26-30	35	19.89
	More than 30	19	10.80
Marital status	Single	150	85.23
	Married	26	14.77
Education level	Bachelor	143	81.25
	Master	14	7.95
	Ph.D.	15	8.52
	Post Doctorate	4	2.27
The main source of income	Parents	83	47.16
	Scholarship	35	19.89
	Job	50	28.41
	Savings	8	4.55

Characteristics		Number	Percentage (%)
Length of stay in Turkey	Less than one year	14	7.95
	One-two years	24	13.64
	More than two years	138	78.41

Trip Characteristics of VFR Visit Hosted

(88.07%) of the sample confirmed that they encourage their friends and relatives to visit Turkey. This proves that Egyptian students can be promoters for Turkey as a destination even by word of mouth. This finding matches several previous studies for example the studies of Tham (2006); Hunter-Jones (2008) and Davidson et al. (2010) that highlighted that international students are not only hosting their friends and relatives but that they actively stimulating them to come and visit them in the study destinations.

Also, (61.36%) mentioned that they received visits from their families and relatives in Egypt while (57.4%) referred that they received visits from their friends living in other Turkish cities.

Regarding the time Egyptian students host VFR travellers in Turkey, (35.23%) of the participants indicated that they received two times VFR visits. Concerning the purpose of travel, (50.57%) stated that VFR usually combines their holiday with leisure and recreation, while (41.48%) just came to visit the student himself.

Concerning the type of accommodation, (56.82%) mentioned that VFR preferred to stay with a student host, whereas (30.68%) clarified that VFR preferred to rent an apartment.

Furthermore, (42.61%) of the sample referred that VFR came to visit Egyptian students in Turkey anytime during the year.

Interestingly, the majority of the respondents (80.11%) visited one to three cities in Turkey with their friends and families (see Table 2). They pointed out that Istanbul, Bursa, Ankara, Antalya, Izmir, Denizli, Trabzon, and Marmaris are the most visited cities for them. This finding is affirmed by Kashiwagiet al. (2018) who clarified that VFR travellers induced by international students mostly have plan to visit multiple destinations during their trip. This confirms the ability of students to encourage domestic tourism in Turkey and spread the economic impact in several cities.

Table 2: Trip Characteristics of Visits Hosted (N=176)

Variables		Number	Percentage (%)
Type of VFR visits from Home country	Friends	44	25
	family/relatives	108	61.36
	Both	24	16.63
Type of VFR visits from other Turkish cities	Friends	101	57.4
	family/relatives	23	13.1
	Both	52	29.5
Times Egyptian students host VFR travellers	One time	45	25.57
	Two times	62	35.23
	Three times	22	12.50
	4-7 times	47	26.71
Purpose of travel /Main reason to visit	Looking jobs opportunities	0	0
	To participate in my graduation	6	3.41
	Business travel	8	4.55
	Just to visit me	73	41.48
	Combine with holiday Leisure, recreation	89	50.57
Type of accommodation	Staying with a student host	100	56.82
	Renting Apartment	54	30.68
	Hotel	16	9.09
	Staying with other friends/family	4	3.41
Season VFR came to visit Egyptian students	Summer time	48	27.27
	Holiday season	38	21.59
	Anytime during the year	75	42.61
	Winter time	15	8.52
VFR length of stay in Turkey	Less than one week	21	11.93
	1-2weeks	68	38.64
	3-4 weeks	45	25.57
	More	42	23.86
Number of cities visited by VFR	One to three cities	141	80.11
	More than three cities	35	19.89

The Role of Egyptian Students to Stimulate VFR Visits to Turkey

The results showed that the majority of the respondents (89.20%) confirmed that their friends and relatives came to Turkey as they are staying there. Concerning the decisions on travel arrangements, (49.43%) of the sample stated that they take the decisions related to travel arrangement together with their friends and relatives, whereas (37.50%) clarified that they (as a host) take the decisions on travel arrangements by themselves as they know more about the destinations. Based on the results, (63.64%) indicated that they play several roles with their VFR during their trip to Turkey. Before their trip, they arrange the plan to travel with them and provide them with information. During the trip, they guide them to some tourist attractions. Most of the time, they serve as translators to overcome the problem of the language barrier, especially

in Turkey. Moreover, they recommend them some places for shopping, activities, eating local food and give them some important tips during their trip. This is supported by the findings of King and Dwyer (2015) who explained that hosts play several and different roles pre, during, and after trips, especially when they receive VFR visits.

Concerning the undertaken activities during the VFR visit, the respondents stated that the majority of VFR travellers preferred to visit tourist attractions, going day trips, eating local food and shopping are the favorite activities for them in Turkey.

This result is supported by Davidson et al. (2010) who mentioned that visiting tourist attractions and eating locally are the most common activities for VFR travellers. Concerning the responsible person who always organizes the activities: the distribution of the sample was fairly even, with both hosts and guests, (51%) of guests were responsible for organizing activities, while the students as a host (47%) were responsible for it.

Regarding the items on which VFR spent money, the most, (35.22%) of the sample referred that VFR travellers spend their money in Turkey, especially on two items shopping and eating locally. Moreover, concerning the way they share the cost, it was noticeable that (41.48%) of the respondents stated that everybody pays for him/herself while (39.2%) mentioned that they take turns in paying when going out with their guests.

This is aligned with the opinion of Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) who stated that the way of sharing the costs during the trip depends on whom will come to visit the students. In their study, they confirmed that in the relatives' visits (VR) they almost paid all while in friends visits (VF) every person paid for himself.

The Economic Impact of VFR Generated by Egyptian International Students

Backer (2007) highlighted that to evaluate the economic contribution of VFR travellers induced by international students we should measure their expenditure per trip not per day. The respondents indicated that the average expenditure

per visit of their friends and relatives are different, they just mentioned in the questionnaire about this average for friends and their relatives. Accordingly, the analysis estimated this expenditure in terms of two items: Number of VFR visits per year and The average expenses of VFR per visit.

The researcher depended on the results obtained from the questionnaire to calculate the estimated average of VFR expenditure. As shown in (Table 3) the estimated average of expenditure for friends was \$ 394.07 per year, while in (Table 4) the estimated average of expenditure for family and relatives was \$1764.80 per year.

As appeared in (Tables 2 & 3) the average expenditure for international students as a whole can be estimated by the number of VFR visits per year and the total amount of expenditure depending on the weighting approach. Therefore, there is a necessity to point out that these expenditures are just expected values and not accurate numbers which may be used to get a total estimation for different groups of students. Thus, it is worth to mention that the general VFR travellers as a market segment visit Turkey may have a socio-demographic profile and travel behavior differed from VFR induced by Egyptian international students in the survey.

Table 3: Average Friends' Expenditure (A\$)

Expenditure Per Visit A\$	No. of Visits	Total Expenditure A\$	Weighting	Total A\$
A	B	C (A × B)	D	E (C×D)
394.07	1	394.07	0.31	122(54)
394.07	2	788.14	0.24	189(42)
394.07	3	1182.21	0.11	130(20)
394.07	4	1576.28	0.03	47(6)
394.07	5	1970.35	0.02	39(4)
394.07	6	2364.42	0.02	47(4)
394.07	10	3940.7	0.05	197(8)
394.07	12	4728.84	0.02	95(4)

Table 4: Average Family and Relatives' Expenditures (A\$)

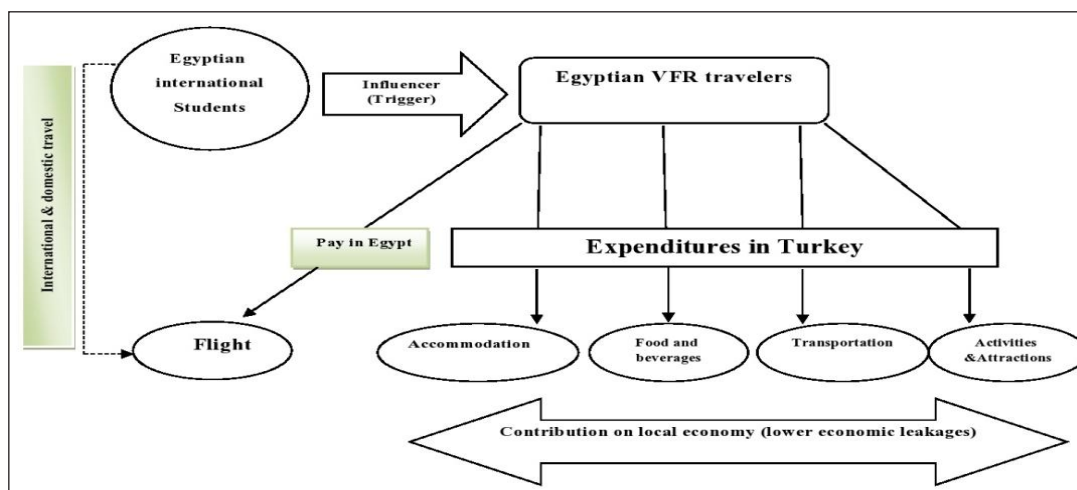
Expenditure per visit A\$	No. of visits	Total expenditure A\$	Weighting	Total A\$
A	B	C(A× B)	D	E (C×D)
1764.80	1	1764.80	0.43	759(76)
1764.80	2	3529.6	0.16	565(29)
1764.80	3	5294.4	0.07	371(12)
1764.80	5	8824	0.07	618(12)
1764.80	6	10588.8	0.07	741(12)
1764.80	7	12353.6	0.02	247(4)
1764.80	15	26472	0.02	529(3)

Previous results showed that all expenditures of Egyptian VFR travellers generated by students in Turkey. Notably, Egyptian students trigger VFR travellers to visit Turkey, so they induce them to pay flight tickets (in Egypt) and travel internationally. Then they plan with them their program inside

Turkey. Once they arrive in Turkey they start to spend money in the tourism sector such as transportation, meals, tourist attractions, shopping, and many other activities. It is important to remember that Egyptian VFR travellers visit not only the residence city of the student but they also travel domestically

with the students to visit one to three cities. In this case, the students themselves turn into domestic tourists and start to spend nights at hotels and consume other tourism services.

This represents several economic impacts on Turkey’s national economy. Fig. 3 summarizes the economic contribution of Egyptian VFR travellers in Turkey.



Source: Adapted and modified by author from Kashiwagi et al. (2018).

Fig. 3: Expenditures of VFR Travellers Generated by Egyptian Students in Turkey

Relationship between the Main Purpose of Visit and the Length of Stay in Turkey

Table 5: Chi-Square Test on the Main Purpose of the Visit and the VFR Length of Stay in Turkey

VFR Length of Stay in Turkey	Purpose of Travel /Main Reason to Visit				
	Just to Visit the Host Students	Combine with Holiday Leisure, Recreation	To Participate in My Graduation	Business Travel	Total
Less than one week	13	8	0	0	21
	7.39	4.55	0.00	0.00	11.93
1-2 Weeks	23	45	0	0	68
	13.07	25.57	0.00	0.00	38.64
3-4 Weeks	21	24	0	0	45
	11.93	13.64	0.00	0.00	25.57
More than 4 weeks	16	12	6	8	42
	9.09	6.82	3.41	4.55	23.86
Total	73	89	8	8	176
	41.48	50.57	4.55	4.55	100.00

Pearson chi2 (9) = 56.1566 Pr = 0.000

Students were asked to determine the main purpose of their VFR visit in Turkey and the season in which they received these visits the most. Therefore, the Pearson chi-square test was used to test the ration between the frequencies of the length of stay of VFR in Turkey and the purposes of travel. The results (see Table 5) showed that there is a significant relationship (Pr=0.000) between the length of stay in Turkey and the purpose of travel. The finding showed that (25.57%) of the VFR who spent between 1-2 weeks in turkey and (13.64%) of VFR who stayed between 3-4 weeks combined

their holidays with their visits to students. Also, (13.07%) of VFR who stayed between 1-2 weeks came just to visit the host students .while (4.55%) of VFR who stayed for more than four weeks was business travel, and (3.41%) was to participate in the student graduation. This finding comes in line with the study of Tran (2019) who linked the purpose of visit and VFR length of stay. He mentioned that more than 50% of VFR visits associated with a holiday stay for more than three days in the host destinations for domestic visits and more than one week for international visits.

Relationship between the Main Purpose of Visit and the Season VFR Come to Turkey

Table 6: Chi-Square Test on the Main Purpose of Visit and the Season VFR Come to Turkey

The Season VFR Travellers Come to Turkey	Purpose of Travel/Main Reason to Visit				
	Just to Visit Me	Combine with Holiday Leisure, Recreation	Participating in My Graduation	Business Travel	Total
Summer time	28 15.91	20 11.36	0 0.00	0 0.00	48 27.27
Holiday season	16 9.09	16 9.09	2 1.14	4 2.27	38 21.59
Anytime during the year	29 16.48	42 23.86	0 0.00	4 2.27	75 42.61
Winter time	0 0.00	11 6.25	4 2.27	0 0.00	15 8.52
Total	73 41.48	89 50.57	6 3.41	8 4.55	176 100.00

Pearson chi2 (9) = 47.2544 Pr = 0.000

Similarly, the Pearson chi-square test was conducted to determine whether there is a relationship between relative frequencies of the season VFR travellers come to Turkey and the purpose of travel. Accordingly, the results (see Table6) referred that there is an evident relationship (Pr=0.000) between the season VFR come to Turkey and the purpose of travel. The finding revealed that most of VFR (23.86%) who visited Turkey at any time during the year they combined their visits with the holiday, leisure, and recreation, while (16.48%) of VFR visited Turkey at any time during the year just to visit the host students. Then, (15.91%) of VFR visited Turkey during summer time was just to visit the host student, and (11.36%) combined their visit with the holiday, leisure, and recreation.

On another hand, (2.27%) of VFR visits conducted during the holiday season and at any time during the year were business travel while (2.27%) of VFR visits in wintertime were to participate in host student graduation. This result is aligned with Shanka and Taylor (2003) who mentioned the existence of a relationship between the purpose of VFR visits and the season they come to visit the students in their study destination. For example, the families and friends visit the international students at the end of the academic year; they combine their visits with other purposes such as leisure, holiday and business. This result is supported also by Bischoff and Koenig-Lewi (2007) who pointed out that this segment can induce tourism businesses in off seasons in host destinations.

Relationship between VFR Length of Stay and the Type of Accommodation used by VFR Tourists

Table 7: Chi-Square Test on VFR Length of Stay in Turkey and Type of Accommodations used by VFR

Type of Accommodations	VFR Length of Stay in Turkey				Total
	Less than One Week	1-2 Weeks	3-4 Weeks	More than 4 Weeks	
Staying with a student host	9 5.11	47 26.70	26 14.77	18 10.23	100 56.82
Renting Apartment	4 2.27	12 6.82	19 10.80	19 10.80	54 30.68
Hotel	8 4.55	7 3.98	0 0.00	1 0.57	16 9.09
Staying with other friends/family	0 0.00	2 1.14	0 0.00	4 2.27	6 3.41
Total	21 11.93	68 38.64	45 25.57	42 23.86	176 100.00

Pearson chi2 (9) = 46.1370 Pr = 0.000

To find out the type of accommodation used by the VFR tourists according to the length of stay in Turkey, the Pearson chi-square test was conducted on the relative frequencies of these variables. The analysis (see Table 7) revealed an evident relationship ($Pr=0.000$) between the type of accommodations used by VFR and the length of the stay in Turkey. Most of the VFR who stayed between 1-2 weeks (26.70%) and 3-4 weeks (14.77%) in Turkey spent their vacation with the students' host while (10.80%) of VFR stayed more than four weeks rented apartment. Otherwise, (4.55%) of VFR stayed in a hotel for less

than one week while (3.98%) spent between 1-2 weeks in the hotel. Accordingly, most of the VFR stayed with student hosts spent between 1-2 weeks and 3-4 weeks in Turkey. This result is in accordance with Tran (2019) who highlighted the relationship among VFR length of stay, type of accommodation, and its location. Also, he mentioned that VFR is less motivated to stay with international students if they will spend a long vacation in the host destination. They feel more freedom in commercial accommodation. Contrary, if they will stay a short period, they prefer to stay with their friends and relatives.

Relationship between Overall Experience about Turkey and the Ability to Recommend their Friends/Family

Table 8: Chi-Square Test on VFR Overall Experience about Turkey and the Ability to Recommend it

VFR Recommendation about Turkey	VFR Overall Experience about Turkey's Visit				
	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very Positive	Total
Never	3 1.70	0 0.00	0 0.00	0 0.00	3 1.70
Neutral	1 0.57	22 12.50	18 10.23	4 2.27	45 25.57
Definitively	0 0.00	4 2.27	55 31.25	8 4.55	67 38.07
Yes definitively	0 0.00	8 4.55	23 13.07	30 17.05	61 34.66
Total	4 2.27	34 19.32	96 54.55	30 23.86	176 100.00

Pearson chi2 (9) = 198.5128 Pr = 0.000

To determine the proportion of VFR tourists who would recommend Turkey to their family and friends Chi-square test was conducted. The findings (see Table 8) proved a statistically significant relationship ($Pr=0.000$) between overall experience about Turkey and recommending Turkey as a tourism destination to other friends, family, and relatives.

The results indicated that (31.25%) of VFR had a positive experience with Turkey and would recommend Turkey to their friends, families, and relatives while (17.05%) of VFR had a very positive experience about Turkey and would definitively recommend Turkey to their friends, families, and relatives.

This finding was clarified by Jarvis (2020) who stated that more than 50% of VFR induced by international students who study in Estonia clarified that their experience in Estonia was above their expectations and approximately 70% of the sample would recommend it as a holiday's destination.

CONCLUSION AND MARKETING IMPLICATIONS

This study is considered as the first attempt to explore the role of international students particularly Egyptian students as a generator of VFR tourism in Turkey.

International Students as a Potential Opportunity for Turkey

The findings noted that Egyptian international students represent a potential opportunity as a pull factor to motivate VFR visits to Turkey as well as playing the role of host. The study showed that VFR visits induced by students could be a significant part of the tourism demand in Turkey. Additionally, the study clarified that VFR tourism generated by Egyptian

students in Turkey is expected to increase because of a growing trend to receive more international students in Turkey as well as the strategy of internationalization adopted by Turkey government. So, from a marketing perspective, this segment should receive more attention.

Economic Contribution

The findings proved that VFR tourism stimulated by Egyptian students in Turkey has a potential economic value for the destination through the expenditures they spend, the nights they spend in Turkey, the number of cities they visit, the activities they undertake. Furthermore, the results highlighted that the students can play a role in the tourism sector by themselves through domestic tourism, by stimulating and convincing their friends, families and relatives to visit Turkey and by promoting it as a tourism destination. Although Egyptian students have different patterns of expenditure with their guests, this depends mainly on whom they will receive either VR or VF visitors. From the questionnaire's results, the researcher calculated the estimated average of VFR expenditure. The findings showed that the estimated average expenditure for friends was \$ 394.07 per year, while the estimated average expenditure for family and relatives was \$1764.80 per year.

VFR Tourism Induced by Students as a Solution for Seasonality

Many destinations face the problem of seasonality, finding effective measures to overcome it becomes a challenge. The findings of this study proved that VFR travellers can visit students at any time during the year. This can help Turkey to overcome the problem of seasonality and spreading the value and volume of tourism activity all around the year. The results noted that there is a significant relationship between the purpose of travel and the season in which VFR travellers visit Turkey. Most of the respondents visit Turkey all around the year and they usually combine their visits with the holiday, leisure, and recreation. According to this finding, the VFR market may be not sensitive to change in seasonality and it can easily be targeted.

International Students as Efficient Communication Channels

The results revealed that the majority of VFR travellers come to Turkey to combine their visit to see the student and having a holiday in Turkey for recreation and leisure. In marketing terms, the students are considered the most active communication channel. The findings clarified that the student can play various roles during VFR visit and he/she

is aware of all the information, attractions, accommodations, and activities in the destinations.

Based on the results obtained, the study raises the following recommendations; for accommodation providers they can play a significant role to attract VFR travelers stimulated by international students. They should offer various incentives to encourage them to spend more nights. Moreover, they should target the first-year students and provide them with special offers, as there is a considerable potential to host more VFR visits during their study period in Turkey. Besides, there is a possibility to repeat these visits for different reasons such as the graduation ceremony. Accordingly, the accommodation providers can promote special graduation packages to encourage VFR to come and extend their stay in Turkey. DMOs in Turkey should develop some strategies to address VFR tourism induced by international students to benefit from the social and economic impacts of hosting this market segment. DMOs, travel agencies and airlines in Turkey should give much attention to offer attractive packages to combine flight tickets, accommodation, visiting attractions to encourage VFR tourism stimulated by international students. Accordingly, the marketing campaigns should be designed to attract these visits during the academic year particularly at the beginning and the end. In addition, there is an urgent need for more collaboration between DMOs and universities to attract international students through creating common marketing and promotion materials in different languages or offering some discounts in particular services. Also, DMOs and universities in Turkey should collaborate to facilitate the accommodation options with special rates for VFR induced by students. It is recommended for universities to target international students in various and new ways especially social media and through other students. Consequently, marketing campaigns should be directed to them in different languages to know more about the services and local attractions. As a final point, it is recommended for the Council of Higher Education in Turkey to increase the scholarship programs offered for international students. Moreover, the international education sector should work together with the tourism sector in Turkey to provide international students with facilities. For example, the ministry of higher education in Turkey can facilitate the visa application for families, relatives and friends of the international students to encourage them to visit Turkey.

The current study explored significant insights related to the travel patterns of Egyptian VFR travellers to Turkey. This means a possibility of undertaking more researches in the future about other destinations and nationalities that will improve the marketing campaigns in several aspects

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