

HOSPITALITY AND ITS MANY GUISES:  
FIGURING A TYPOLOGY FOR CARPET SALESMEN

by

CELAL KAAAN BAŞER

Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

Sabancı University

June 2017

© Celal Kaan Bařer 2017

All Rights Reserved

HOSPITALITY AND ITS MANY GUISES:  
FIGURING A TYPOLOGY FOR CARPET SALESMEN

APPROVED BY:

Doç. Dr. Cenk Özbay  
(Thesis Supervisor)



Yrd. Doç. Dr. Ahmet Faik Kurtulmuş  
(Jury Member)



Yrd. Doç. Dr. Ebru Kayaalp Jurich  
(Jury Member)



DATE OF APPROVAL: June 29, 2017

## ABSTRACT

### HOSPITALITY AND ITS MANY GUISES: FIGURING A TYPOLOGY FOR CARPET SALESMEN

CELAL KAAAN BAŞER

M.A. Thesis, June 2017

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Cenk Özbay

Keywords: *Carpet salesmen, Sultanahmet, typology, hospitality, the guise*

Types and typification are deemed to be part and parcel of everyday living as individuals navigate their daily lives and in the process, try to make sense of their encounters with the people and the world around them. This study takes up this need to typify by attending to the circumstances under which individuals, in this case tourists as guests and carpet salesmen as their hosts, resort to forming types as part of their assumed roles. It employs a mixed methodology which is based in part on a qualitative content-analysis of tourist reviews and topic-based forum discussions on the online travelling website TripAdvisor, as well as fieldwork conducted over several weeks in and around Sultanahmet. By using Goffman's dramaturgical metaphors and his conception of social interactions through face-to-face encounters, this study lays the ground for elucidating how the many guises of hospitality are both performed by carpet salesmen and discursively propagated by tourists so as to contribute to the typification of a prevailing figure of the carpet salesman.

## ÖZET

### MİSAFİRPERVERLİK VE KİSVELERİ: HALICILARIN TİPOLOJİK BİR TASNİFİ

CELAL KAAAN BAŞER

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Haziran 2017

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Cenk Özbay

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Halıcılar, Sultanahmet, tipoloji, misafirperverlik, kisve*

Tipler ve tiplendirme, insanların günlük yaşantısının olağan seyri, ve bu suretle, diğer insanlar ve etraflarındaki dünyayla olan etkileşimleri açısından hayatın ayrılmaz bir parçası olarak görülebilir. Bu araştırma insanlardaki bu tiplendirme ihtiyacını, benimsenilmiş roller açısından başvurulan tipleri de dikkate alarak, misafir olarak turistler ve ev sahibi olarak halıcılar üzerinden ele alıyor. Bir yandan online seyahat sitesi TripAdvisor'daki turist geri bildirimleri ve konu odaklı forum tartışmalarının kalitatif bir içerik analizi, diğer yandan Sultanahmet'te birkaç hafta süreyle gerçekleştirilmiş bir saha çalışması olmak üzere karma bir metodoloji izlenmiştir. Bu araştırma, Goffman'ın dramaturjik metaforları ve yüzyüze karşılaşmalar üzerinden kurguladığı sosyal etkileşimler olgusundan da yararlanarak, misafirperverlik ve kisvelerinin hem halıcılar tarafından sergilenişi hem de turistler tarafından söylem olarak türetilmesinin, hakim bir halıcı tiplemesi yaratılmasındaki rolünü irdeliyor.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over the last couple of months, ever since I took on the enterprise of writing up a thesis, I have accumulated countless debts to friends, family, and professors. As is custom, I would like to acknowledge their contribution to both my wellbeing and character without which this thesis would have never seen the light of day.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Bahadır, the closest person I have known to being a best friend, for always being there to return me back to sanity and to encourage me on through what were often recurring phases of sheer boredom and severe self-doubt.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Dilyara, Yeşim, and Mohsin, my office compadres, with and thanks to whom I have somehow endured the semester long process of writing and rewriting, as well as correcting the occasional the!

I owe a debt of gratitude to a number of fellow peers who have graced me with their time and attention, among whom are Ayşe Büşra, Onur, Hana, Özkan, Gamze, Berkay, Emirhan, Caner, Ayhan, Selin, Çiğdem, Faruk, Büşra, Tunahan, and many others.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my supervisor Cenk Özbay for remaining optimistic throughout the process, and for being encouraging, upfront, and down-to-earth in all the advice and feedback he has given me during the final few months.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the two jury members, Ebru Kayaalp and Ahmet Faik Kurtulmuş, for tolerating my persistent indecisiveness regarding the whole enterprise, as well as for their invaluable suggestions.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my uncle Birşad, a carpet salesman of thirty years, for acting as an excellent gatekeeper as well as for being a fountain of information.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the Cultural Studies Program for harboring the wannabe anthropologist that I am without protest, and similarly to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Sabancı University for the generous scholarship they have provided over the course of two years.

And finally, I owe a debt of gratitude to my parents who have never ceased, even for a single moment, to be there for me, and this thesis is the product of their sweat and blood just as it is mine. Thank you, again, from the chasms of my heart.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Hospitality and the Guise.....	3
1.2. Erving Goffman’s Symbolic Interactionism.....	6
1.3. Figuring Typologies.....	8
1.4. Methodological Considerations.....	9
1.5. Chapter Breakdown.....	11
<b>Chapter 2: Gauging Bodily Idioms and Performances from the Field.....</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1. Staging the Field.....	13
2.1.1. The Grand Bazaar.....	13
2.1.2. Nuri Osmaniye Street.....	14
2.1.3. Sultanahmet Square.....	15
2.1.4. Arasta Bazaar.....	15
2.2. Figuring the Performance.....	16
2.2.1. The Carpet Shop.....	16
2.2.2. Speech, Language, and the Lure.....	18
2.2.3. <i>Tezgah</i> and Its Variants.....	22
2.2.4. The Carpet Show.....	23
2.2.5. Weaving ‘Carpet Narratives’ That Sell.....	25
2.2.6. <i>Hanut</i> and the Commission Chain.....	28
2.2.7. When Tourists Are “Done wrong by”.....	29
2.3. Conclusion.....	31
<b>Chapter 3: Typification by Virtual Word-of-Mouth: A Qualitative Content Analysis of User-Contributed Posts on TripAdvisor.....</b>	<b>32</b>
3.1. The TripAdvisor Reviews Page.....	32
3.1.1. Hospitality as Knowledge Differential and the Guise of Trust.....	33
3.1.2. Hospitality as Obligation and Its Extent.....	34
3.1.3. Hospitality Gone Awry.....	37
3.1.4. Hospitality as Generosity and Reciprocity.....	40



3.1.5. Hospitality as an Experience to be had.....	42
3.1.6. Hospitality as Reputation and Digital Charm.....	43
3.2. The TripAdvisor Forum.....	49
3.2.1. Scams: What are they and how to avoid them?.....	52
3.2.2. How to be a Savvy Tourist.....	58
3.2.3. The Need to Tell Stories.....	66
3.3. Conclusion.....	70
<b>Chapter 4: Conclusion.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>73</b>

## Chapter One

### Introduction

When I finally decided that for my thesis I would study contemporary carpet salesmen in Sultanahmet, the immediate reaction of my peers, of some of my professors, and eventually, of carpet salesmen themselves was one of intrigue, fascination, and genuine amusement. While for some, these carpet salesmen stood to represent all but a cultural enigma, one that ought to be studied as one would do a distant tribe, for others they fared as comic currency, that is, in so far as *they* were treated as the exaggerated archetype of a contrived, persistent, and scamming salesman. It was this initial reaction that prompted me to consider more closely the circulating figure of the carpet salesman, and thus to inquire into the circumstances, be it manifest or latent, under which both tourists and carpet salesmen alike resort to typification as a way of producing and reproducing what one might call a prevailing typology for the figure of carpet salesmen.

My research employs a mixed methodology which is based in part on a qualitative content-analysis of tourist reviews and topic-based forum discussions on TripAdvisor, as well as fieldwork conducted over several weeks in and around Sultanahmet, a major touristic destination in Istanbul, Turkey. As for the conceptual framework, my inquiry takes as its point of departure Erving Goffman's dramaturgical analysis of symbolic interaction where concepts such as 'the stage', 'the setting', 'impression management', 'roles', and 'performance' become critical to analyzing social encounters. My analysis is built upon and inspired by a reading of both *The Presentation of Self In Everyday Life* (1959) where the 'stage' of life is said to take on a theatrical quality, and the follow-up, *Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction* (1961) where the basic unit of analysis for social interactions is conceived through what Goffman calls 'an encounter' wherein 'actors' are said to participate in a 'performance' with different 'roles'. I thus take up the ensuing sales process between the carpet salesman and the tourist, that is, from the very first welcome up until the final purchase or departure, as the primary data point for the figuring of a prevailing or be it contested typology.

Since the sales process comes already enwrapped in hospitality, a term used quite conspicuously as both an industrial descriptor referring to a range of commercial services provided in the context of tourism, and a moral realm which prescribes an appropriate range of behavior for the treatment of strangers (as in non-locals or travelers), I therefore employ hospitality as a heuristic frame with which to attend to what is an eclectic congerie of gestures, that is to say, the wide-ranging gestural economy adopted by carpet salesmen in their interaction with tourists. The concept of hospitality with all that it connotes serves as a figurative nexus in making sense of the interplay between notions of obligation and expectation, wherein tourists expect salesmen to be hospitable while the salesmen in turn expect tourists to submit to their at times ostentatious displays of generosity/ reciprocity, all in the hope of obliging the tourist (now customer) to return the given/ received hospitality with a purchase or two.

As for my contribution to the broader literature on hospitality studies, tourism studies, as well as to Goffman's theatrical model for symbolic interactionism, I go on to introduce the concept of 'the guise' (in its combined use with hospitality) as a new heuristic frame with which to explore the production of types and in that, the very process of typification as either enacted/ performed by carpet salesmen or discursively produced/ propagated by tourists through electronic word-of-mouth on such online traveling websites as TripAdvisor. While the usage of the term 'encounter' seeks to highlight the performative aspect of social interaction, the guise which quite simply stands for one's semblance or manner of presentation affords in that way a conceptual surface for breaking apart such encounters where interactions can be thought as birthing their own situational variety with respect to the "styles of bodily idiom and self-presentation" put on display and performed for tourists by carpet salesmen (Urry and Larsen 2011: 192). Since the guise – as standing for the alternating surfaces within/between encounters – allows one to better delineate between the ascriptive roles of the tourist/customer/guest versus that of the local/salesman/host, it thereby offers a conceptually clear marker for grounding one's interpretive scaffold.

The primary goal of this research is not to present a reified so-called *emergent* typology for carpet salesmen, but instead to explore the prevailing congruence of varied strategies, motives, and performances that together color each encounter between a

salesman and a tourist. To that effect, the insights that I take up throughout this thesis all emanate from a close inspection of a broad range of dimensions, intersections, and confluences, and not just from an arbitrary selection of what I readily purport to be relevant types concerning the circulating figure of the carpet salesman. My concern throughout the thesis is, put simply, to understand how hospitality gets enacted, performed, worked, and reworked through every encounter. I argue that it is important to do so in order to demystify the process of typification which comes to produce types that widely circulate as readily available frames and are imbued over time with representative qualities for particular groupings of people, in this case, contemporary carpet salesmen in and around Sultanahmet. It is in that light that I ask the following questions: What lies under the many guise(s) of hospitality, and how does the reception (by tourists) and the performance (by carpet salesmen) of these guises contribute to the typification of the figure of carpet salesmen, a figure now circulating not only by word-of-mouth but also across online platforms in the form of user-generated reviews or discussion?

### **1.1. Hospitality and the Guise**

When one thinks of hospitality, what comes to mind are hospitable obligations that one conventionally has towards strangers. Hospitality as such stands to encompass a wide range of moralistic considerations that a ‘host’ has in attending to the needs of his/ her ‘guest’ (for a detailed theoretical discussion see Burgess 1982; Lashley 2001; Dunke and Gurney 2001). Yet, in a commercial setting where hospitality is rendered into a touristic commodity to be produced (given) by locals and consumed (received) by tourists, the moral realm that surrounds one’s expectations of/from hospitality ends up becoming muddied with the introduction of profit-making as an ulterior motive. It is to that effect that traits associated with being hospitable – such as attentiveness, reciprocity, and generosity – are all brought within the realm of tourism, which today in Turkey represents a commercial endeavor of close to 31 million arrivals and a total turnover of 22 billion US dollars in the year 2016 alone, though nevertheless a significant decrease from a peak of 41 million and a turnover of 34 billion in the year 2014 (TURSAB 2017). Given the size and value of this commercial endeavor, the term hospitality has thus emerged as an important heuristic with

which to study cross-societal interaction in the context of a globalizing world where hospitality begins to “[...] presuppose various kinds of economies, politics, and ethics as the tourist gaze extends around the world and draws into its warm embrace countless social relations between hosts and guests” (Urry and Larsen 2011: 96). It is thus within the context of global tourism and in particular of commercialized hospitality that I locate my exploration of the figure of the carpet salesman. As Bryce *et al* (2013: 46) identify in their historical-comparative study of tourism across the Middle East, the “durable” expectations of tourists, that is still mostly from the West, continue to configure touristic destinations as sites of the imagined Orient. By taking up “hospitality scenes” (2013: 54) as encounters in the Goffmanian sense where actors interact with one another under assumed roles, my research hopes to elucidate the larger process of typification as well as the more readily propagated types that get widely read, shared, and replicated increasingly by virtual word-of-mouth. Yet, as Yan & Almeida Santos (2009: 297) observe, my research also takes note of the “ambivalent and hybrid” representational practices that local tourism providers themselves engage in through the deliberate and active commodification of Oriental otherness with the end goal of capitalizing upon what are presumed to be the entrenched expectations of tourists. As such, the heuristic frame of the guise (in its combined use with hospitality) helps to track the particular ways in which both tourists as well as carpet salesmen themselves contribute to the shaping of what might call a prevailing figure of the carpet salesman. As practices of both orientalizing and self-orientalizing continue to figure roles in the context of global tourism where ‘hosts’ increasingly attend to the needs of their ‘guests’ in return for money, each encounter thus paves the way for renewed exposure to the figure in circulation, be it performed by carpet salesmen for tourists or propagated by tourists in the recounting of their encounters with carpet salesmen.

The point then of using Goffman’s dramaturgical metaphors and his conception of social interactions through encounters, is that it comes to provide a conceptually clear way for assessing hospitality as performed and received in any given encounter (or an account of an encounter) in its own right, that is, as an idiosyncratic interaction, but also for comparing it to other encounters in order to arrive at what I presume to be overarching insights about the ensuing sales process between a carpet salesman and a tourist. For the purposes of this research, the encounter stands for the sales process. The setting is the

carpet shops in Sultanahmet. The actors are the tourist-customer-guest on the one hand, and the local-salesman-host on the other. One might also point out the latent gender dimension to these encounters in that all salesmen are necessarily men – according to Islamic conventions, only men are allowed to barter in the market place (Gülersoy 1979: 24), -- while most of the reviewers and forum users on TripAdvisor are women (more on this in Chapter Three). By performance, I mean to include all the critical junctures of the sales process as primary points of analysis. Rather than using Goffman's divide of the 'front', 'back', and 'off stage', which provides too neat of a delineation for charting the interaction between a salesman and a tourist, I introduce instead the heuristic of the guise in its combined use with hospitality to track the gestural economy that carpet salesmen employ at various junctures of the sales process. The guise originates from an expression that Goffman himself uses only once in the Preface of *The Presentation of Self In Everyday Life* (1959), wherein he writes about the so-called "guise of character" with respect to the multifarious ways in which individuals compose themselves in their daily face-to-face interactions with others.

My contention is that it is by closely attending to various junctures in the sales process, such as the introductory hook, the serving/ reception of hospitality, and the haggling over price, that one can then go on expose the different guises of hospitality at play, whether it is with regard to generosity/ reciprocity, the elation one might get from a high-contact sale, manipulative pressure tactics, or simply profit motive. And it is in this sense that we can then begin to unravel the plethora of expectations that tourists come to have and the very role of these expectations, whether fully met or not, in the consequent typification of the circulating figure of carpet salesmen.

Another point to take up in relation to hospitality and its many guises are the travel-community websites, such as TripAdvisor or Travelplanner, where tourists can share or read reviews about particular carpet shops or discuss pertinent issues to the sales process through open, user-generated forum discussions. With respect to the process of typification, this represents a transition from an actual word-of-mouth sharing, and by that, propagating of types to what one might call a virtual or be it electronic word-of-mouth, thus requiring a renewed analysis of hospitality as figured in this new, online realm. As the following quote by Urry and Larsen (2011) suggest, the changes brought about by the 'web 2.0' has literally

transformed the way in which a tourist is set up to experience a given destination, starting from even before their arrival and continuing way after, that is, until the given tourist contributes to the figuring of a destination and its locals, in this case, of contemporary carpet salesmen in Sultanahmet:

“[...] this is a new economy where tourism services are continually ‘shamed’ or ‘recommended’ on a global virtual stage with millions of daily visitors. While word-of-mouth recommendations always have been a crucial factor in triggering journeys to particular places, they were traditionally confined to a small word of friends, family members and co-workers. ‘Electronic word-of-mouth’ does not know such a restricted world since it is global in scope.” (Urry and Larsen 2011: 59)

“Tourists are now part of that place-making and experience evaluating process”  
(Urry and Larsen 2011: 60)

The following questions provide the basis of my inquiry in Chapter Three:

What might the attraction be for the recounting of one’s touristic encounters, the sharing of information, and the giving of cautionary advice to complete strangers on virtual platforms?

The internet has brought about the need for an online presence: how do carpet salesmen maintain the many guises of hospitality on a virtual stage? Are the same techniques sufficient, or is there a need to develop newer yet still recognizable representations?

## **1.2. Erving Goffman’s Symbolic Interactionism**

The first to coin the term symbolic interactionism was Herbert Blumer, who using the ideas of American philosopher George Herbert Mead, advanced an enduring sociological perspective that ended up bringing micro-level analysis to the fore in contrast to what was the-then mainstream, positivist and macro-level approach to understanding society (Carter and Fuller 2015: 1). Blumer defined symbolic interaction in the following way:

“The term ‘symbolic interaction’ refers, of course, to the peculiar and distinctive character of interaction as it takes place between human beings. The peculiarity consists in the fact that human beings interpret or ‘define’ each other’s actions instead of merely reacting to each other’s actions. Their ‘response’ is not made directly to the actions of one another but instead is based on the meaning which they attach to such actions” (Blumer 1969: 180).

Blumer's variant of symbolic interactionism, which is associated with the Chicago School, seeks to study interactions among people whereby individuals are conceived as active agents in the creation of their own social world(s) of meaning, and where one's notion of the self becomes figured and refigured through these very interactions. As the context for these interactions change over time and space, the projected image of the self thus gets revised as meanings attached to behaviors and speech acts so change along with the context. While it must be said that Erving Goffman's dramaturgical perspective doesn't always correspond to the core tenets of symbolic interactionism, i.e. whereby individuals are regarded as meaning-inferring/ world-making autonomous agents, his use of concepts like 'the actor', 'the performance' or 'the stage' as well as his attention to micro-level interaction is nevertheless deemed sufficient for him to be considered as a symbolic interactionist (for a detailed discussion of the different variants of symbolic interactionism, see Carter and Fuller 2015).

The following quote encapsulates the key insights of Goffman's symbolic interactionism by clearly demonstrating how his conception of the encounter coupled with dramaturgical metaphors allow for a close analysis of the ensuing sales process between a carpet salesman and a tourist, and the very key part that expectations play in the figuring of roles for the various actors:

“[...] it is important to note that in performing a role the individual must see to it that the impressions of him that are conveyed in the situations are compatible with role-appropriate personal qualities effectively imputed to him: a judge is supposed to be deliberate and sober; a pilot, in a cockpit, to be cool; a book-keeper to be accurate and neat in doing his work. These personal qualities, effectively imputed and effectively claimed, combine with a position's title, when there is one, to provide a basis of self-image for the incumbent and a basis for the image that his role others will have of him. A self, then, virtually awaits the individual entering a position; he need only conform to the pressures on him and he will find a *me* ready-made for him” (Goffman 1961: 77).

As Goffman posits, there are two sides to one's image-making: the incumbent *self* who performs in accordance with “role-appropriate personal qualities” and the “role other” (in this case a tourist) who confers those qualities or types in the first place to produce “a *me* ready-made” to which the *self* need only to conform to pass under a given “position's title” (in this case *as* a carpet salesman). Since Goffman perceives these roles as both “differentiated and interdependent” (1961: 76), the figure of the carpet salesman therefore



needs to be analyzed with regard to what are situated encounters, where each unique encounter acquires or is imbued with representational qualities. It is for this reason that studying the sales process from both angles, from that of the carpet salesman as well as the tourist, is critical to arriving at insights about the process of typification.

### **1.3. Figuring Typologies**

“Typification, perceiving the world and structuring it by means of categorical types, is evidently an essential and intrinsic aspect of the basic orientation of actors to their situation” (McKinney 1969: 1).

“Classification is arguably one of the most central and generic of all our conceptual exercises. It is the foundation not only for conceptualization, language, and speech, but also for mathematics, statistics, and data analysis in general. [...] It is almost the methodological equivalent of electricity — we use it every day, yet often consider it to be rather mysterious” (Bailey 1994: 1).

A typology, typification, or classification is, in the simplest way, a conceptual abstraction imposed upon the presupposed messiness of life. As the scholars above point out, they are essential to our daily living as we go about making sense of the world around us. Figuring typologies is important in that individuals frequently draw from what are readily available – circulating – typologies, or can themselves go about forming their very own short-hand typologies which are less exhaustive, much easier to form, and more flexible as sociocultural frames in navigating shared social experiences.

As sociocultural frames, typologies function by marking a point of difference from which an agent, a tourist in this case, can generate future touristic capital – a whole range of stories and touristic know-how concerning a given destination. Over time these frames accrue representational quality, thereby standing in for the typical, the traditional, or the exemplary with regard to what can be experienced. By serving as collections of readily available frames, they provide a conceptual scaffold to tourists in terms of what to expect and what to avoid in their encounters with carpet salesmen. What passes as touristic recreation becomes, in this sense, a way of thinking and sensing, a so-called touristic point of difference from which to go about experiencing future touristic encounters. The validity and legibility of these encounters are then propagated by accounts that either affirm or oppose frames in circulation.

My goal, once more, is not to *discover* an existing typology per say, in the sense that what I end up presenting is not a definitive figuring of carpet salesmen, but rather to chart and understand the circumstances under which both tourists and carpet salesmen alike resort to typification. In other words, my research seeks to address the following question: what might be the discursive procedures through which the figure of a carpet salesman — as someone who purportedly behaves, looks, talks, or simply interacts *as* one — is transformed into a pervasive trope that continues to get read, shared, and further replicated?

#### **1.4. Methodological Considerations**

In this thesis, I go about figuring a typology for carpet salesmen based on the one hand on fieldwork which includes interviews, conversations, as well as my own observations as a researcher, and on the other, on a qualitative content analysis of tourist reviews and user-contributed forum discussions. I chose to employ a mixed-methodology for several reasons. The most important one is that a mixed-methodology has the potential for allowing one to shift their vantage point from closer, as in when doing ethnography, to further away, as when employing more formal research methods. Since each methodology prefigures to an extent the researcher's involvement/ distance to their subject matter, having a combination of different methodologies can therefore yield many more insights all the while giving the researcher the opportunity to corroborate one's point of departure for arriving at such insights in the first place. Another key reason for why I decided to divide my research into two hinges upon the fact that the online data I just happen to come across was just too indispensable for the questions that I was seeking to answer. The reviews and the discussions provide readily available data concerning how tourists go about recounting their encounters with carpet salesmen, and how these accounts in turn are read, shared, and replicated by others so as to produce a prevailing typology for the figure of carpet salesmen. They also provide a window into the varied expectations of tourists vis-à-vis the sales process, as well as their motivations for posting about them online regardless of whether their accounts are deemed positive or negative.

To begin with the qualitative content analysis, my selection of posts from among the thousands that were available was based on an assessment of what I perceived to be the

most insightful and informative ones to analyze, where this assessment ended up involving an iterative process of going back and forth between one's given interpretive frame and the raw data. As for the thematic gatherings that make up the sub-sections (see table of contents), I was careful about not grouping posts and reviews by similarity alone, since as Bailey posits below, trivial dimensions are bound to produce trivial classifications:

“The lesson [...] should be obvious — a classification is no better than the dimensions or variables on which it is based. If you follow the rules of classification perfectly but classify on trivial dimensions, you will produce a trivial classification. As a case in point, a classification that they have four legs may produce a four-legged group consisting of a giraffe, a dining-room table, and a dancing couple. Is that what we really want?” (Bailey 1994: 2).

It is in that light that I tried to keep the range of selected themes and topics as wide as possible while still maintaining the cogency of the overarching narrative of my analysis. This effectively meant that rather than searching for a list of terms that I would have arbitrarily selected beforehand, I instead coded categories and terms derived directly from the raw text, with frequency of occurrence for instance becoming an important factor in my selection of posts to reproduce as examples within the bounds of this thesis.

A point to bear in mind throughout this exploration for the figure of the carpet salesman is that the *figure* is, as the noun suggests, a mere figuration or approximation at best, and most likely through aggregate or wide resonance. It is for that reason that *being* a carpet salesman ought not to be treated as a totalizing label, but rather one that only makes sense in the context of an encounter. It is only by closely attending to these encounters that I can then go on to assess how it is that certain accounts, in the way that they are discursively produced and propagated, eventually get imbued with or ascribed representational quality.

As for the fieldwork I conducted in Sultanahmet over several weeks, my research consisted in interviews with carpet salesmen, numerous conversations, as well as my own observations of the various junctures that make up the sales process. Since many salesmen were hesitant toward a more formal interview, I ended up prioritizing conversations whereby I would approach a salesman, inform them roughly about the scope of my research, and then go about inquiring into the intricacies of the sales process. My hanging around with carpet salesmen led at times to unintended focus groups where a number of

salesmen (and not just carpet salesmen) would join in on the conversation that was taking place. As for my positionality as the researcher, since I was upfront about my intentions on studying contemporary salesmen, only those salesmen who did want to talk ended up continuing the conversation, whereas others indicated their reluctance by either telling me that they were busy or through their visible discomfort at being asked about the interactions of carpet salesmen with tourists.

### **1.5. Chapter Breakdown**

The thesis is divided into two body chapters that build off one another, that is, by raising up the same questions albeit from the perspective of differing roles, one from that of the carpet salesman and the other from the tourist.

In Chapter Two, ‘Gauging Bodily Idioms and Performance from the Field’, I go about providing an analysis of the intricacies of the sales process by taking up the issue of how carpet salesmen themselves contribute to the process of typification in the way they are purported to speak, act, or behave. My analysis is based solely on information I was able to accrue from my fieldwork. The chapter opens up by staging the field, that is, the four distinct areas of Sultanahmet where carpet salesmen can be found. Here, I highlight the importance of the setting for the prevalence of different sales dynamics. I then move on to analyze the performance of carpet salesmen in their scripted or be it idiosyncratic interaction with tourists. I do this by breaking up the sales process into smaller vignettes which then reflect in detail the key junctures of any given encounter between a salesman and a tourist.

In Chapter Three, ‘Typification by Virtual Word-of-Mouth: A Qualitative Content Analysis of User-Contributed Posts on TripAdvisor’, I provide an analysis of tourist reviews and user-generated forum discussions from the online travelling website TripAdvisor. I further divide the chapter by separating my analysis of the Reviews Page and that of the TripAdvisor Forum, thereby highlighting the particular dynamic of each digital platform. I also employ the use of thematic gatherings to weave an overarching narrative for why tourists choose to post about their encounters, and how certain accounts get shared, read, and replicated to produce a prevailing or be it contested typology.

In Chapter Four, by way of conclusion, I provide a final analysis by returning to the key questions that I had set forth in the introduction, most specifically on the many guises of hospitality and their role in the founding of a figure of carpet salesmen, that is, as performed by carpet salesmen and discursively propagated by tourist through electronic word-of-mouth. I also consider future lines of enquiry with regard to both contemporary salesmen as well as the process of typification more broadly.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Gauging Bodily Idioms and Performances from the Field**

#### **2.1. Staging the Field**

Carpet salesman in Sultanahmet can be located in four distinct areas, namely the Grand Bazaar, Nuri Osmaniye Street, the alleyways that lead into the Sultanahmet Square, and the Arasta Bazaar. What differentiates carpet shops and their salesmen located in these four areas are a number of factors, most important of which are the size of the given carpet shop, its proximity/distance to major touristic drop off zones across Sultanahmet, and the given surroundings, both with respect to competition and the scale of business. While I offer an overview of each location, most of the insights in this section and in the thesis as a whole come from fieldwork I mostly conducted in and around the Sultanahmet Square as well as the Grand Bazaar, two distinct locations which serve as the quintessential backdrop for the figure of carpet salesmen.

##### **2.1.1. The Grand Bazaar**

The Grand Bazaar is a maze made up of numerous alleyways, all brightly lit, with seemingly endless row of shops, each selling something different ranging from ceramics to scarves, from touristy knick-knacks to carpets. In front of each shop and all along the alley, young men in their 20s and early 30s line up to greet tourists. Some converse amongst themselves; others simply sip away at their tea.

The carpet salesmen at the Grand Bazaar are enmeshed between other salesmen, mostly gift shops with the occasional exchange office conveniently situated here and there. They tend to dress quite casually, some fielding well-groomed beards and moustaches while others, especially the younger salesmen, sporting tight-fitting short-sleeved shirts that purposively expose their contoured muscular features. This stark difference in attire creates

an interesting dynamic where those who speak their respective language more fluently seem to prioritize their language skills whereas others choose to invest more in their outward appearance since first impressions matter dearly in an environment that affords no more than a few seconds to lure tourists/ customers into either entering their shop or finalizing a purchase right then and there.

The noisy, crowded, and narrow alleyways of the Grand Bazaar don't necessarily allow for the more intensive relationship-building that the carpet shops around the Sultanahmet Square tend to rely on. Instead, the sales pitches employed here focus more heavily on the management of first impressions, perseverance at engaging strolling tourists, as well as a degree of happenstance depending on the volume of tourists on any given day. Since most shops in the Grand Bazaar are small to medium sized, carpet salesmen can engage with at most three or four tourists at a time (or a group of tourists of that size) leading to a competitive atmosphere. The sales that take place in the alleyways are more about the quick fix, the quick match, and the quick buy. This contrasts with the painstaking relationship-building that is commonplace in carpet shops located elsewhere in Sultanahmet where there is more space and time as well as incentive to do so.

### **2.1.2. Nuri Osmaniye Street**

The handful of carpet shops dispersed along the Nuri Osmaniye Street feature large vitrines with huge and intricately designed carpets hanging from the ceilings. The displays are by no measure modest, and the salesmen who are charged with selling them tend to also be dressed up sporting high-end suits. This street, which resembles to a surprising degree İstiklal Street in Taksim, is located right in between the Grand Bazaar and the Sultanahmet Square. For someone heading to the Grand Bazaar from the Sultanahmet Square, there are basically two routes they can take: one requires walking along the narrow pavement that parallels the tramway which is almost always bustling with people, both tourists and locals, while the other involves a more pleasurable walk along the spacy Nuru Osmaniye Street which features high-end cafes and jewelry stores and is guarded from one end to the other by the shade of tall century-old trees. Given this, there are fewer but larger carpet shops interspersed all along the street, what some carpet salesmen have referred to as the *büyük*

*esnaf* (large, more established tradesmen), who tend to serve to a wealthier clientele and as such who do not necessarily depend on the incoming flow of tourists just as other, smaller carpet shops (the so-called *küçük esnaf*) naturally do with respect to their customer profile.

### **2.1.3. The Sultanahmet Square**

The Sultanahmet Square encompasses the large expanse between the Aya Sophia, the Sultanahmet Mosque, and the Basilica Cistern. The Square functions as a key drop-off zone given its proximity to the surrounding historic monuments, the tramway, and other amenities. There are numerous carpet shops littered along the alleyways and streets that lead into the Square, often interspersed among bookstores, travel agencies, small gift shops, hotels, exchanges offices, restaurants, and cafes. This contrasts with the Grand Bazaar where all carpets shops are huddled together in a single area with carpet salesmen potentially competing with another when the number of tourists is low.

Most carpet shops around the Sultanahmet Square are medium to large sized shops that can cater to larger groups of tourists all at once, thus making it feasible for shop owners to have several salesmen working concomitantly next to each other. Since the rents are as high as those in the Grand Bazaar, there is a lot of capital at stake for many of these shops. Yet, as several salesmen have told me, there is comparably less oversight of carpet shops located in the alleyways that lead into the Square than there is for those in the Grand Bazaar, which often require informal connections and recommendations to open up shop in the first place. In that respect, the carpet salesmen from the Square that I've talked to were keen to differentiate themselves not only from other carpet salesmen located elsewhere but from salesmen working in and around Sultanahmet as well. Put simply, there appears to be the semblance of fragmentation in the sociocultural and socioeconomic background of carpet salesmen in the Square more than the other three locations.

### **2.1.4. Arasta Bazaar**

The Arasta Bazaar, practically one long and spacy alleyway featuring shops on either side, is located down a narrow street off of the Sultanahmet Square. Despite being



known to have carpet shops, this has over the years however become more so a case of the past since there are no more than five or so carpet shops still in business. Many have been converted into spice stores, gift shops, cafes, or have been just left empty, especially so during off-season – that is, for most of the year except for late spring and the summer months. Based on my conversations with carpet salesmen as well as my own observations of several encounters, there doesn't appear to be a separate sales dynamic of note as compared for instance to the Grand Bazaar.

## **2.2. Figuring the Performance**

### **2.2.1. The Carpet Shop**

Carpet shops, with their exquisite window displays featuring rows of curled up carpets and kilims, serve as the prototypical setting for the figure of carpet salesmen. Though varying in size, they all come to function as the Goffmanian setting for the ensuing sales process between the salesman and the tourist, where the smell of wool coupled with carpets littered and hanging from one end to the next, provide the necessary, that is, the *right* context from which to set about performing *as* a carpet salesman. The décor of the carpet shop, beginning with the windowsills moving onto the entrance and from there finally to the showroom, emblematically situates the figure of the carpet salesman within and amongst the very fabric of carpets. It is in this respect that differences in the size of shops, their given location, the degree of ostentation in display, and the overall décor all work to differentiate one salesman from another in the eyes of tourists.

Perhaps the most important factor to take into consideration vis-à-vis the performance put on display by salesmen for tourists is the respective size of the carpet shop in question. Size matters since it correlates with having either a large showroom where several groups of tourists can be catered to all at once, or with having a small shop where the entrance doubles as a make-shift platform, often leaving individual tourists huddled up against the wall or in the corner. While showrooms are airy, accommodating, and open, the make-shift platform of small shops are in contrast stuffy, cramped, and overwhelming.

Whereas the former provide the salesman the needed time and space to found relationships with customers as well as to enact gradual trust-building measures so as to coax them into buying, in the latter, given their time and space constraints, salesmen tend to focus more on what I call the quick fix, quick match, and the quick buy, therefore leaving no time, as one salesman put it, “to check the temperature” of tourists and to act accordingly.

Another point to consider is the exterior of carpet shops be it the various words inscribed onto the window displays or the naming of the carpet shop itself. The most noticeable signs are the descriptive words used to mark and differentiate one shop from another. Some of the more popular signs include phrases like “hassle-free shopping”, “authentic”, “all sizes”, or “Turkish carpets.” Also important are the so-called “Excellency Certificates” as well as recommendations issued by either established travel guides or travel websites such as TripAdvisor. With respect to the naming of shops, they often feature a combination of the following words:

Art Gallery	Rug House	Rug Store	Heritage
Carpet Shop	Nomadic Carpets	Oriental Rugs	Magic Carpets

Some carpet shops may feature only the name of the shop owner, mostly if the owner is already known or is working with a partner traveling agency based on set commissions.

Since the tourism sector has incurred many boom and bust cycles in the last two decades, be it due to terrorism, wars and conflicts in neighboring countries, or periods of economic crisis, many carpet salesmen have seen it necessary to sell all kinds of touristy knick-knacks along the front of their shop, thereby gradually turning the carpet shop into a kind of hybrid carpet-gift shop. In addition to carpets and kilims, several of these shops now sell an array of goods ranging from textiles, jewelry, pottery, ceramics, towels, scarves, tiles, cushion covers, slippers, canes, lanterns etc. Since carpets are more expensive, cheaper touristy merchandise thus increasingly make up a larger share of a carpet salesman’s monthly income which in turn further encourages the selling of such merchandise as opposed to carpets. This is a crucial point since this very economic consideration ends up making it more difficult for tourists, as well as myself as the research, to clearly discern carpets shops from their now hybrid versions, thereby reducing

the respective correspondence between contemporary carpet salesmen and their circulating figure *as* carpet salesman.

### **2.2.2. Speech, Language, and the Lure**

While the motif, color, or size of a given carpet on display may indeed attract a customer to inquire further by compelling them to enter into the carpet shop, it is rather a combination of first impressions and a dose of sheer happenstance that ultimately allow for a sale to go through successfully. The qualities that make-up first impressions, as enumerated and confirmed by several salesmen, are one's language skills and level of fluency, the efficacy of sales hooks used for initial engagement, and one's physical appearance in the sense of both attire as well as their perceived allure as a young virulent man (more on this in the following sections).

Language skills are essential to establishing rapport, where the degree of a carpet salesman's fluency in the respective language of a given tourist, is taken as being determinative to his ensuing level of engagement. It is for this reason that carpet salesmen, as well as others who work in the tourism industries, are often able to converse and sell merchandise in more than half a dozen languages, English, German, Russian, and in the last decade, Arabic being the most prominent ones as speakers of these four languages make up for most of the arrivals. Since English is nevertheless universally understood, many salesmen begin the sales process with English but switch almost instantaneously to others so as to accurately establish the nationality of the given tourist – I was told that nationality mattered because certain sales pitches (in differing levels of ostentatious display, perseverance, or pricing) just work better with certain nationalities. Carpet salesmen have become so apt at this that they can discern the precise whereabouts of a given tourist, i.e. the home state of an American tourist or the difference in accent between someone British and Australian, from a mere few words. With regard to fluency, there is a noticeable difference between small carpet shops as compared to larger ones. While carpet salesmen in larger shops have more room and space to be more articulate and expressive in the way they speak, salesmen in small shops however, such as those in the Grand Bazaar, use language as just a tool for selling merchandise and so communicate more directly as

opposed to exerting personality in the way that one speaks. An illustrative scenario for this would be for a carpet salesman to inquire more deeply into the background of the given customer, such as their nationality, hometown, duration of stay, prior visits to Turkey etc., whereas a carpet salesman in a smaller carpet shop might be tempted to only ask about the customer's preferences and budget, thereby avoiding undue familiarity and the added effort it would take to engage with tourists on a more interpersonal level.

Here is a non-exhaustive list of sales hooks employed by carpet salesmen, some more typical than others, with which they try to engage or otherwise lure strolling tourists:

“Excuse me madam/ sir...”

“Can I help you?”

“Do you want to see the best carpet in the world?”

“Come inside please, no need to buy, just enjoy, Turkish hospitality”

“Free carpet show, authentic carpets all sizes, all colors, all regions.”

“Dowry pieces for best price.”

A list of keywords that some carpet salesmen pointed out as being effective hooks for one to employ as the sales process moves forward:

Fair price, best quality

Original Anatolian tribal pieces

Made in Kurdish village, East of Turkey

Dowry pieces woven by young girls over several months

Authentic hand-made double-knot Turkish carpets

Fixed price, hassle-free shopping

Mention of rewards or recommendations

Just as important as language, is the physical appearance of a salesman. Being dressed well and looking attractive can have the effect of raising the acceptable threshold for perseverance, especially so when persuading a strolling tourist to enter into one's shop or when in the process of negotiating over the final price of a given carpet. Youthfulness, that is, looking young (and not necessarily being young) serves in that respect as an added trump card in the sense that salesmen are taken to be more successful at garnering sympathy from older tourists – thereby further inducing them to follow through on the sale,

– as well as a more positive, or what some salesmen have called “friendly” reaction from female tourists in their attempts at coy flirting as part of their sales repertoire. As one young salesman noted, while he may indeed fail to end the bargaining process having achieved a sale, on those few occasions that a sale does go through smoothly and successfully, it is largely thanks to the kind of relationships found on the bases described above, that is, either by accruing sympathy from older tourists or by appearing to flirt with female customers. A point to note here is that this analysis assumes that carpet salesmen are straight, while it may very well be that the same gender dynamic in the form of coy flirting may also exist between non-heteronormative encounters. Yet since I haven’t personally observed or inquired specifically into that matter, I cannot speculate as to whether it exists or not. Another carpet salesman reaffirms the important of forming relationships by stating that a successful sale depends very much on a salesman’s understanding of the so-to-speak “psychology of each customer,” so as to react appropriately to their given personality, needs, and expectations. This psychologizing produces over time a form gestural economy that salesmen adopt to manage and direct the range of meanings that tourists supposedly read into their gestures. As one salesman attests, there is a great deal of “figuring out” involved in a salesman’s interaction with a given tourist, whereby he must find the right combination of gestures which will hopefully “please the customer”:

“You have to of course figure out the customer [...] some want [you] to be warm, and others to be serious. [...] Of course, you have to act according to the customer and not according to yourself. We behave in accordance with what pleases the customer.”

The interaction between carpet salesmen and tourists can be best described as a ‘high-contact sale’. Buying a carpet is different from buying a food item from a supermarket where you can go and pick it up yourself; that is, a tourist cannot venture into a carpet and start unrolling the carpets themselves, they will require the assistance and the mediation of the carpet salesmen. The most poignant example of this is the highly interactive back and forth dialogue between the two parties whereby the salesman goes fishing for several points of information, such as nationality, budget, duration of visit, personality, age etc., from the very initial moments of the sales process. As one carpet salesman put it:

“[In order] for them to not say no, you have to adduce whether they have pets; for which room they are [thinking of] buying. Otherwise, the carpet will backfire (*halı ters teper*).”

That is why the salesman must ask questions to “dig in” and “unearth” to the latent preferences and the respective budget of each given customer. They must, in other words, develop “a comprehensive understanding of their customers” (Kivisto and Pittman 2007: 277) so that the tourist is not given the slightest chance to come up with an excuse to not buy.

As the sales process often lasts for several hours, it thereby requires a considerable degree of impression management or what some carpet salesmen have referred to as a ‘carpet composition’. It basically involves a whole range of techniques, from narrativizing to establishing rapport and from persuading to giving discounts, whereby the salesman creates a holistic impression in the mind of the customer for each given carpet. This impression becomes the basis on which to ground the final price and thus the prospect of a successful sale.

With respect to the bargaining process, several carpet salesmen have told me that tourists are most hesitant when they’re just about to finalize a purchase. It is during these final moments that many pull out from buying altogether or request more time for further deliberation. This is precisely the moment at which the skills of a carpet salesman come into play, ranging from delivery to gesturing, from comic timing to what one salesman called “the smile psychology” (*gülme psikolojisi*). Many of the skills that make the this sales repertoire can be taken under Hochschild’s notion of emotional labour as performed by flight attendants (1983: 95-96). While flight attendants are tasked with following strict manuals about how to compose oneself, such as smiling and flirting with customers, carpet salesmen have similarly their many years of experience – a combination of trial and error, and the imitation of more experienced salesmen – to rely on. In that way, a carpet composition can be thought of as the end-performance of a repertoire of successful/effective scripts and sales pitches that a salesman has built-up over the years through interacting with hundreds if not thousands of customers. Salesmen might wish to come across as passionate, knowledgeable, helpful, sincere, patient, or be it flirtatious given the particular situation. Their performance *as* carpet salesmen thus entails working in and

against the latent expectations of tourists, that is, as best adduced through the high-contact sale at the beginning of the encounter all the way to the final carpet composition.

### **2.2.3. *Tezgah* and Its Variants**

*Tezgah*, literally meaning workbench or counter, is a word that takes on many connotations especially in the context of salesmen and their merchandise. For instance, “*binbir tezgah*”, a common expression with flexible everyday usage, can be loosely translated as referring to those who arrive at their goals by engaging in multifarious sales pitches, that is, in potentially backhand, non-transparent ways. Hence, it is often used in the everyday jargon of carpet salesmen as an all-encompassing slang to refer to a sale or sales pitch albeit with different nuances depending on the given situation and the verb with which it is used. These nuances can be summarized as follows: to perform a sale (*tezgah yapmak*), to setup a sale (*tezgah atmak*), to enter into a sale (*tezgaha girmek*), to engage in a straightforward sale (*diüz tezgah*), and its opposite, to engage in a reverse sale (*ters tezgah*). While the first three are employed interchangeably so as to express a salesman’s intent to engage with a customer by bringing into play their sales persona, the latter two however refer to a much more sophisticated sales tactic that requires an assessment of a given tourist based on their manifest preferences as well as budget.

Among the different types of tourists, be it in terms of their nationality, age, gender, attitude, expectation, or mood, there is one type – as identified by carpet salesmen themselves – who upon entering a carpet shop will expressly declare their wish to buy a carpet of a particular type, color, or size, effectively impinging upon the salesman’s assumed role in the sales process. With regard to encounters recounted to me by salesmen as well as those that I have witnessed in person, these types of customers often come with pre-conceptions toward both the salesman and the sales process as a whole. They believe that by declaring their deep-felt averseness toward entering into the sales process, they will somehow avoid what they already presuppose to be an insidious setup. It is in these types of situations that carpet salesmen react by abandoning what they refer to as a ‘straightforward sale’, and opt instead for a ‘reverse sale’ which entails the employment of psychologically manipulative cons that require a greater deal of skill as compared to the

more standard sales pitches. At this moment, the novice salesman is expected to *pass on* the customer to another, more experienced salesman who will attempt to coax the seemingly entrenched customer by actually beginning to praise them for their apparent astuteness at knowing what they want. In the everyday jargon of carpet salesmen, this highly adaptive sales pitch is spoken of in terms acquiescing to the customer's so-to-speak waterway ("*adamin suyundan gitmek*"), effectively meaning that the salesman begins the pitch by first mirroring and reaffirming the customer's predisposed attitude and biases so as to be able to establish some ground for rapport. And it is in doing so that the carpet salesman regains relative control over the sales process from which point on he will exploit, as best he can, to finalize the ensuing bargaining process with a purchase or two.

The calculative semblance of sincerity, that is, the wide-ranging acts of hospitableness read either as generosity or reciprocity, are essential to a successful *tezgah* in all its variants. What these variants come to reveal, given their use in the everyday jargon of carpet salesmen, is that hospitality assumes many guises and as such ought not to be treated as something merely given and received – in the sense of a transaction – but rather as part of a series of acts – together as a performance – that is purposively performed with the end goal of getting the customer to buy. The switch between the so-called straightforward and the reverse sale in particular attests to the calculative and be it scripted nature of the sales process. The carpet salesman, hardened by numerous encounters, is well aware of what might work given the ensuing junctures. Since their acts, behaviors, and motivations are encoded (and *hopefully* decoded) as hospitality, that is, as 'Turkish hospitality', they are thus in place to play around with the variants of *tezgah*, adapting to each and every encounter accordingly. The common usage of the term *tezgah* attests to what might unite carpet salesmen *as* carpet salesmen in effect by hinting at a congruence in sales pitches and strategies, those widely employed and discursively referenced on a daily basis, for ultimately coaxing or manipulating the customer into making a purchase.

#### **2.2.4. The Carpet Show**

Carpet shows or carpet demonstrations are the epitome of the scripted sales process and are as such the most emblematic dimension as figured and propagated in the accounts



of tourists. They are often pre-organized for tour groups on a commission basis, and often take place in medium to large-sized showrooms. It basically refers to the displaying of carpets to a group of tourists/ customers with the carpet salesman acting as the omniscient narrator who provides information about the history and provenance of each carpet, the state of affairs of carpetology in Turkey, and most importantly, the motivations for buying expensive carpets in the first place.

In figuring the carpet show as a more scripted version of an encounter, there are effectively three roles to be filled: the carpet salesman, the audience, and the helpers who are called *yancı* ([those] on the side) and are often novice salesmen or apprentices in training. The role of the salesman involves performing as would a stand-up comedian who uses figurative gestures, intonations in his voice, and an overall self-assured composure to charm the audience. Based on the few demonstrations I had the chance to witness, as well as from the many recorded and posted online, the salesman goes about regurgitating in an expressive, articulate, and story-teller manner the studied and scripted narrative he or his team of salesmen have woven, with the end goal of securing not just one but several purchases. His role is choreographed with respect to several years or even decades of experience in order to flatten out and in doing so maximize the effectiveness of his delivery. The *yancı*'s role, on the other hand, is quite simply the laying out of carpets in gesturally expressive manners and in tandem with the commands of the salesman. They are in that sense a conduit for the narrative. As for the audience for whom the carpet show is most probably a once-in-a-lifetime experience, their role is to react to the narrative either in chatter, laughter, or exclamation. They mimic in that sense the audiences of Ancient Greek amphitheaters, signaling off to the performers their current state of mind, to which the performers will then adapt accordingly.

The so-called and much typified 'flying carpet' demonstration is illustrative of some of the ways in which carpet salesmen try to establish rapport and ultimately coax their audiences into making a purchase. The point of this demonstration is to use the directionality of the light to change the apparent color of the carpet on display (mostly silk carpets). If the carpet in question is a large one, then two *yancı* pick it up and turn it around by 180 degrees, and if it's a smaller one either the salesman himself or one of the *yancı* will actually throw the carpet sideways up into the air so that it will land in the opposite

direction to its original position. As the direction of the light shining upon the fine threads changes, the visual appearance of the carpet so seemingly shifts from pale to a darker hue.

### **2.2.5. Weaving ‘Carpet Narratives’ That Sell**

Carpets are not cheap touristic commodities that are bought by virtue of their being so. They instead come wrapped in various narrative plots – what I have called ‘carpet narratives’ – which aim to compel the customer to make a purchase and at the time same to also justify in their mind the spending of big bucks. As such, carpet narratives form a critical part of the salesman’s so-called ‘carpet composition’. What follows is an exposition of some of the more widely employed narrative plots, as I have adduced from several interviews and conversations where I have asked carpet salesmen to talk about what they thought was the significance of the work they do, especially in relation to their interactions with tourists as locals.

Perhaps the only unanimously referenced carpet narrative is the one that tries to exalt the supposed value of carpets by framing them as exquisite cultural artefacts. As Stronza points out, locals of any given touristic destination will often try to “consciously capitalize on tourist’s hope to find meaning and cultural significance in everything they see” (2001: 273). Carpet salesmen, as de facto locals in this encounter between locals and non-locals, are thus in position to strenuously underline the artisanal aspect of carpets so as to be able to demand what they think is a fair price, given both the workmanship and the various stylistic choices with respect to motifs or color employed in any given carpet. As the following carpet salesman implies in an almost nonchalant way, this particular narrative has become part and parcel of the scripted performance put on display by salesmen for tourists and is frequently referenced at key junctures of the sales process:

“We tell them, look, this is specially handcrafted [*el emeği göz nuru*] of madder’s dyer, this and that [et cetera]; this motif; from this place, from Central Anatolia for instance. We then tell them [that] we have such a history spanning two thousand, three thousand years... and they are delighted by this. We [somehow] convince them and make the sale. Of course, they are interested in these kinds of things.”

The broken-up sentence structure with which he recounts this seemingly banal yet well-rehearsed narrative attests to how carpet salesmen themselves deliberately work to figure their merchandise and in that respect, themselves as carpet salesmen vis-à-vis tourists, or better, potential customers. In the following snippet, the salesman makes the important point that not every tourist is or automatically becomes a customer by virtue of their having entered a carpet shop, and thus stresses the role of narrativizing in achieving a successful sale:

“Now you will say brother (*abi*), for instance, the customer arrives and immediately demands [to buy] a carpet. No, I mean there are those who surely do but most of all we tell our history. We came from there, this is what happened, this and that, and the tourist wants to hear [this]. Of course, [this is a] Turkish carpet after all. They know that Turkish carpets are famous in Turkey. They come with that in mind and of course we of course tell them [that].”

This time, the salesman openly discloses that the reason for his recounting of such a historically and by that, culturally framed narrative is precisely because tourists both expect and also enjoy listening to them. And it is this acute observation about the motivations of tourists that carpet salesmen hope to capitalize upon so as to extract the maximum during the bargaining process. As one experienced carpet salesman exclaimed during a carpet show, “all are symbols, all have meanings, all have stories,” reinforcing once more the notion that carpets are not just carpets, and that they come enwrapped in narratives which salesmen tell to both impress and inform, or as implied by several of them, to increase the value of their merchandise.

With respect to the making of high quality carpets, salesmen inform and frequently remind that they are not the end-product of a continuous labour, but that they rather change hands several times and often take a long time to be fully completed, anywhere from eight months to a year and a half, since the weaver can only focus on weaving three to four hours a day given how intricate and exhaustive carpet-weaving really is, especially in terms of eye concentration. This point, though it may be true and somewhat appreciative on the part of the salesman of the human labour that goes into making such highly prized items, is nevertheless quite frequently utilized as a narrative to hike up the price of carpets all across the board, regardless of whether they are in fact of high quality or are instead cheap, machine-made, mercerized (processed cotton that shines brighter as though it were silk), or

imported knock-offs. The catch phrase of this particular carpet narrative can be summarized, in one salesman's words, as being "works of culture and leisure" as opposed to "products of supply and demand."

In addition to the size, the age, the color scheme, the type of dye, the material, and the number of knots, what perhaps matters more in the composition of a given carpet are the stories recounted by salesmen about the particular provenance of each and every one of them. As the following snippet indicates, just as salesmen enjoy recounting these stories, so do tourists similarly enjoy acquiring if not collecting them:

"We draw both pleasure and joy in telling [these] to tourists, and also, of course, earn money [at the same time]. But the main point in our telling these to tourists is that they listen to us with fascination."

It is in that way that the telling of the provenance of each and every carpet functions as a carpet narrative, urging on tourists to buy, so that they might thereby add to their own cultural and material know-how, once again justifying in their mind the spending of big bucks. If not as stories, carpet salesmen also go persuading tourists to buy by urging them "to invest" in a carpet, no matter how expensive it may be, since they can think of their newly purchased carpets "as though they were a souvenir or legacy left from you to them [your grandchildren]" where carpets naturally gain in value with every passing year.

Another widely employed carpet narrative pertains to how carpets are viewed by carpet salesmen and, according to them, supposedly by tourists as being somehow indicative of Turkey. As culturally distinct and nationally iconic objects, carpets are conferred with a degree of representativeness, and it is in using this narrative line that carpet salesmen try to coax the hesitant tourist into buying what will later serve them as not *merely* a souvenir but more importantly as the concrete proof of their having travelled to Turkey:

"Imagine for instance that you return back to America, won't anybody ask you what you drank, what you ate [...] what you bought from Turkey. And you will say that you bought carpets from Turkey, from the land of carpets. I mean, there's no catch (*esprisi yok*) to saying you bought a shawl, yet when you say I bought a carpet it means that you have been to Turkey."

As the salesman states in a humorous way, the presumed "catch" in buying a carpet from the tourist's perspective is that it serves as concrete proof for the many stories that they

have supposedly acquired during their stay in Turkey. In that way, a tourist is *ought* to be able to say that they ate kebab, drank ayran, and last but not least, bought an authentic Turkish carpet. The “catch” from the perspective of the carpet salesman, however, is that tourists must be made to feel obliged to make a purchase. It is in this sense that carpet narratives, sourced from various angles, work to entrap the customer in the very relationality of the sales process where the ultimate end is for the sale to go through successfully, and if possible, with the customer feeling justified and having no regrets.

### **2.2.6. *Hanut* and the Commission Chain**

*Hanut* is an Armenian word that stands for store. In the everyday jargon of carpet salesmen, however, it refers to the luring of tourists to carpet shops in return for a commission. Since this practice has existed for at least a few decades, if not more, it has become part of the unofficial commission chain that also includes independent guides as well as travelling agencies who pre-commit to bringing tourists to certain stores. Tourists themselves refer to these people either as scouts/ runners/ hawkers, or simply as carpet salesmen, being unable to differentiate between the two. This is a key point for the circulating figure of the carpet salesmen since this figure is quite often enmeshed in the figure of those who engage in *hanut*, thus requiring salesmen to take the onus of when this practice descends into intense haggling and pressuring of strolling tourists.

Carpet salesmen, and shop owners in particular, feel pressured to acquiesce to the demands of these scouts since not doing so might end up jeopardizing their business by leading to too few or no customers at all. Yet, doing so also means that the number of commissions handed out, that is, to various middle-men who facilitate this pre-sales process of finding customers, and often before any purchases have even taken place, ends up impacting the final price of not only carpets but of all merchandise sold via commission.

People who earn a living from *hanut* tend to be young men, dressed-up, speak several languages fluently enough, and be above average – if not gifted – at persuading total strangers on the street. One of these scouts described the work that they do as “chin labour” (“*çene işi meslek*”), implying that there’s a particular talk to talk by which to engage and successfully lure tourists. Here is a list of pick-up lines, engagement tactics, as

well as what one might call ‘scout rhetoric’ that I have heard being actively used to engage and lure tourists:

“Hello my friend, how are you?”

If shrugged off, the scout exclaims, “Am I dangerous?”

“Come let me tell you about...” – insert restaurant, iconic monument, or shop name  
Offering a free-tour, but passes a designated shop along the way

“Do you want to buy this mosque? You don’t have to buy, just look.”

“Can I help you with anything?”

Since *hanut* is essentially unregulated, meaning anyone with little to no experience can try their hand at luring tourists, it often leads to intense hassling on the streets due to competition between several scouts over what they perceive to be a scarcity of tourists. It has also come to burden carpet salesmen instead of being a boon by creating unofficial commission chains which become too taxing especially for the smaller shops around the Sultanahmet Square who not rely on a steady flow of tourists but who also at the same time pay extortionate rates of rent for being so close to the historic monuments in the first place. The municipality has therefore decided to restrict *hanut* by banning it from certain areas and by fining those who engage in it. Yet, several carpet salesmen told me that the practice still continues, for better or worse.

### **2.2.7. When Tourists Are “Done Wrong By”**

As I went about exploring the intricacies of the sales process, one of the most pertinent issues that needed addressing was the issue of scams and all the instances of hospitality gone awry for which the figure of the carpet salesman seemed notorious. Having put this question to several salesmen, the near unanimity with which they responded was quite startling in that almost all of them put the onus of these negative experiences, if they are indeed ‘true’, on tourists themselves. The following are a selection of comments that show the range of positions vis-à-vis the issue of tourists being scammed:

“It’s [due] to tourists’ own stupidity. [You] cannot trick them so easily. You have to settle.”

“We are tradesmen [*esnaf*], you cannot scam; you have a lot to lose.”

While some salesmen deny there being widespread scamming altogether by indicating the high stakes involved for those who do engage in it, that is, their livelihood as carpet salesmen, others point toward how tourists themselves actively take steps to avoid falling into cons, thereby requiring carpet salesmen to act in accordance with the varied desires and expectations of the customer so that they will “believe” you:

“A straightforward sale won’t work; you have to talk and communicate. Otherwise the tourist won’t believe [you] anyway. You have to know the language, be sympathetic, and then [there’s] the price.”

Another group of salesmen, though fewer in number, do admit to tourists being so-to-speak “done wrong by,” but nevertheless differentiates between professional carpet salesmen who have been in the business for years and those who only “pose” as such despite their lack of experience, training, or credible knowledge about carpets in the first place. Among a range of views, one salesman posits for instance that those who do scam unsuspecting tourists, while there being not many, do it for profit motive and to make what they presumably consider to be “easy money”:

“Amateurs, bent on money and full of lies who operate on hearsay information [...] [there are] individuals, who only two years ago had been selling pizza and have now entered into business to make easy money by posing as carpet salesmen.”

Another salesman, while admitting to there being as he calls them “shrewd, crafty people” (*kasaba kurnazi*) who deliberately prey on tourists using their charm and language skills, insists that it is nevertheless tourists who allow for it to go on:

“What can you do, these people speak six seven languages. No point going to the tourist. I mean if you go to the customer and say, “look, there’s something wrong here, this man is trying to trick you,” even if you say this the customer won’t believe you and instead believe him [...] We warn the tourist but the man is wishful (*lades diyor*), goes ahead and buys. You are honest, want to do honest work yet the man still buys [from him]. [...] You help them you’re guilty, you don’t help them you’re guilty. [...] you know, these are shrewd, crafty people [...] the damp burns along with the dry (*kurunun yanında yaş da yanıyor*).”

This carpet salesman expresses his deep disgruntlement toward the issue by stating that no matter how hard he tries the tourist, who is by now seduced by the multi-lingual seller, will still continue on with the purchase. Yet, when it goes horribly wrong, it is the image of carpet salesmen as a whole that gets blamed for it. He continues on by bemoaning that

despite his intentions of doing “honest work,” his image nevertheless burns along with those of others due to the tourist’s wishful stance.

### 2.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, I sought to arrive at insights regarding how carpet salesmen themselves contribute to the process of typification. To that end, I conducted interviews, had numerous conversations, and gathered first hand observations of the sales process in action. As I did not wish to ethnographize my own encounters with carpet salesmen, I instead chose to provide brief vignettes into key pillars that come to make up the figure of the carpet salesman, that is, the carpet shop, the high-contact sale, the role of language in the luring of tourists, the *tezgah* and its variants, the practice of hanut, the employment of carpet narratives, and finally, their stance regarding scams. Throughout the chapter, my goal has been to break down encounters between salesmen and tourists so as to uncover what I hoped would be apparent congruencies in the way that carpet salesmen perform for tourists, as well as in the conscious choices they make *as* carpet salesmen especially with respect to the “styles of bodily idiom and self-presentation” (Urry and Larsen 2011: 192) they often assume and switch between in order to better coax or manipulate the given customer to make a purchase. The context of commercialized hospitality, wherein profit-making is regarded as an ulterior motive to be hidden, becomes key to understanding how carpet narratives, for instance, are carefully planted throughout the junctures of the sales process so as to not only achieve a successful sale but to also justify it in the mind of the customer, thus revealing the degree of story-telling and impression management in which all carpet salesmen engage in any given sale. The performance and reception of hospitality, as such, has shown to take on many guises, be they scripted or idiosyncratic, and it is these shifting guises that in the end form the basis on which tourists go on to discursively produce and reproduce, as I elucidate in the following chapter, a prevailing figure for carpet salesmen.



## Chapter Three

### Typification by Virtual Word-of-Mouth: A Qualitative Content Analysis of User-Contributed Posts on TripAdvisor

#### 3.1. The TripAdvisor Reviews Page

There are close to a hundred user-contributed headings and several hundred posts under each heading. Each heading stands for a specific carpet shop in Sultanahmet. A reviewer can create a heading with an initial post, which opens it up to posts by other reviewers. The length of each post varies, ranging from a mere few lines to about a page and half. Each review is submitted with prior knowledge of previous reviews thereby enabling the possibility of there being *agreements* in reviews – posts that resemble one another in both content and form, – the continued use of often similar spelling, especially of the names of particular salesmen that continuously get misspelled, and discernible shifts to people’s overall carpet buying experience from one month/ year to the next. One can also find user-contributed photos of the carpet shop, the shop owner, and if applicable, the particular salesman with whom the reviewer interacted.

What ensues is an analysis of overarching themes as they pertain to the reviewer’s most basic expectations from hospitality, most notably, with regard to ‘Turkish Hospitality’ as it is displayed and performed for tourists by carpet salesmen. I make the argument that these reviews hint at a figurative cycle, where the question of “whom to trust” sets about a chain of guises which in the end produce an electronic word-of-mouth reputation for the given carpet salesman, be it negative or positive.

Occasional and minimal grammar mistakes have been corrected to ensure a smoother reading, while those pertinent to the way in which the reviewer writes (as in their English proficiency or word choice) have been left untouched. All names and pseudonyms, both of the reviewers and those of the particular salesmen referred to in the reviews, have also been left untouched.

### 3.1.1. Hospitality as Knowledge Differential and the *Guise of Trust*

Among the many themes that get repeatedly brought up with regard to each tourist's disparate encounter(s) with carpet salesmen, perhaps the most pertinent one is the existence of a stark knowledge differential between the salesman on the one hand, who given his many years as a salesman is deemed to have a natural, if not unfair edge in the pricing and the selling of his merchandise, and the tourist on the other (referred to as the customer) for whom the whole process of selecting, negotiating, and ultimately purchasing a carpet is viewed as a once-in-a-life-time event. Alarming, a tourist is presumed unable to differentiate between carpets manufactured in Turkey – the so-called 'authentic' Turkish carpets produced in various regions across Anatolia – from those imported from China or Afghanistan where carpets are mass-produced according to replicated designs with lower quality. Tourists thus find themselves at the mercy of the good will of a carpet salesman who might at any instance wish to capitalize on such an asymmetry of information. The question then becomes one of "whom to trust?" It is in this light that hospitality, as adduced by various tourists in their reviews, subsumes the *guise of trust*:

Andrew H – November, 2014

"As one of the other sellers pointed out, you'll never know as much as the carpet sellers in Istanbul so it's all about developing a relationship with person in the store you choose, estimating their integrity and taking the plunge."

Dave4242 – April, 2016

"Bottom line is trust and while I probably won't ever know if I got a good deal it sure felt like it."

As both Andrew H and Dave4242 acknowledge, while a tourist has the final say in their choice of carpet shop, the stark knowledge differential between sellers and buyers can nevertheless not be avoided, leaving the tourist with no option but to "take the plunge" by forming a relationship with the given salesman. Though there is no final guarantee that the "deal" will be a "good one", the semblance of integrity and trust are nevertheless sufficient for the purchase to go through, at least on the part of the customer.

Yet, as the following review by John R amusingly reveals, the *guise of trust* can and often is utilized as a sales pitch in its own right through which a carpet salesman tries to

create links of obligation and indebtedness, thereby setting up emotional primers which he will most likely exploit as the sale process moves forward:

John R – June, 2015

“The best piece of advice I got was from a second generation leather shop owner at grand bizarre. He said "I am a Turkish man and I can tell you all Turkish men are liars, trust no one," a variation on a classic paradox but his words came back to me many times over my 5 day journey.

The sales process is all about using the information asymmetry to extract maximum margin and is called haggling. Step one is rapport and indebtedness "where are you from... I have a brother who lives in ...come come let me give you a tea..." to create a need for reciprocity and it is a custom. Then comes the carpets starting with the best the ones better and bigger than you originally asked for. They will watch you very carefully as they tell you the prices and this continues until they can see you are considering it. Now they know your budget and upper limit. The cascade of carpets continues and of course you become overwhelmed.”

Besides the foretelling advice of *not* to trust any salesman, since “all Turkish men are liars” and as such will undoubtedly use anything in their sales repertoire to coax the customer into buying, what is perhaps even more striking is how John R notices himself being “carefully” watched by the carpet salesmen, who are deemed to be sussing out vital information regarding the budget of their customer, and how upon noticing he returns the very same watchful gaze to the point of imitation. Of course, this moment of apparent mutual gaze, where the guise of trust is revealed to be a thin veil hiding what seems for John R to be the salesman’s ulterior motive of making a profit at his expense, is decisively cut short as John R soon admits to becoming “overwhelmed” by the sheer performance of hospitality put on display.

### **3.1.2. Hospitality as Obligation and Its Extent**

As the various trust-building measures take force, so increases the links of obligation which prime and *trap* the customer within the sales pitch that the salesman is in the process of acting out. Hospitality, in this new guise, that is, ‘Turkish Hospitality’, represents for many reviewers ‘the return-no return point’ after which tourists, as they themselves go on to elucidate, begin to feel increasingly obliged and thereby entrapped by ensuing acts of hospitableness for which they suspect they will later pay:

Jstub – August, 2016

“...be advised that if you enter the showroom there is a very good chance you will buy a rug. You know nothing and they know everything. Good luck. The tea might not be free. [...] I still experience tinges of guilt realizing that I drank their tea, ate their kebobs... [...] In my defense I repeatedly tried to pay for what I was given. Of course I was not allowed to pay for their Turkish hospitality.”

Don C – March, 2015

“Several cups of tea, moving off to another location, provided us with lunch (which was meant to be our getaway), and then the next thing you know we are buying a carpet that we didn't really intend to buy. I have nobody to blame but ourselves, however, here we are hours later and this has soured our day, and rather than be excited we are scratching our heads wondering how it all happened. Lunch was provided and we were told we could just pay for it if we wanted to, no harm no foul. Of course the more hospitality you take, the more you are falling into the trap.”

Jstub underlines once again the stark knowledge differential that many reviewers believe to be the case when purchasing a carpet. He also reveals that while the tea and kebabs on offer, that is to say free of charge, may at first seem like a genuine act of hospitality, might in hindsight not turn out to be as unconditional and “free” as they were made out to be by the unsuspecting tourist. The “tinges of guilt” that Jstub confessedly feels are illustrative of the emotional primers that carpet salesmen exploit through guilt-tripping. Though the customer may “try to pay” for an act of hospitality, their offer to do so will most likely be refused under the guise of so-called Turkish Hospitality. As Don C proclaims, he was simply too overwhelmed by the series of acts of hospitality, be it the tea or the free lunch, that he ended up buying a carpet which he “didn’t really intend to buy,” left still “wondering how it all happened”. A similar account of being carried away by salesmen, or be it scouts whose job it is to lure customers right up to the doorstep of the carpet shop, reveals how the semblance of what passes as Turkish Hospitality effectively entraps unsuspecting tourists to the point of purchasing a carpet:

Aoflex – August, 2014

“[...] found myself talking to some Turkish guy named Raf near Hagia Sophia who wanted to practice English. He said he was off of work and wanted to show around town—the term 'Turkish hospitality' kept coming out of his mouth. I felt safe in Istanbul up until then and I didn't have anything left to do that night, so I went for a walk with Raf. The next thing I know we're walking into a store, sitting on a couch, and being served apple tea. Absolutely no

mention of carpets, or rugs, or business had been made, only Turkish hospitality.”

The extent of such hospitality, as Bret G attests with respect to her encounter, can quite literally surpass reasonable expectations of tea, coffee, and perhaps of desert, to further include private tours and personal drivers – all seemingly for no charge. Moreover, though the purchase may have taken place and both the customer and the carpet salesman be satisfied with the resulting sale that has just taken place, that does not however mean that more cannot be purchased by the same customer, and it is with such premonition that salesmen maintain the guise of hospitality till even after the initial purchase:

Bret G – February, 2015

“Erol was polite, professional, friendly, and knowledgable. And don't forget that famous Turkish hospitality & tea. And Turkish delight. And coffee. And baklava. And more tea. We chatted about home, family, travels, and other stuff.

As we were leaving he said that he would be honored if we returned at 1000 the next morning so his driver could take us on a tour. The next morning we traveled to places we'd never seen and enjoyed about 3 hours of wonderful learning. Upon our return to El Rincon, the driver mentioned that Erol would like to share a beverage or a meal with us. Oh, sure. We spent a couple more hours with him, eating wonderful food (we are vegetarians and he had no problem filling our bellies!) drinking tea, and looking at more rugs. Yeah, we bought one more rug. Erol also asked us to accept our choice of a beautifully embroidered bedspread/wall hanging, and a couple bags of tea - as his gift.”

Despite a sense of satisfaction and of having no regrets, another reviewer, Gstevens, remains guarded all the same about the various sales pitches that pass under the guise of hospitality, and further stresses how it might at times “get out of hand” when salesmen simply try to force the purchase:

Gstevens14 – August, 2015

“All in all it was a very enjoyable 2 hours spent mainly exchanging stories, and now that we're home and have our carpet sitting in our living room, we are more than happy with our purchase and experience. However, I can easily see how the ‘hospitality’ could get out of hand as they were less than keen to allow us to simply walk away.”

### 3.1.3. Hospitality Gone Awry

When the guise of trust is taken as yet another pretext for applying undue pressure on the customer to buy – that is, when hospitality gets out of hand, – the chance of these encounters going awry so increases as the following reviewers distressingly attest:

Traveller111111 – October, 2014

“But aggressively greedy businessmen as well! They will emphasize ‘hospitality’, calling you brother/sister, start the conversation with where are you from, to which they may respond, “Yes, I am going to (City in your Country) for a carpet exhibition”, hospitality of non-stop Turkish tea, coffee, cigarettes, and food.

“They are true con-artists and put massive amount of pressure on you making you feel like a distinguish[ed] guest, putting numerous employees in laborious work of display, turn, roll down, roll up carpets. Within half an hour they will have displayed nearly 100 carpets!!”

Not only does Traveller111111 denounce the sales tactics he believes all carpet salesmen employ, such as the non-stop serving of beverages, food, and cigarettes and their attempts at interpellating buying customers as members of their family, such as “brother or sister”, but he also accuses them of behaving like true con-artists, whose only desire is to capitalize upon ostentatious displays of hospitality so as to persuade the customer to buy. Yet, another reviewer points to a different tactic which involves what he calls “the slow squeeze,” one where ostentation gives way to the careful and subtle manipulation of group psychology:

Percyvakil – September, 2015

“We were told there was no compulsion to buy, just look etc. the tactic in these sort of places is 'the slow squeeze' they pick a weak link in the group and slowly pile on the pressure. Here too, that's what happened. They picked out a Korean couple and cornered them into liking a carpet, admitting it was nice and started pressurizing them to buy it. The more they tried to wriggle out the more the flattery, the bargaining, the negotiation and pressure to buy.”

As Percyvakil explains, the salesman pick outs individuals or be it couples who he thinks will be the most impressionable among the group of tourists, that is to say, who will supposedly show the least resistance to attempts at priming. Once again, hospitality subsumes a series of guises in the form of flattery, bargaining, negotiation, and pressure, where each semblance is purposively performed, be it scripted or improvised, with profit motive as the primary driver of the sales process. The following reviewer illustrates this

more clearly as deception, lies, and further attempts at guilt-tripping are all employed by a salesman in order to persuade the already regretful customer that a refund is simply not possible since that *might* cause issues for him supposedly with the government ending with a possible suspension of his license, and by that, the loss of his job:

Annacecilia1 – July, 2016

“I said also that I couldn't buy a carpet, because I didn't have any money, but Selahattin said, but you can buy by credit card if you don't have any cash on you. Then I was told to narrow down the carpets and I ended up with two. I felt so uncomfortable and absolutely run over and completely trapped. I've never experienced anyone that was so pushy in my life. Also I did try to give back the carpets and getting my money back, but that was not possible, because I did the purchase and it was settled. Selahattin then said he would be getting problems with the government, because they had already taken their percent of the purchase, and in order to get my money back, the carpets must have been fake etc. He also would have to pay the government a fine and he would lose his license and would never be able to work as a carpet salesman.”

Annacecilia1 describes the sales process, like several other reviewers mentioned earlier, as having made her feel “completely trapped” and “absolutely run over” and that her only way out as she saw it was to agree to buy, leaving her to dwell not only on the financial but the psychological cost of having been manipulated into buying something she simply couldn't afford. There also seems to be a gender aspect to the particular tactic employed since another reviewer, also female, strongly repines at the “insidious techniques” that she felt were being used in her encounter with a pushy salesman:

Bjw0905 – October, 2015

“Surrounded by him, his "uncle" who seemed to be the proprietor, and several male employees, I was manipulated mercilessly for over an hour. Each time I tried to exit, they charmingly/laughingly stood in the way. Only when I finally agreed to buy something and produced a credit card was I allowed to leave. They utilize various insidious techniques to break people, especially women and in particular a woman alone. The operation should be shut down.”

Bjw0905 alarmingly recounts how a salesman, “the uncle,” and a group of male employees, as most if not all carpet salesmen and their apprentices always are, “mercilessly” manipulates her, “a woman alone”, into thinking that making a purchase was her only way out. She cries foul at being “surrounded” as well as at being “charmingly/laughingly” refused exit, since for her this was not just any sales tactic but one pertinent to her as a woman – being *all by herself*. Bjw0905's account is very similar to that of Annacecilia1, in

which a salesman behaves in a distressingly pushy way, employing “insidious techniques” like lies, deception, and further guilt-tripping, giving off the impression that whatever he does he can simply get away by “laughing it off” using what he sees as his virulent “charm” as a young man interacting with a foreign woman (more on this in the ensuing pages). Another gender dynamic that also factors into the sales process concerns couples, where one couple recounts the abuse they encountered when they appeared to the salesmen to be not cooperating, that is to say, to be not tagging along their sales pitch as all tourists duly *should*:

Slbaker – September, 2015

“We were escorted to a showroom in the back and offered tea. I refused, since I was already sweating, and they became quite rude and aggressive. I also had no interest in sitting away from the door because I wanted a breeze, this also made them behave worse. One man kept asking me why I don't want a carpet. I explained that I have a wonderful golden retriever at home and having carpeting of any kind makes the house more difficult to clean. HE SUGGESTED I KILL MY DOG... He started insulting her [his girlfriend] for wanting to check with her live boyfriend, insulting me saying I was jealous of her, insulting her for not being able to make decisions.”

Slbaker recounts how his increasing uncooperative if not disinterested behavior as a customer, and also as compared to his girlfriend who appears to have been doing the bargaining, triggered the salesmen in the showroom to behave ever more “rude and aggressive” towards him to the point where one of the salesman, upon learning that Slbaker had a dog and so did not wish to buy a carpet, suggested – as inscribed in capital letters in the review – that he simply kill his dog. Not only does this ‘joke’ fail to coax Slbaker into changing his stance, but further pushiness in the form of accusations about his girlfriend’s indecisiveness and about his purported jealousy of his girlfriend’s interaction with other men, in this case the “charming” and virulent carpet salesman, altogether reveal how important a role gender plays in both the acceptance and the performance of hospitality, be it as something to be capitalized upon through particular sales tactics or as a key aspect that remains pertinent throughout the sales process and is revealed to be so only at certain junctures, such as when hospitality fails to live up to its name.



### 3.1.4. Hospitality as Generosity and Reciprocity

While there are plenty of accounts of hospitality gone awry, there are also many reviews that recount encounters with carpet salesmen where hospitality assumes the *guise of both generosity and reciprocity*, that is, an interpersonal exchange based on considerable goodwill with no immediate expectation of return. The following review in a sense epitomizes this expectation, if not search for hospitality as generosity and reciprocity, for it involves an exchange that is not based, at least for the time that the reviewer was there, on the prospect of future return:

Laksmi A – May, 2016

“As my trip this time is only a short stop over before next destination, I did not plan to buy any carpet, but Hamit patiently share a lot of history and details about carpets and kilims at the Motif Collection. I could see his passion and high commitment towards what he is doing, which is something precious to find during this time.”

Laksmi A reveals that while she didn't intend to buy a carpet, since this was merely a “short stopover,” she nevertheless appreciated Hamit's patience at telling her all about carpets. The guise of generosity, in this case, amounts not only to mere friendly reception but of playing the part of a knowledgeable, passionate, and highly committed carpet savant – someone exceptional nonetheless, – qualities which she finds to be rare and thus precious. Another reviewer also provides the specific name of the salesman that attended to her, demonstrating yet again the personal relationship that forms the basis of both a successful sale and a satisfied customer, seemingly two indispensable ingredients of hospitality:

Sabra F – August, 2016

“Not only did Arma explain where the carpets came from and their age and value, but he also was able to explain the meaning of the some of the patterns, colors and textures. This was a very educational experience as well, which speaks to the genuine nature of the store.”

“Arma was able to help me choose and purchase the 2 carpets with ease. He's very patient and listens closely to what you want, which is valuable trait in customer service.”

For Sabra F, similar to Laksmi A, the “educational experience” that the salesman so generously provided was critical in making the carpet shop appear to her as “genuine,” indicating to prospective customers that the salesman was not out to simply make a quick

profit. Rather, she perceived his willingness to talk extensively about carpets as a sincere demonstration of his commitment to his profession, so as to know enough about them, and by extension, to his customers. Another review points to how “Erol, the salesman” had been patient throughout the sales process and was further willing to hold on to the carpets they had just purchased so that they could continue wandering around Sultanahmet, all of this for their convenience. While they did “end up” making another purchase in return for the additional hospitality offered, it had nevertheless worked out smoothly for all parties involved thereby demonstrating that profit motive, in the form of obliging and guilt-tripping, need not necessarily interfere with or be antithetical to the positive reception of hospitable acts by buying customers:

Gillian W – January, 2014

“Erol, the salesman, was very patient with us, unrolling hundreds of carpets for us to see. He then packaged the rug up in a very handy carry-on bag and offered to hold it for us until we were done our day's wandering. He also invited us to come back for lunch the next day if we had time. Well we did, and we went, and we were so glad. Erol served us the best meal we had in our 3 weeks in Turkey. Yes, we ended up buying another rug. There was no way we could resist.”

In a similar fashion to Gillian W's account, JoAndrew A is also open about how she and most notably her husband were quite literally charmed away by their respective salesman. Not only was Hidir, the salesman, successful at “triggering” the interest of his customers, but he was also able to spark a deep sense of reciprocity between all parties, to the point of making JoAndrew A and her husband feel as if they were talking amongst genuinely “good old friends”:

JoAndrew A – August, 2014

“There is something about Hidir's calm, honest & patient persona that must have appealed to my husband... for next thing I know, there were 3 of us taking part in the conversation, carpet choices & other details like shipping & handling. Truthfully, carpets are not really my husband's cup of tea, but Hidir seemed to have triggered his interest especially when Hidir shared how some beautiful carpets can be passed on to our children & our grandchildren & onwards... discussing further varieties of carpets, then moving on to family life & some personal details. All this falling into place naturally & genuinely like we're good old friends!”

The following two reviews attest to key qualities, such as overall transparency and mere helpfulness, which carpet salesmen ought to have as *de facto* good salesmen regardless of the merchandise they happen to be selling:

Adam H – October, 2015

“They are honest and upfront, no heckling over prices everyone gets a fair deal and a quality product. Other carpet locations have to barter with you because they typically pay a 35% commission to whoever refers you (mostly 'tour guides' of some sort). This is not the case with the Hamit and the Motif Collection, here they do not engage in back deals with guides or tour agents, they rely on recommendation and word of mouth.”

Leslie C – May, 2014

“In the end, I couldn't decide which carpet to get, so what he did was go through all the carpets with me again and we separated the yes's and no's. Then he laid out the yes's side by side for me. This was the perfect method to decide, great salesman.”

While Adam H praises the policy of having fixed prices over “heckling” and the transparency of the sales process with there being no hidden commission chains that might end up impacting the overall price of the purchase, Leslie C appeals to the basic tenet of helpfulness by which all salesmen ought to already abide given their being a salesman.

### **3.1.5. Hospitality as an experience to be had**

Whether or not a tourist ends up taking a positive view of their encounter with a salesman, hospitality can still be taken up, as the following reviewers do, as an experience to be had in its own right. Both the good and the bad, as two polar extremes of hospitable exchange, are justified in the minds of some tourists as long as their encounters live up to the expectation or be it the promise of a memorable experience:

73Melissa73 – February, 2016

“Hamit, the owner of the shop, told us that each carpet or kilim has a story. I think this makes what you buy so unique and special. We came back to home with two small carpets. But more than the carpets, meeting people in Motif and learning about Turkish dowry carpets became our precious memory.”

Roadwarriornewjersey – March, 2014

“We met up with our tour guide and group a few days later. One of the first things he said to us was this advice, "Whatever you buy in Turkey, make sure it

is a carpet or rug. Forget about the junk. Save your money and purchase this instead. You won't regret it. Years, well after your trip, the junk you bought will be thrown away or forgotten, but the rug will be something you will see and use every day. Every time you see it, you will be reminded of Turkey and this trip. And it will last for many, many years and probably be passed down to your children and theirs as well." Sound advice! Glad we did!"

For 73Melissa73, it was not so much the carpet buying experience that made her encounter memorable, but rather her interaction with the carpet salesman who recounted the story behind each carpet. For Roadwarriornewjersey, however, it was the prospect of buying a genuine souvenir, as opposed to buying touristy “junk”, which would last for many years and even be passed down to their children, that compelled her to follow-up on the advice she had received. A comment by another reviewer epitomizes this view of hospitality, albeit amusingly, in the following way:

Bret G – February, 2015

“If you want a cheap doormat, go to Walmart. If you want the wonderful experience of buying a beautiful Turkish rug, visit Erol at El Rincon De Fehmi.”

While hospitality might be taken as a “wonderful experience” to be had, the widely ranging positive encounters nevertheless become critical in producing both a new discourse and a new guise of hospitality, one where the resulting reputation of carpet shops and of particular carpet salesmen paves the way for the display of digital charm and a virtual kind of hospitality.

### **3.1.6 Hospitality as Reputation and Digital Charm**

As Lou-And-Am proclaims in her impassioned review, when there's an “absence of actual word-of-mouth” regarding what she considers to be vital information about carpet shops, sites like TripAdvisor in this way become “increasingly invaluable” for not only the sharing of “high and very much deserved praises” but also for choosing between “the absurd number of [...] welcoming smiles” that seem to overwhelm unprepared, if not unwary tourists:

Lou-And-Am – August, 2014

“How do you know if your purchase is 1) authentically Turkish, 2) truly hand-made and 3) as valuable as your merchant claims it to be? Especially when

considering the absurd number of merchants extending their welcoming smiles and directing your attention to their shop. In the absence of actual word-of-mouth, we turned to this (increasingly invaluable) site and Hamit's little shop came up. So let us add our own share of high and very much deserved praises."

The following two reviewers reaffirm the usefulness of "TA" (TripAdvisor) in its recommendations of carpet salesmen deemed to surpass expectations of hospitality, so much so that these positive reviews and recommendations become decisive in their choosing where to visit and ultimately where to buy. In this way, the question of "whom to trust" lends itself to a full circle where there is now a ready-made circulating list of reliable salesmen:

Jasonkeen34 – May, 2016

"We went to Motif Collection based on recommendations in TA and other guidebooks. The quality, colors and designs are all exceeded than what we had seen elsewhere in Istanbul."

Rob0371 – March, 2016

"We found Motif in a Nat Geo magazine before we left on our trip to Turkey and after reading so many positive reviews had predetermined this was where we were going to buy a carpet for our living room."

Another illustrative example is the account in the following review where the salesman's concern for both his customer and his reputation, so adduced by the reviewer, appears to have overridden his profit motive of making a sale at whatever the cost:

Yeruandabe – April, 2015

"I considered buying another carpet but Hakan noticed a defect on it and stopped me from getting it as he pulled it out of his stock. I probably would not have noticed it until I got to Indonesia but Hakan values his reputation and customers over making a sale."

While it is not as surprising to have Yeruandabe commend the salesman's decision to inform his customer about a defect and consequently pull out of stock the carpet in question, what is however worthy of note is that this move by Hakan, his salesman, impressed upon the reviewer so much so that he felt compelled to open up an account on TA just to share it, so as to reaffirm and extend in the process Hakan's reputation through electronic word-of-mouth. Realizing how important travelling sites like TA can be both to their reputation as carpet salesmen (in a pool of several hundred), as well as to the overall financial wellbeing of their businesses, carpet shop owners have thus taken it upon

themselves to transform platforms like the ‘Reviews Page’, which under normal circumstances ought to be dedicated to reviewers and reviews alone, by responding to reviews (in particular to those that are critical of them) as well as by making exquisite displays of *digital charm*, thereby performing in the process a kind of virtual hospitality.

One defining aspect of shop owner responses is the long prologues that they all feature as a way introducing and presenting themselves to not only the particular reviewer at hand, but to all reviewers. As such, these prologues turn into an opportunity through which shop owners can engage with critical reviews on their own terms, whilst setting up in the process a more favourable backdrop from which to go about charming soon-to-be travelers who they suspect will be reading over their responses:

Motif Owner – May, 2015

“We are in same place doing carpet business more than 23 years. In this long period we did not have any single complaint from no one. Our aim was always having new and strong friends than trying to make money. We grown up as carpet repairing people. Still this is our main work. All our visitors sees that we do sell only older Anatolian dowry pieces (carpets, kilims, salt bags, saddle bag). All our goods are naturel dye and hand spun wool. We do not sell any single commercial carpet or kilim in our shop. We do sell only older pieces. Because of that our prices goes according piece. Not on sizes. We always try to keep our prices in a very reasonable amount with fixed prices. Unfortunately except writing that respond we do not have much things to do for this fake review.”

November, 2015

“As we mentioned before we are selling only older carpet and kilims. Because we been always with older carpets and we never change way of making our business. The other reason in Turkey carpets and kilims made finished more than 20 years ago. Workmanship in Turkey is really expensive and not many people wants to learn about how to make carpet. The carpets that you will see in the market 99 percent is made out of Turkey as a commercial carpets. That is why you will see same thing in every second shop.”

As the responses by Motif Owner clearly demonstrate, the shop owner’s concern here is not with the reviewer per say but rather with everyone. It is to that end that he expounds on his many years of experience, his chivalrous work ethics, and that which distinguishes the carpets that he sells, namely “Anatolian dowry pieces,” from those of others, which are taken to be not authentic, or least to say Turkish, and to be cheap commercial knock-offs that can be found “in every second shop”. In another response, Motif Owner further

elaborates upon why the authentic yet expensive “tribal pieces” he sells are worth what they are worth, denying all claims of overcharging:

October, 2015

“As we are selling only Turkish tribal older carpets, kilims and cicims, we do have very different price range. Sometimes a smaller piece can be more money than a bigger carpet. Actually our prices starts from 35 USD and it goes upper. To say that cannot find right carpet in between 2000 USD to 4000 USD is not fair and true\*:.) happy. in our currency this is between 6000 tl to 12000 tl makes it. This is really a big amount of money.(in any single shop people they can show you anything you want as a fake carpets or real ones like in our shop). [...] All of our visitors can see that on most of things we do have price tag or a little explanation about what they are. Our customers gladness more important than making money. Because of that we are seriously working to make better the way of doing our business according costumers needs. Our real work is repairing carpets and washing. Thanks god this is quite enough for us making living or lives.”

While openly proclaiming that customer satisfaction is indeed their top priority, and that they are constantly trying to improve their “way of doing business” to best accommodate the needs of their customers, the shop owner from Motif does not however hesitate to call out what he ascribes to be “fake reviews”:

October, 2015

“Unfortunately such a customer never been in our store. This written or made written by another carpet shop owner as a fake review to make down our reputation like other two reviews. We know number of customers who visit our shop. Some people visit our shop only for having information .We are always very happy to share our knowledge, time, showing our carpets to anyone who visit our store without any obligation for buying. if you check all other reviews that you will see they are all from different countries and they were all happy being in our shop. Other way we would not be in National Geographic magazine or in many local magazines or newspaper or in Guide books where to buy carpet in İstanbul in first place.”

May, 2015

“This is basically written to break down our reputation as a fake review. Such a person never been in our place. if readers checks that comment you will find out that reviewer is not Australian. This not Australian native English (it is obvious this written by another carpet shop owner). This review has full of mistakes. Which will not do an Australian. Unfortunately in our beautiful country some people instead of working harder and getting themselves better, they are trying to pull them down others to their level. And this review a basic example of this.”

In the former response, the shop owner accuses the critical reviewer of being just another jealous carpet shop owner hoping to disparage the purportedly positive reputation of Motif. To counteract the damage done, if any at all, the shop owner goes on to offer up his knowledge as a carpet salesman for free, reminding the readers that in his store there is no obligation to make a purchase. In case you might not believe him, all the reader has to do is to check a feature article written about them in the National Geographic or to look up any touristic guidebook, which would supposedly list their carpet shop as being among the top, if not the “first place” to buy a carpet. In the latter response, the shop owner accuses the review of being a fake this time with respect to their level of English, as in grammar and word choice, displayed in the review. The owner takes the fact of there being spelling and grammar mistakes as an indication that the reviewer is not Australian, as his username purports him to be, and yet another attempt by a rival carpet shop owner hoping to disparage his impeccable reputation.

Turning now to the responses by renowned carpet salesman/ shop owner Hakan Evin, who became famous when it was reported in the media that the-then First Lady Hilary Clinton had made several expensive carpet purchases in Evin’s shop in the Grand Bazaar, the notion of digital charm becomes all the more clearer as he blatantly tries to charm the dissatisfied customer by indicating that it would be a “big honor and a big pleasure” for him to welcome the customer again, hopefully sending him back this time as a “happy customer”:

January, 2015

“Dear Costumer, I want to thank you again for your nice review about my company. I feel sorry that I made you feel I was upset when you were leaving my company, It was a big pleasure for me to meet you and host you in my company. Nothing would make me happier than a happy costumer. I prefer to have a happy visitor than selling a rug. If you ever come back to the Grand Bazaar it would be a big honor and a big pleasure for me to meet you again. Show you rugs and explain you about oriental art culture. Your visit worth much more than selling a rug. If your travels ever brings you to the grand bazaar, Please send me e-mail and let me know when do you like to visit us again.”

In another response, Hakan Evin tries to entice a customer, who left the Grand Bazaar due to a “bad experience with [an] untrustworthy rug dealer” that supposedly tried to sell him a Chinese imitation, by openly sympathizing with the plight of the tourist to the point of



apologizing on behalf of the absent or *disfigured* figure of the carpet salesman. He then moves on to describe the reviewer as a “very good man” whose trust and goodwill was abused, all in spite of Hakan’s later efforts to dispel the resulting bitterness from an instance of hospitality gone awry:

August, 2014

“I am sorry that before you met me, you had a bad experience with untrustworthy rug dealer and they sold you chinese imitation fake silk rug. You are a very good man and you trusted them and they even gave you a fake certificate. I tried my best to help you about this unpleasant issue because of my business ethic. I wish you were staying here 1 more day that we could get better. I hope to see you again in Istanbul.”

In the following response by another shop owner Uğur K, the emphasis is on addressing the points of criticism raised by the reviewer, unlike other shop owners quoted above. In this instance, criticism is turned into professional feedback on which to improve upon for future encounters. Not only does Uğur K express deep regret at their inability to distinguish themselves from the practices of other carpet salesmen, and as such to adequately explain the length that they go to provide “the best quality available”, but he also suggests somewhat tongue-in-cheek that he personally be given “another chance to educate” the customer in question, hopefully this time more thoroughly:

April, 2015

“Thank you for your review. So sorry to hear you had an unpleasant experience in our store. We take our responsibility very personally to ensure that each and every client that enters our establishment understands why our products are completely unique and the best quality available. I am so sorry, that we didn't explain and educate you about the difference between us and the other shops in Istanbul. [...] I hope on your next visit you will come and visit me personally and I will do my best to show and explain to you why our products are different than others and how much reasonable. We look forward to your next visit to Istanbul and another chance to educate you more thoroughly about our products.”

Again, unlike previous shop owners, Uğur K takes yet another step towards what he considers to be professional customer service in that he, in the following response, very publicly chastises one of the salesmen working for him who is accused by the reviewer of employing aggressive sales tactics:

August, 2014

“I find your review very disturbing because as Heritage Nomadic Art Gallery rug store who despises aggressive salesmanship, I go to great lengths to ensure that all our staff are well trained in how to not to be aggressive. If you could please email me about which salesman was aggressive, I will be very quick to deal with this matter as it is totally unacceptable in our organization. Our price are very reasonable in this cause we cannot offer you half price we just offer a little discount for payments in cash. I look forward to hearing back from you about which salesman was dealing with you and in which shop you visited. Thank you for allowing us the chance to improve.”

By asking the reviewer to personally e-mail him about the salesman in question, Uğur K appears to take a very public stance, strongly underlining that this sort of behavior was “totally unacceptable in [their] organization” and that he would be “very quick to deal with this matter” – reminding all readers, as he had implied in the former response, that reviews such as these were critical in giving them “the chance to improve”. As elucidated through the many reviews included within the bounds of this thesis, the core dynamic at play in the Reviews Page is the guise of trust. Carpet salesmen go onto lend themselves to a display of trust and to its convincing performance – so as to ultimately secure a purchase – all within the pretext of ‘Turkish Hospitality’. In that way, travel sites like TripAdvisor complete the full circle of reviews and feedback that tourists in today’s world so dearly depend on.

### **3.2. The TripAdvisor Forum**

The TripAdvisor Forum has a fairly standard setup with the focus being on user-contributed, topic-based discussions where ‘forum members’ or ‘users’ are encouraged to create topics of their own (unlike the headings in the reviews page which often pre-exist) and also to post as many times as they wish (again unlike the one-off review in the reviews page) without the pre-requisite of having visited the given destination in question. This has the tendency of creating a knowledge differential between frequent travelers, frequent posters, and first-timers.

Inscribed into the everyday running of the forum is a hierarchy of ‘levels’ (from 1 being the beginner’s level to 6 being the highest) which provide a clear indication to new

users of a more experienced user's credibility with respect to advice as well as the frequency with which that user actively posts about a given destination such as Istanbul, Cappadocia, or be it the entire country.

For my research, I read-up on both old and new posts. I also searched specifically (using the forum's own search function) for topics and posts that contained either the word 'salesman' or 'carpet'. The keyword search yielded around 200 forum topics, containing thousands of posts with varying number of posts under each topic. While most topic-based discussions are about three to four pages long, there were also some heated discussions, such as those related to scams and general advice on how to deal with pushy salesmen, which went on for nine, twelve, or even fifteen pages.

Below is a fairly representative list of topics brought up in the forum:

- How best to deal with salesmen
- How to avoid scams
- What is a scam, and the moral/ethical limits to persistence
- Best strategies to use when negotiating
- The experience of the 'bargaining process' as an Oriental ritual of negotiation
- Ways of ignoring persistent scouts/ runners and pushy salesmen
- The Blue Mosque trap
- Varied accounts regarding instances of 'emotional blackmail' and 'guilt-tripping' as employed by pushy salesmen
- How to be a savvy tourist
- Being a female tourist and perceptions of foreign women in Turkey
- Advantages of being female when dealing with salesmen
- The arms race between the tourist and the salesmen regarding effective sales pitches
- Varied accounts of 'Turkish Hospitality'
- Discussions concerning Orientalizing, stereotypes, and the traveler's 'need' to tell stories

For the purposes of clarity, I have broken-up the ensuing analysis into three sub-sections: 'Scams: What are they and how to avoid them?'; 'How to be a Savvy Tourist'; and 'The Need to Tell Stories'. While internally cogent, each section is organized in a way that sets up the narrative analysis for succeeding sections.

Under ‘Scams: What are they and how to avoid them?’, I explore accounts of encounters with forceful salesmen who employ emotional blackmail, guilt-tripping, and aggressive sales pitches in order to coax or manipulate tourists into making a purchase. My analysis calls attention to the gendered treatment of women by carpet salesmen and its implications for the figuring of a prevailing typology. The section ends by tying the often challenging and intimidating nature of the sales process, as indicated by several reviewers, to a discussion of the need to be prepared.

Under ‘How to be a Savvy Tourist’, I cover a range of posts that give cautionary advice on how to be a savvy tourist: ranging from the need to be firm when negotiating, to embracing one’s subjection-position as the customer, from an active arms race between the carpet salesman and the tourist, to being able to recite basic phrases in Turkish. I highlight competing stances toward the onus of tourists themselves in their having fallen victim to scams or aggressive sales tactics. The main insight that I identify is the embracing of their assumed roles as customer, so as to become their very best of it in juxtaposition to the carpet salesmen who are deemed to maximize their profit margin all at the expense of the unsuspecting tourist. The section ends with an analysis of tourists’ attempts to fantasize about the sales process from what they purport to be the emic point of view of a carpet salesman.

Under ‘The Need to Tell Stories’, I demonstrate how the embracing of one’s role as customer ends up bringing about a level of reflexivity and introspection toward the apparent need or urge to typify, ranging all the way from self-affirmation to the ornamenting and embellishing of good dinner-time stories. I thus take up introspective posts that question the purpose and value of accounts circulating on platforms like TripAdvisor which ultimately work to typify encounters with carpet salesmen in the very process of their telling. The selection of posts that I include within the bounds of this thesis seek to problematize and debunk attempts at both Orientalizing and typification, be it with respect to what is purported to be the manifest behavior of carpet salesmen or the latent phantasies of tourists regarding the ensuing sales process.

### 3.2.1 Scams: What are they and how to avoid them?

This first post by Tcantarelli serves as a good way of introduction since it touches upon many of the themes and topics that surround the issue of scams, from what they are to how to avoid them. He begins by bringing up similar concerns as those from the Reviews section about tourists being frequently manipulated into making a purchase, the gendered element of this high-pressure sales tactic notwithstanding. Unlike the reviews section, however, Tcantarelli puts part if not the entirety of the blame on tourists themselves who he thinks must come “prepared” for these types of scams that prey on people’s “ingrained politeness,” especially those on vacation with money to spare, and for the intense “school of emotional blackmail” that has become all too familiar:

Tcantarelli, level 6 contributor, Brazil – May, 2008

“What caught my attention about this thread is that I hear very similar stories about overly assertive tour guides or others in Salvador (Brazil) and tourists who have no experience in asserting themselves sufficiently to say no firmly and walk away. One woman, for example, recounted that she paid "a lot of money that she didn't really have" to a 'tour guide' after she was apparently unable to shoo him away, let him show her around and he became demanding.

Being prepared is the key. I always tell people coming to Brazil to be prepared for this type of, yes ---scam--- which preys on people (with discretionary vacation money in their pockets) whose ingrained politeness hasn't inured them to this school of emotional blackmail used as a sales technique.”

Tcantarelli’s last point about people’s tendency to comply with what’s going on so as to not seem incomplicit is clearly illustrated by Noshi and her husband’s encounter where a “friendly stranger” appears at first to be simply helping out a tourist couple in need, only to then lure them forcefully, that is quite literally by the hand, to their carpet shop despite their pleas to the contrary:

Noshi, level 5 contributor, Singapore – April, 2008

“It was our first day at Istanbul, and we were outside the Blue Mosque looking for someone to help us take a picture when a guy came up to us and offered. So he took our picture, and started talking to us.. I thought he was just a friendly stranger, and soon we got talking, and soon he was holding my husband's hand towards his shop. We said no, we want to go to the mosque first, as we are Muslims and we really wanted to go to the mosque first and then go shopping... but he was so forceful, refusing to let go of my husband's hand! So we thought, ok fine let's just go and look around and go off.

Totally impossible! They made us go to the 2nd floor and started throwing carpet after carpet in front of us. When we said no, they said they've shown us SO many carpets and we don't want to buy any?! Are we playing with them?! They were angry with us, for real? We said we were there on a budget and had no money but they still didn't let us out. My husband decided that the only way is to buy the smallest cheapest carpet. Which was what we did. And when we got back home, we showed it to relatives who are carpet experts, and they said it was worth much much lesser. God it was a terrible nightmare. Totally spoilt our first day at Istanbul.”

The particular sales pitch employed in Noshi’s account is often referred to as the Blue Mosque trap. It gets its name from the Blue Mosque, which is a central gathering point in Sultanahmet, and it entails guilt-tripping a tourist (as a potential customer) through an initial act of kindness, such as a free tour of the surrounding historic monuments, so as to ultimately lure them back to their or a relative’s carpet shop. As Noshi indicates, once they were in the shop the carpet salesmen began working their sales pitch first with a unrequested carpet show and following that, with remarks to pressure and guilt-trip Noshi and her husband into making a purchase. The emotional blackmail that Tcantarelli refers to in the first post seems to have worked in this case since Noshi’s husband decides that the *only* way out is to comply by buying a carpet, albeit a small one, which in the end they learn was overpriced. Noshi’s final remark about her encounter amounting to a “terrible nightmare,” that is, on their very first day in Istanbul, is mirrored by Bigheadedp who also falls victim to the same Blue Mosque trap:

Bigheadedp, California-USA – May, 2008

“I was just in Istanbul hoping to get a nice Turkish carpet but one rug salesman completely destroyed my desire to get one. I was visiting the Blue Mosque and this guy approached me, insisting that he gives me a guided tour of the mosque in exchange for a quick visit to his store. I didn't think it was a great idea, but he wouldn't go away, so i figured why not. After the tour, I didn't feel comfortable going with him to his store, so I told him that and then he got angry. He started to use emotional black mail by saying that I used him and that the situation is unfair. I asked for his business card so that I can go visit later, and he told me that he had none, but that he has some at his store. So being a sucker that I am, I went to his store, which was near the entrance of the Arasta bazaar, right behind the blue mosque.”

In Bigheadedp’s case, it was not so much as the promise of help but rather a matter of sheer insistence that calls the salesman’s initial offer, of a guided tour in exchange for a visit to his store, into question. Once the tour was over, Bigheadedp openly communicates

to the salesman about her discomfort at going with him to his store. Yet, rather than showing understanding as one might expect as a kind of hospitable gesture, the salesman tries to pressure her instead by capitalizing on this last-minute backing down with an intense display of anger and frustration, which Bigheadedp admits to falling for “being [the] sucker that [she is]”. Another forum user, Toilettduckk, further expounds on the intricacies of how salesmen “try to strike up an acquaintance” only to then “work their way into [their] sales pitch”:

Toilettduckk, level 6 contributor, Illinois-USA – March, 2014

“One thing I'd like to add about the aggressive carpet salesmen, though: they will almost never tell you what they're up to until they've got you engaged in conversation. I found that most of them will try to strike up an acquaintance with you by asking you where you're from, and how you like Istanbul---THEN they work their way into the sales pitch. Once I figured that out, I didn't even get started with the conversation. I just said, "Sorry, I'm in a hurry," and walked on by. Like the leather goods salesman the day previously, this guy managed to get me into his shop---this time, a shop by the Arasta Bazaar, loaded not with leather coats but with hundreds of (admittedly beautiful) carpets. I was seated in an elegant antique chair upholstered in red velvet, "the queen's chair," and a glass of tea was put into my hands.

Again, I told them firmly that I don't buy on impulse. My husband was arriving the next day, I told them (which was true), and I wouldn't consider making a large purchase without consulting him. The man who was obviously the boss, and who (like the leather goods salesman) claimed to be the younger guy's cousin, stepped in then. "Now, we know that, in the home, the wife is boss, and she, not the husband, decides such things," he said. I responded, "Not in my family. We make such decisions together. He made a few more attempts. First, he offered to sell me a kilim for 750 U.S dollars if I bought it that day; otherwise it would be \$1200. I refused. Then he offered to take me to dinner that night, "my treat." Again, I declined.”

As Toilettduckk herself admits, it was not once but twice that a salesman had “managed to get [her] into his shop,” the first being a leather goods salesman and the other a carpet salesman, and it was only after both encounters that she had become aware of how attempts to engage in conversations were effectively used by salesmen as hooks for sales pitches. She goes on to recount how when she announced that she would not be making a purchase without first consulting her husband, another salesmen who she presumes to be the boss replied back by proclaiming that “in the home, the wife is boss,” thereby rejecting Toilettduckk’s pretext for refusing to make a purchase. This gendered treatment of tourists,

in this case of a married woman trying to buy carpets without the company of her husband, is followed by two other attempts; the first being the time-old expediency sale where the price on offer is supposedly the *best* price possible, though only for a limited time, and the second being the salesman's surprisingly bold offer to take her out to dinner as "[his] treat". This last point regarding carpet salesmen's approach and treatment of women is one that is raised up by several forum users, most notably by Busy-retired who is a designated TripAdvisor "destination expert for Istanbul":

Busy-retired, level 6 contributor, Florida-USA – September, 2013

"Salesmen in Istanbul are a bit aggressive and determined. If you respond to their questions and just generally be polite, as you would in your own country, they may not interpret your message in the same way that you sent it. Turkish women do not talk to strange men. They do not even make eye contact or acknowledge that the men exist. So when a salesman asks you where you are from and you stop and answer him, he may misread your behavior to suggest that you are available for a social experience and/or a good customer to purchase a carpet."

In order to explain why certain salesmen may be tempted to approach female tourists the way the posters above say they do, Busy-retired points to the customary interaction, or rather non-interaction, between men and women in Turkey. She writes off any communication between the two, to the point of suggesting that women in Turkey compose themselves as though men simply do not exist. Hence, Busy-retired goes on to assert that when foreign women stop to respond to salesmen's attempts at striking up a conversation, these salesmen (who are often young men) may "misread" this behavior as not only being suggestive of their being a viable customer, but also of their being "available for a social experience" as a foreign woman. Another poster, Travellinganne1965, adds more flesh to this explication, by juxtaposing her self-perceived image as a "liberated and self-assured Canadian woman" on the one hand, and the toxic combination of emotional blackmail exerted by a group of salesmen on the other:

Travellinganne1965, level 3 contributor, Canada – January, 2012

"A kind "gentleman" offers to show me quickly through to the route where I can go...he then provides me with a whiplash tour through the various sites and then takes me back to his rug shop...I KNEW there was going to be a catch!! I felt obligated to sit through a rug show... he promptly disappearing (likely off to



snag another unwary victim) and 3-4 men flipping carpets for me!! It was high pressure sales to the Nth degree...

I am as liberated and self-assured Canadian woman as the next and often travel alone, but when feeling obligated and then having 3-4 men in a room alone I was feeling pressured to purchase something...ANYTHING to get out of there!! It was almost scary...in fact I felt like crying for about 2 hours...I am not an idiot and if that carpet is 100% wool...I will eat my hat...if it is natural dyes...I will eat my pants... and if it is the supposed 40 year old that the fellow said it was...stiff from starch and still smelling like spinning oil etc...Then I will eat my shorts...I know I got duped but I was SOOOO grateful to be able to get out I would have paid even more...

As a back story for the record...not 12 hours earlier getting off in the airport was continually listening to "fights" and verbal disagreements on and off the plane...suffice to say I was sufficiently intimidated by the "aggressiveness" I witnessed that I was sorely afraid of offending the local merchants (that would be male merchants).. So travelling in Sultanahmet beware of offers of assistance and beware the carpet shops...take a friend or hire a local guide to help you out...especially single women..."

Besides her utter disbelief of the purported quality of wool and dye and the alleged age of the carpets on show, what really marks Travellinganne1965's account among the many others that tell of a similar story is the very extent of her frustration at not only being pressured to the "nth degree" but of being done so *as* a woman. The "back story" to her encounter adds another layer to her standpoint as a tourist by revealing that she had been primed from the moment her plane landed to reacting sorely to what she considered to be widespread "aggressiveness," to the point that by the time she had arrived in Sultanahmet she was already susceptible to intimidation and pressure tactics. It is in that regard that she ends her account with cautionary advice suggesting that it would simply be better for single women to shop in another's company rather than alone. Yet, there are other forum users who tell of a different story, one wherein these grave bothers are taken as being "part of the experience" of shopping in Sultanahmet:

Busy-retired, level 6 contributor, Florida-USA – September, 2014

"Some people find Sultanahmet very hectic. They do not like to be bothered with determined carpet salesmen who will approach you on the sidewalk. Some object to the very loud prayer calls that echo through the entire neighborhood. Neither of these things bother us,, and, in fact, the carpet salesmen are part of the experience for us, and the prayer call is always evocative."

Jistanbul, level 2 contributor, USA-Chicago – August, 2010

“While they can be annoying, I find them to be an amusing feature of any trip to Istanbul. I love it when they try to guess your nationality by using greetings in different languages. They're more humorous than harmful.”

The first user, Busy-retired, who again is the designated TripAdvisor destination expert for Istanbul, maintains that despite the “hectic” state of affairs in Sultanahmet with seemingly loud (though evocative) call to prayers and “determined” (and as such bothersome) carpet salesmen, the overall experience is nevertheless one that she finds worthwhile enduring. Jistanbul, after a similar fashion, indicates that she finds these annoyances to be “humorous” and thereby “an amusing feature of any trip to Istanbul.” While both of these forum users may have enthusiastically embraced what they perceive to be the quirks and challenges of interacting with carpet salesmen, the following user, however, takes a more down to earth approach by admitting that it was only after four separate encounters that she had started feeling more at ease with “the sales culture of Sultanahmet,” which entailed a great deal of bantering as well as handling of persistent salesmen:

Osumom311, level 6 contributor, Ohio-USA – January, 2012

“During my second week, I was feeling more comfortable with the sales culture of Sultanahmet so was able to banter a bit with the shop owners and sales people hanging around outside their shops and still say no when invited to just come in a take a look at that carpet they thought I so desperately needed. (It's hard to totally ignore people you pass by several times a day, and they do remember you. They'll remember you after one day, one week, and even after you've been gone a year or more!) Now, after four trips, I don't feel uncomfortable at all with the way things are done in Sultanahmet. But for somebody not used to the Sultanahmet sales press it can be pretty intimidating. I'd bet many tourists who had no intention of buying a carpet have gone home with at least a small one.”

As Osumom311's account clearly illustrates, most notably through the final remark, the intensity of sales pitches in Sultanahmet and the degree of interaction between the unsuspecting customer and the experienced carpet salesman can often appear to be “pretty intimidating” especially for a first-timer. The most concrete testament to this observation is the number of people who she suspects had no intention of making a purchase but have nevertheless “gone home with at least a small [carpet].” Admittedly, it is only after several encounters that Osumom311 was able to manage the sales process and to not feel “uncomfortable” while doing so. It is in this way that an initial discussion of scams, from

what they are to how to avoid them, lends itself to instead a discussion of how to become a *savvy* tourist, one who is “armed with information” and who displays at all times a “healthy of dose of awareness” against the plethora of scams and sales pitches which aim to capitalize upon the purported naivety of tourists.

### **3.2.2. How to be a Savvy Tourist**

In presenting various templates for how to become a savvy tourist, tourists effectively come to embrace their designated role as customer, and as such, strive to become their very best version it. Perhaps the most prominent poster on the question of how to be a savvy tourist is Busy-retired, one of the more active destination experts who frequently gives self-assured advice along with detailed descriptive accounts of how the actual sales process ought to advance with the customer always being in the driver’s seat and to that effect, out of harm’s way. In the following two extracts, she goes on to elucidate precisely that:

Busy-retired, level 6 contributor, Florida-USA – June, 2010

“Do not be intimidated by the kindness of the salesman, or his charming personality. Negotiate hard, and be more than willing to walk away if the deal is not to your satisfaction. When you fall in love with a carpet do not let the salesman know that a carpet has captured your imagination. The concept of playing several dealers against one another is a good tactic. We stay in Istanbul for weeks when we visit, and our purchases are always made near the end of our stay. We make sure that each salesman knows that we are also considering a carpet from the shop down the street.

May, 2009

“Carpet Salesmen: I understand that for many people the easiest thing to do with carpet salesmen is to simply ignore them. Like GTTD we just cannot do that. When we are in a hurry we just shake our heads and say "No", usually in Turkish. We often advise people, who are worried about carpet dealers to keep walking, avoid verbal responses and avoid eye contact. We stop and visit with the carpet dealers in our neighborhood. A couple of them have been very kind to us, even when they know there is absolutely no chance of selling us a carpet.

When I am alone and approached by a carpet seller I always smile and ask for the name of his shop because, I tell him, I have too many carpets and I need to sell some. This almost always establishes the appropriate tone without being offensive. I certainly do have plenty of carpets.”

Busy-retired’s core advice is to be prepared to “negotiate hard” at all times so as to not become easy prey to the “kindness” and “charming personality” put on display by carpet

salesmen. A tourist ought to hide their intentions, just as salesmen do when coaxing the customer into accepting the initial price, by “playing several dealers against one another” so as to avoid being conned. Crucially, along with negotiating hard, it is important for tourists to remember that they’re the paying customers – or so they are already interpellated as such by salesmen – hence they should act as customers “willing to walk away if the deal is not to [their] satisfaction.” While the persistence of carpet salesmen can get annoying, Busy-retired suggests that rather than reacting rudely to their advances, or ignoring them altogether, it would instead be better to engage them albeit with a prepared line, a kind of counter-sales pitch, which would work to quell their hopes of ever initiating a sales pitch in the first place. Another user characterizes this struggle between the tourist and the salesmen to overcome one another’s defensive/ offensive interpolations as a kind of *arms race* where tourists would be “best to arm [themselves] with information” before going about making a purchase:

Califpoppy, level 6 contributor, California-USA – June, 2009

“You need to do some research ahead of time. You will be invited in, offered apple tea and spend a couple of hours being shown the difference between the kinds of rugs for sale. Don't allow the salesmen to overwhelm you with choices. Haggling is expected in the bazaar and in some stores you can also. There are so many shops selling rugs, in Sultanahmet on *kucuk aya sofya* there are stores on the left hand side of the street. best to arm yourself with information before you go and idea of price, ask for the price in lira and euros.”

In addition to asserting that “research ahead of time” is needed in order to familiarize oneself with the different junctures of the sales process, such as the introductory hook, the serving/ reception of hospitality, and the haggling over price, Califpoppy’s most vital insight into encounters with carpet salesmen is that it is only thru having information that an unwary tourist avoids being “overwhelmed” by the range of sales tactics employed by salesmen. The following post by Sarikanarya serves to illustrate this point about information in that it highlights the benefits of being able to recite phrases in Turkish, especially those that will be useful in the bargaining process:

Sarikanarya, level 6 contributor, Istanbul – September, 2011

“Just smile at them and say "Indirim yok mi?" (indi-rim yok muh) i.e. what no discount?? They will wobble their head around as if in great pain but some discount is almost always forth coming!

If it's not enough then continue with "biraz daha.." (said as written) i.e. a little more.. The cheek of you only learning that much Turkish is sure to get you some discount just for the fun of it and after all, doing the bargaining is just entertainment isn't it ☺ yup that can do too...it sounds like co-two (like co pilot). [*kötü* as in bad]

Also try "hadi yaa" (said as written) and means 'aww come on now'. Or even "yaa hadi canım" (yaa hadi jan-um) meaning 'ya come on sweetie', which is guaranteed to make him smile. Obviously these are just fun lines when bargaining for simple items; if you are bargaining for a carpet then things need to be a little more formal-you're talking big bucks there!

Strangely enough friends in the sales business tell me that women always do the hardest bargaining, men just want to get it over and done with but the girls dig their Jimmy's firmly in.”

As Sarikanarya contends, while the benefits of knowing all these phrases might not be automatic and work only when bargaining on more simple items and not carpets per say, the mere “cheek” of engaging with salesmen in Turkish might nevertheless be a good way for first-timers to ease themselves into a more amicable playing field. Of particular note is the final remark where Sarikanarya goes onto reproduce an observation her “friends in the sales business” have supposedly shared with her, namely that women “always do the hardest bargaining.” It is interesting since it adds a contrasting point of view to the gendered element brought up by previous users, those by Tcantarelli and Toilettduckk for instance, who had flagged it out as a distressing reality they were made to stomach in their admittedly *inhospitable* encounters with carpet salesmen. Instead, Sarikanarya appears to embrace, even encourage this palpable gender dynamic, one where the prevailing image of a brazen (and certainly non-local) woman is consciously utilized to extract the most out of the bargaining process.

This lucid introspection concerning the circulation of the figure of the tourist vis-à-vis that of the carpet salesman is one that is frequently taken up by other users in heated debates, at times to the point of putting the entire onus of awry encounters on tourists themselves. The following post by Isailthe7seas captures the gist of this self-reflective mode as it attempts to combine ideas of self-help (as in break-up advice) with the plethora of ways to behave “as a savvy traveler”, all of this *only* to be deserving of the “genuine hospitality” carpet salesmen are capable of providing:

Isailthe7seas, level 6 contributor, San Francisco-USA – May, 2009

“Genuine Hospitality and a Carpet Salesman... they can overlap...keep that in mind as you are approached...many pointed us in the right direction without expecting anything in return. Try to remain gracious...an old songs says...there are 50 ways to leave your lover. Islam says there a 99 ways to say God... (I think, I remembered this correctly). You as a savvy traveler can surely come up with 20 ways to graciously say no thank you.”

While highlighting both the reciprocity and the generosity given by carpet salesmen, Isailthe7seas condones in the same breath the view that portrays all salesmen as persistent conmen ready to haggle and to put undue pressure, all of whom are purportedly motivated by the prospect of a quick financial gain over conventions of hospitality. FBZ’s post takes this introspection further by firmly deriding (as far as the TripAdvisor platform and the virtual as a medium allow for) those whose behavior she views as exacerbatory, if not the very cause of awry encounters shared and propagated online:

FBZ, level 2 contributor, UK – November, 2005

“If you can't stand being hassled by carpet sellers, then don't linger at their stores. If you accept an offer of tea, it certainly does not mean that you have to buy a carpet. Many of the sellers prefer to show someone their beautiful merchandise, rather than playing yet another endless game of Tavala. If you don't want to buy something when you are ready to leave, be firm, ask for their card and make sure you thank them for the tea.

If you're in the Grand Bazaar and you are fed up of 'lady, lady, can I just ask you one question', then just walk on without making eye contact. It is irritating, I know, but hey, here's an idea... Have the courtesy to learn to say 'no thanks' in Turkish and they will immediately leave you alone. Simply lift your eyebrows and say 'tesekur ederim' and walk on. It's not difficult and it's much more polite than ignoring the sellers or being rude to them in your frustration.”

As FBZ tries to convey in strongest terms, a tourist is not a hapless potato sack who can be easily coaxed or manipulated into making a purchase. Rather, a tourist ought to be capable of saying “no thanks”, that is firmly but politely, and what more, ought to be able to withstand the barrage of sales pitches that they *allow* themselves to be subjected to by knowingly “lingering” in front of carpet stores. The impression that FBZ leaves the reader with is one where the tourist is taken to blame for both caving in and/or falling victim to scams. Another poster, Simonyet, takes a step further by questioning the very credibility of those accounts that speak of the “dangers” supposedly awaiting travelers, all the way from scamming taxi drivers to aggressive and persistent carpet salesmen:

Simonyet, level 3 contributor, Indonesia – January, 2006

“I just spent 6 days in Istanbul. I am curious to know why everyone else gets hassled or ripped off and I didn't. Not once did I get ripped off in a taxi, even half blind on Raki with a stumble here and there, found a taxi on the street on numerous occasions, they took me directly back to my hotel at the same price I paid to get to my destination.... and I am baffled why I was warned about what was being "done". Taxi drivers were honest and they drove me directly to and from my destination. Honestly on many occasions the drivers took the shortest possible route. What is it with everyone else???”

As for carpet sellers, I admit I was asked if I wanted to buy a carpet on a few occasions (not many) to which I just replied "I honestly do not want to buy a carpet, thank you"....and that was it.....I was left completely alone. Actually, I found these carpet sellers very nice people, most of them wished me a pleasant stay in Istanbul...honestly!!!! Again I am at a loss to understand the warnings given. I am proof that what you may read on this forum about the "dangers" of Istanbul are NOT always true. If you are a decent tourist and treat whoever you come across with respect and decency, treat the country with respect it deserves then you will be absolutely untouched by associated problems other people have experienced.

For would be travelers to Istanbul all I can say is open your mind and heart and "FEEL" the warmth, not have "REJECT" written on your forehead. Hence you will not get hassled.”

Simonyet’s denouncement rests upon a juxtaposition of her own experience of spending six days in Istanbul, admittedly packed with traveling and partial drunkenness, and that of others who *claim* to have been “hassled or ripped off” by salesmen, taxi drivers, and the like. While acknowledging that she too was approached by carpet salesmen, she nevertheless proclaims to have dealt with their advances smoothly and without hassle, again, markedly unlike how others have described their own encounters to have played out. In this regard, not only does she go on to profess to be “the proof” of the falseness of the many cautionary tales in circulation on TripAdvisor, but she also asserts that the real reason for why they may had these negative encounters in the first place is the very mindset with which they’ve gone about conducting themselves as travelers, with “reject [being] written on [their] forehead” as opposed to an “open mind and heart” which would have helped them “feel the warmth.” While Simonyet’s stark assessment might indeed resonate with the sentiments of a few other travelers – similar views were expressed by others on the forum, – the more prominent view regarding how tourists ought to behave however is the one expounded by Sarikanarya who advocates for what she calls a “balanced realistic view”:

Sarikanarya, level 6 contributor, Istanbul – February, 2009

“In all the years of my love affair with this country I have been lucky enough not to fall victim to scams or conmen (not knowingly at least!) but I know so many people who have and indeed since living here have helped several people to try to get redress from wrongdoers.

If you are lucky you can't say these problems don't exist and equally if you are caught out by scams you can't say that all Turks are conmen. One should always take the balanced realistic view that low lives exist in every country in every community, some look like vagabonds and some look like urbane business people.

I think all tourists to whatever destination can be accused sometimes of wearing rose-tinted glasses – after all we go on holiday to escape our problems and have fun, not go looking for more stress. Which means that sometimes we can get scammed because our defence system is on hold when we are on holiday.

It is for this reason that I think it is important that if a scam happens we are told about it on the forum so that whilst we can enjoy ourselves we are also aware of what does go on and hopefully not fall into the same trap. Indeed many posters say "this was my experience so here's a warning to others". It doesn't mean we are mistrustful of every person we meet but just have a healthy amount of awareness of what is going on around us.

While admitting that she herself has never been “caught out by scams” in all the years that she has spent in Turkey, Sarikanarya claims that *one* (tourists and forum users) should nevertheless avoid taking up either extreme of on the one hand negating that these scams do really exist and that people can and do indeed “fall victim to scams or conmen,” and on the other, of interpellating all Turks as conmen with ulterior motives. It is to that effect that one should abandon, or least to say, leave aside notions of luck and particularism, that is to say, those peripheral impressions that emanate solely from one’s own particularistic (and in that sense limited) encounter(s), and instead adopt what Sarikanarya deems to be “a healthy amount of awareness” of all possibilities, be they examples of hospitality gone awry or of seemingly unconditional reciprocity. Unlike Simonyet’s reproachful doubtfulness towards others’ negative accounts on TripAdvisor, Sarikanarya maintains instead a more nuanced position where accounts about scams or of particularly negative encounters do not end up taking away from the experience but rather adds to their enjoyment of it effectively by informing them (ideally in a *healthy* tone, so as to avoid mistrustfulness and paranoia) of the apparent possibilities. It is only in this way that one can mitigate the resulting disappointment from wearing “rose-tinted glasses” and of tourists’ tendency to lower their



“defence system” against scams or stressful situations when on holiday. This more nuanced and critical position with regard to encounters with carpet salesmen is pushed to its limits by Peregrin\_man who takes a step further by actually fantasizing about being a salesman to the extent of reproducing what he calls the “seller’s script,” that is, a typified encounter as recounted from the emic point of view of a carpet salesman:

Peregrin\_man, level 6 contributor, Romania – May, 2008

“Another highly interesting aspect in my view is the Oriental ritual of negotiation. Very different from its cold and impersonal Western equivalent. Not to mention there is a whole lot for a Westerner to learn from this interaction. I know Wall Street brokers who could receive meaningful lessons in the Bazaar. I have devised a step by step analysis of the carpet sales technique (this is the Seller's side only I will relate, you can imagine the Customer side of the dialogue yourself) in case someone who has not experienced this before might like to know what to expect. I am pleased to say that it has been deemed accurate to the detail by many regular Istanbul forumites, most of whom have purchased a Turkish rug at least once.

Here it goes (again, this is the Seller’s script):

1. (broad, friendly smile) Where are you from? Please come into my shop and have a look, you don't have to buy anything! (Customer is politely, charmingly lured/dragged in)
2. please sit down, relax, no hurry, you are on holiday (tea glasses and if applicable ashtrays materialize out of thin air on the small table in front of Customer).
3. You don't have to buy anything. But as I have no customers at the moment, let me just show you some of my best carpets. No, no, no, this will not take long, sit down and finish your tea! Please! (orders are given in a musical tone, a couple of attendants become alarmingly agitated, a dozen carpets of all sizes and colors are rolled out in front of the Customer. Now, to get out of the shop he/she would need to walk all over the beautiful, brand new carpets, not to mention climb over the rolled up parts of them)
4. You don't have to buy anything. But just for the fun of the conversation, which ones of these 12 carpets do you like more (a review of all models takes place, colors, patterns, texture etc. followed by the removal of some 6 carpets toward which the Customer's nose wrinkled just slightly; meanwhile fresh tea glasses are served)
5. All right, now, I know you will not buy a carpet. But please humor me, just assuming one day you would buy one, which one of these 6 would it be? If it is too difficult to choose, just show me the two you like best. (Customer caves in - "ok. let's get this over with quickly now" - and indicates two; the surplus carpets are once again removed as if teleported by a Genie)

6. Ok, you say you don't need a carpet. Still, I ask you, how much would you pay for one of these two? (Customer is puzzled) Would you pay n Lira? (Customer says absolutely not, way too expensive) Would you pay n x 30% Lira? (Customer has already spent a good hour there. The exit is blocked with carpets. The price is now manageable; it would not cause vital damage to the bank account. Both carpets are beautiful. We only live one life)
7. Ok, I understand your hesitation. But you know these are best quality Kilims. These things do not come cheap. Tell you what I'll do: I will offer you both carpets for n x 50% (Customer has distinct feeling that the Seller is now so anxious to close a deal that this is unexpectedly turning into a unique opportunity)
8. Eventually Customer walks away with either one carpet at n x 25% or two at n x 45% Lira. He/she will now have an item in the living room to remind them of Turkey. The Merchant was charming, saw them to the door and asked them to come back tomorrow for an even better deal from the new stock that must arrive. Life is beautiful!

The exotic setting, the colorful silky background, the 1001 nights atmosphere, the tea and Oriental perfumes, these all add up and make it a truly special experience. Gotta love Istanbul!”

The point of featuring such a long quote is twofold: first, it is representative in the sense that there are other users who also seek to fantasize about a typical encounter with carpet salesmen, that is, by presuming unimpeded access to their emic point of view; and second, it is perhaps one of the richer, illuminative, and more complete of attempts to typify a sales process, if not a performance, where the tourists' interactions with carpet salesmen remain at the forefront of this exercise of across role imagining. Dubbed to be an acute exposition of “the Oriental Ritual of Negotiation,” the account is positioned on a contrasting divide of the West and the East, where the former is represented by Wall Street and the Wall Street broker (as the Westerner), and the latter by the Bazaar and the carpet salesman (as the Oriental). Announcing that what will ensue will be a “step by step” breakdown of the Oriental's script, or “the seller's script” to be precise, Peregrin\_man takes the reader on a codified journey from step 1 to step 8, the fantasy having been “deemed accurate to the detail” by others on the forum. The script begins with an exposition of the salesman's *real* motive, that is, his ulterior motive, where the seemingly “broad, friendly smile” is revealed only to be a sales hook. The guise of hospitality enters into full play with the serving of tea and tobacco which “materialize out of thin air,” as the magic and mystique of the sales process would have it. The incessant stream of tea is followed through by a musicality of gestures, where carpets are removed as if “teleported by a Genie”, as well as a show of

carpets of “all sizes and colors.” The sales process that continues on with a period of intense haggling over price ultimately ends with the customer “caving in.” The last section is replete with interjections by Peregrin\_man who, in parenthesis, repeatedly returns back to the point of view of the tourist only to further reinforce the Orientalizing elements of this fantasized encounter with a carpet salesman. He presents the final few steps of the sales process as though the customer were up to that point in grave danger and that it was only thanks their bravery and persistence (this time surprisingly not by the salesman) that they had followed through to the end without the purchase causing “vital damage to the bank account.” As Peregrin\_man exclaims in the end, “we only live one life” and that “life is beautiful,” thanks in part due to the scripted sales process where both the tourist and the salesman play their respective roles in this “Oriental ritual of negotiation,” which, as the very last sentence suggests, will repeat itself on end as long as “the merchant” is willing to perform it for every customer. This long account by Peregrin\_man provides an interesting point of contrast in that it does not, on the one hand, decry the various sales pitches employed by carpet salesmen, nor on the other, seek to give cautionary advice to first-timers in the hope that they become savvy travelers. Instead, the sales process is itself turned into an object of phantasy, whereby both the customer and more so the salesman become the subjects of a scripted performance. It wouldn’t be much of a stretch to presume that accounts such as Peregrin\_man’s, have a tendency to impress images, ideas, and expectations onto the sales process, which when not met, can turn into points of concern and as such, the basis for the telling of negative encounters, and these encounters, once again, paving the basis of more accounts. This cyclical process for the sharing, the reading, and the replicating of experiences – be they about scams, cautionary advice, or phantasies – is problematized in the last section of this chapter where forum users themselves ponder over the purpose and the value of accounts that work to typify encounters with carpet salesmen in the very process of their telling.

### **3.2.3 The Need to Tell Stories**

The embracing of one’s role as customer end ups bringing about a high level of reflexivity toward the ongoing propagation and circulation of widely attributed types.

Illustrative of this are the following users who take a deeply reflective stance towards the discussion taking place throughout the TripAdvisor forums and who actively seek to problematize as well as debunk attempts at both Orientalizing and typification (at times, not mutually exclusive), be it with respect to what is purported to be the manifest behavior of carpet salesmen or the latent phantasies of tourists regarding the sales process, all the way from the sales hook to the final purchase. The first post by Patara01 puts this introspection into context by acknowledging the degree of misrepresentation in accounts of encounters throughout the city:

Patara01, level 6 contributor, Germany – June, 2008

“Unfortunately I never saw men with red fezzes (lol) and nobody wore dusty clothes and the only women with (half) covered faces have been close to Fatih. And we didn’t need to eat our meal with fingers (but we could if we liked to do:-). It is a conglomerate of experience and phantasy, just how Joe Public figures an oriental city. I agree with the former posters, there is nothing to add.”

In identifying Orientalist accounts as amounting to “a conglomerate of experience and phantasy,” and by comparing this exercise in imagining to a figuring of the oriental city, what Patara01 is in effect pointing out is the degree to which imagery and frozen notions of culture can end up pre-figuring a tourist’s expectations of a given destination and of a given set of encounters which are purported as the norm. It is, after all, “Joe Public,” as in the average Westerner, who ends up determining in aggregate the legible range of experiences to be picked from, as well as the range of emotions and expectations to be had from each of these experiences. It is in that light that Degisen, a local from Turkey and also a fellow traveler himself, warns against the allure of “joining the crew of perception” by providing an explication for why it might be that tourists feel compelled to recount their encounters using what are often typified, readily available frames:

Degisen, level 4 contributor, Istanbul – June, 2008

“I just came from a trip to northern Finland, a skiing resort called Yllas which is located well above the Arctic Circle. when I came back, I realized that people were more than ready to hear stories about how cold it was, how deep the snow was etc. so if I wanted to draw some attention, all I needed to do was to play on these. the truth was somewhat different; it was cold but not that cold and yes the snow was deep but not more that you would have in any ski resort in turkey. same thing happens when I travel to Africa or Asia with different stories expected of course. Particularly when traveling to Morocco, on my return, it was particularly difficult not to fall in the orientalist traps (and that is being a

Turk!) I almost wanted to tell stories, how hot it was, and how much hassle I had to deal with, even though these were only partly true. But it would feel really nice to give people what they need and to be a part of a whole for a while by joining the crew of perception, moreover by strengthening the perception. This way, I would also be able to label myself as a brave adventurer.

So it boils down to the perception issue. And if the act of playing on false perception is put together with mindless orientalism, the situation quickly multiplies itself. the only exit is to change the perception; but it is much more difficult than to move mountains. of course, I don't expect travelers to tell the truth, only the truth. Neither I expect them to give detailed and accurate statistics about locals' fashion habits. They of course will filter their observations through their own previously set paradigms (as we see milder examples on this forum). to me it only is a matter of credibility not ethics. But I wanted to share this to exhibit the degree of misinformation we locals have been dealing with for years and years. This is why we locals have been encouraging you dear visitor friends to leave the old town and the beaten path and join us in discovering also the contemporary life. Because with our set paradigms, it is sooo easy to miss things that are happening in front of our very eyes; especially in Istanbul. and when in Istanbul, the things we miss can amount to a life time opportunity to understand our world better.”

As Degisen illustrates via reference to his own attempt at recounting a ski-trip to Finland, prevailing expectations of a given destination have a tendency to be propagated since “people [were] more than ready to hear stories about how cold it was, [and] how deep the snow was.” If Degisen would want to draw attention, he would only have to *play* on these aspects, that is, by exaggerating the realities. For him, the main allure for this kind of typification is the sensation of belonging that one supposedly derives from “joining [in] the crew of perception.” It is a sense of virtual affinity that compels users, especially new users, to affirm prevailing notions so as to be accepted into the active community of users. From a different angle, users tend to propagate particular aspects that enable the labeling of oneself as “a brave adventurer.” This urge hinges upon juxtaposing oneself against the figure of the Oriental other, in this case the carpet salesman, where the ‘I’ is read as having endured the unendurable, to not having succumbed to the Oriental sales process of seduction and haggling. Indulging in such “mindless orientalism” (in his travels to Morocco for instance) or the playing on false perceptions is perilous since such accounts tend to multiply and, as Degisen puts it, trying to change these perceptions once they have formed is equivalent to “mov[ing] mountains.” While indicating that he does not expect tourists “to tell the truth, [and] only the truth” regarding their encounters, as each will “filter their observations

through their own previously set paradigms” – here hinting at posts by other users –, Degisen nevertheless takes a strong stance against those who limit their experience to a handful of available frames and who do not venture off “the beaten path” to discover contemporary life, thereby missing out on the “life time opportunity” to better understand Istanbul and by extension, the World. Degisen’s reflection on the dangers that “set paradigms” pose to not only locals who have to endure them but tourists themselves who end up missing out on opportunities, is further complemented by another user, Gonetothedogs, who ties tourists’ tendency of readily taking up perceptions of the *typical* to a social need to tell stories:

Gonetothedogs, level 6 contributor, UK – June, 2008

“I think there are two sides to this. First of all, people notice the things they are not used to. We don't notice the similarities to what we are used to in anywhere we go, only the differences. How we interpret those differences (positive or negative depends on what they are, and of course the type of person we are).

Then there is the need to feel like a brave adventurer. We all know people who have had a bad experience on holiday twenty years ago and they are still telling the same story to make them sound like they have faced the trials of the world and survived. We all want good dinner party stories and people don't want to hear 'Oh we had a great time, the people were lovely and the food fantastic' - that doesn't keep them on the edge of their seat and the teller the centre of attention. So people tell the 'horror stories', embellishing them each time - and eventually believing the stories themselves and so passing them on with increased fervour.

The first time we went to Istanbul, we felt brave and out of our comfort zones.... And of course we told stories when we got home of getting lost for hours in the maze of the labyrinthine Grand Bazaar (OK - it was actually about 30 minutes if that!) to make people think how brave and intrepid we were....”

As a designated TripAdvisor destination expert for Istanbul, Gonetothedogs remarks that there are two fundamental motivations for why tourists frequently resort to such exaggeration and typification: first, they tend to notice differences more than similarities meaning that what stands out is often what gets later recounted; and second, they feel a need to tell their stories and the best/ most memorable stories tend to be “the embellished horror stories” which put the spotlight on the teller, making them seem more “brave and intrepid.” While the first point might go some way to explaining the content of what tourists often exaggerate, it is rather the second point about the need to tell stories that speaks more directly to *why* tourists might feel compelled to privilege their negative

encounters over seemingly dull, positive ones. And the straightforward answer to the question of motivation, though quite anticlimactic and dreary, might simply be that hyped-up accounts make for better dinner party stories, and as long as that is the case, tourists and travelers of all kinds will continue to post about their encounters – be they about scams, cautionary advice, phantasies, or the need to feel brave –, and those encounters will continue on being widely shared, read, and replicated by virtual word-of-mouth.

### 3.3. Conclusion

What my analysis of hospitality and of its many guises has revealed with regard to reviews and user-contributed forum discussions by tourists, is that while there is no single portrayal of carpet salesmen that goes uncontested, there are nevertheless thematic agreements in the way that tourists seek to recount their encounters to fellow travelers. The sub-sections have sought to reflect these agreements, and on occasion, the apparent disagreements. A pertinent example is the issue of scams, where, for some, carpet salesmen are strictly to blame for having engaged in scams while others put the entire onus for having fallen victim to cons or sales pitches on tourists themselves, who *should* have known better than to be seduced or engrossed/overwhelmed by them in the first place. The most fascinating insight regarding the process of typification was offered by fellow forum users who went so far as to provide their own take on why people might feel the need to recount their encounters in certain ways, that is, by resorting to what are often readily available figurative tropes that they know will be recognized by others. As one explained, they do so in order to participate in the “crew of perception” whereby negative tropes about carpet salesmen become in a way what others wish to hear since they, quite simply, make for better “dinnertime stories.” It is then in that way that the need to tell stories ends up trumping the veracity of one’s own experience, and so a vicious cycle is created through the constant producing and reproducing of only certain types, often critical, resulting in what one might call the continued circulation of a pervasive figure of the carpet salesman.

## Chapter Four

### Conclusion

My quest to understand the process of typification via a study of contemporary carpet salesmen as well as user-contributed posts by tourists has shown that both tourists and carpet salesmen alike actively contribute to the circulating figure of the carpet salesman. The former do so by sharing, reading, and replicating accounts of encounters that come to propagate only a handful of types which then become produced and reproduced as new users seek in their role as newcomers to either reaffirm or negate the prevailing shorthand typology figured for all carpet salesmen. Meanwhile, the latter do so by both building up a repertoire of effective sales pitches that get used and reused on end, thus revealing a semblance in tactic and behavior, as well as by assuming and switching between different guises of hospitality, which together reflect an apparent congruence in the way that a disparate group of individuals is seen to speak, act, and behave *as* carpet salesmen.

Despite the congruencies in the way that tourists go about recounting their encounters and in the way that carpet salesmen end up performing *as* carpet salesmen, my research has nevertheless indicated toward a process of gradual hybridization whereby the figure of the carpet salesman is and has been over the last decades undergoing change either by their having to adapt to what are shifting flows of tourism, such as by beginning to sell other merchandise along with carpets as well as by assuming the allure of other salesman, or by abandoning their work as salesmen altogether due to overwhelming economic fluctuations and consequent bankruptcy. As shifts in both tourism and employment take full force, the figure of the carpet salesman has thus begun to lose its poignancy as a referential ideal type with an immediate corresponding reality. This was the case for me during my fieldwork as I could not discern carpet shops from their hybrid carpet-gift shop versions.

Along with hybridization, the figure has also been in the process of undergoing a form dilution with the advent of Web 2.0, that is, through the amenities of the electronic



word-of-mouth, which in its propagation of prevailing frames has worked to further confound the circulating figure of the carpet salesman with the latent needs of the traveler to either partake in set paradigms, to feel brave and fantasize about the oriental other, and the urge to embellish stories for more effect. These needs have come to trump the semblance of veracity in the telling and retelling of one's experiences, thereby taking away from the grounding of the figure in real, actual carpet salesmen. As the reaction of my peers, friends, and professors foreshadowed from the very get go of this research, this figure now seems to only persist on account of its use value as either comic currency for the archetype of a contrived, scamming salesman, or as a seemingly apt backdrop for a good, dinner-time story.

It is in this vein that a further line of enquiry into the figure of the carpet salesman would have to necessarily employ a diachronic approach to the historically changing context and medium within and through which this figure has come to circulate over the last decades. Such an approach could help reveal persisting structural dynamics that my comparative analysis of idiosyncratic encounters as performances may have quite simply overlooked. Attending to this changing figure of the carpet salesman will add to a more fuller understanding of the process of typification, whereby a figurative trope is layered and thus constituted over time and space, reflecting a number of confluences, motivations, and particularities at each given juncture.

## REFERENCES

Bailey, Kenneth D.

- 1994 *Typologies and Taxonomies: An Introduction to Classification Techniques*. SAGE Publications: University Paper Series on Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences.

Blumer, H.

- 1969 *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bryce, D., Maclaren, Andrew C. & O’Gorman, Kevin D.

- 2013 “Historicizing consumption: Orientalist expectations of the Middle East” *Consumption Markets & Culture* 16(1): 45-64.

Burgess, J.

- 1982 “Perspectives on gift and exchange in hospitable behavior” *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 1(1): 49-59.

Goffman, Erving.

- 1990[1959] *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Penguin Books  
1972[1961] *Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction*. Penguin Books

Gülersoy, Çelik.

- 1979 *Kapalı Çarşının Romanı*. Istanbul Kitaplığı Ltd. Publications

Hochschild, Arlie.

- 1983 *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Hsieh, Hsiu-Fang & Shannon, Sarah E.

- 2005 “Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis” *Qualitative Health Research* 15(9): 1277-88.

Dunke, Jane & Gurney, Craig

- 2001 “Chapter 5: Putting up? Gender, Hospitality, and Performance” in *In Search of Hospitality: Theoretical Perspectives and Debates* (eds.) Lashley, Conrad & Morrison, Alison. Routledge

Kivisto, Peter & Pittman, Dan

- 2013 “Chapter 11: Goffman’s Dramaturgical Sociology: Personal Sales and Service in a Commodified World” in *Illuminating Social Life: Classical and Contemporary Theory Revisited*. SAGE Publications

Lashley, Conrad.

- 2001 “Chapter 1: Towards A Theoretical Understanding” in *In Search of Hospitality: Theoretical Perspectives and Debates* (eds.) Lashley, Conrad & Morrison, Alison. Routledge

McKinney, John C.

- 1969 “Typification, Typologies, and Sociological Theory” *Social Forces*, 48(1): 1-12.

Urry, John & Larsen, Jonas

- 2011 *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*. SAGE Publications

Yan, Grace & Almedia Santos, Carla

- 2009 ““China, Forever”: Tourism Discourse and Self Orientalism” *Annals of Tourism Research* 36(2): 295-315.

Zhang, Yan & Wildemuth, Barbara M.

- 2005 “Qualitative Analysis of Content” *Analysis* 1(2): 1-12.

TURSAB

- 2017 Tourism Data: Statistics: Report on the *Number of Tourists and Tourism Revenue*. Retrieved June 12, 2017: [http://www.tursab.org.tr/tr/turizm-verileri/istatistikler/turist-sayisi-ve-turizm-geliri/2003-gelirsayi-ve-ortalama-harcama\\_68.html](http://www.tursab.org.tr/tr/turizm-verileri/istatistikler/turist-sayisi-ve-turizm-geliri/2003-gelirsayi-ve-ortalama-harcama_68.html)