

PERCEPTION AND MARKETING PROBLEMS IN TURKISH CULTURAL TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

Defined as a subset of tourism based on and shaped according to cultural values, cultural tourism involves many variables that creates a regional distinctive edge, which in turn shapes the tourism moves of our day. In this regard, despite having a very rich set of cultural values both qualitatively and quantitatively, Turkey does not use this unique potential for cultural tourism adequately mostly because of the lack of correct perception and marketing of this subset of tourism since cultural tourism in Turkey appears to be limited to archeological and historical sites. This case study handles the issues of diversification in cultural tourism, its consumption, how it is perceived and marketed, and then discusses existing problems.

Key Words: Tourism, cultural tourism, cultural diversity, perception of cultural tourism, marketing of cultural tourism

TURKIYE KÜLTÜREL TURİZMİNDE PAZARLAMA VE ALGILAMA SORUNSA LI

ÖZET

Kültürel değerler üzerine kurulmuş ve şekillenmiş bir turizm çeşidi olarak tanımlanan kültür turizmi, günümüz turizm hareketlerini şekillendiren, pek çok değişkeni bünyesinde barındıran ve bölgesel farklılıklar yaratan bir turizm çeşididir. Bu bağlamda Türkiye nitelik ve nicelik olarak zengin kültürel değerlere sahip bir ülke olmasına rağmen bu eşsiz potansiyeli büyük ölçüde pazarlama ve algılama sorunlarından dolayı yeterince değerlendirememektedir. Çünkü Türkiye'de genel olarak kültür turizmi, tarihi ve arkeolojik alanlarla sınırlanmış gibi bir özellik göstermektedir. Bu çalışmada, kültür turizminde yaşanan algılama sorunu, tüketimi, çeşitlendirilmesi ve pazarlanması konuları ele alınmış ve var olan sorunların tartışılması amaçlanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Turizm, kültürel turizm, kültürel çeşitlilik, kültürel turizm algılaması, kültürel turizm pazarlaması.

INTRODUCTION

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In the last quarter of the 20th century, diversification in tourism took on new dimensions with the effect of an emerging intellectual class, thus resulting in millions of travellers starting to engage in cultural tourism. There is no doubt that the culture that nourishes this subset of tourism is hard to harvest. However, just like in any other product, the harvest is not only related to a given year's produce but more to the development of the best seed stocks and to the preparation of soil over the years (Macmillan, 1994: 82). Therefore, as a unique destination where many various cultures have flourished, Turkey is in a good position to market its cultural values. Although the country also offers opportunities for other subsets of tourism such as entertainment, rest, history or nature, statistics show that the fastest growing type of tourism in our day is cultural tourism. Conversely, table 1 shows that Turkey has a problematic approach to cultural tourism and that the proportion of Turkey's cultural tourism is constantly decreasing (from 8,1% in 2001 to 5,2% in 2006) (Table 1). This is noteworthy as the number of total tourists traveling to the country is constantly rising and is above world averages. It can therefore be said that there is a problem with cultural tourism in the country despite all efforts to promote it.

Although certain European countries, the USA and Japan seem to lead the shaping of cultural tourism, the lack of adequate information and the novelty of its marketing have slowed down the overall understanding of this type of tourism (McKercher, 2002: 37). Actually, even the meaning of the term cultural tourism is being debated (Hughes, 2002) due to the many activities it includes. To illustrate, it includes cultural heritage, but also music, theater and dance. Today, it is still a topic of debate whether cultural occasions and activities are the prime reasons for tourists to choose a given country as opposed to a mere accidental reason, and whether any tourist who engages in cultural attractions during a trip can be defined as a cultural tourist (despite their motivations) (Richards et al., 2001: 79).

Table 2. Foreign and Turkish Citizen by Purpose of Visit (2001-2006)

Years	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Purpose of visit						
Grand Total	11 276 531	12 921 982	13 701 419	17 202 996	20 522 621	19 275 948
Travel, entertainment	5 231 273	6 401 016	6 815 797	8 216 757	9 904 716	8 529 890
Culture	917 368	1 016 739	1 004 079	1 116 206	1 310 082	1 008 513
Percentage of culture	8.1	7.8	7.3	6.4	6.3	5.2
Other	5 127 790	5 504 227	5 881 543	7 870 033	9 307 823	9 737 545

Reference. Turkish Statistical Institute Web Site

As stated by Lee and Crompton (1992), tourists want interesting, exciting and surprising experiences. While some of these experiences are related to natural attractions, the majority of them are related to the cultural values in a given society. Therefore, all subsets of tourism support one another in increasing the motivation of attraction. Whether visiting a city or the countryside, guests are interested in various kinds of attractions at one time and cultural tourists increasingly prefer newly developing markets (Weirmair, 2000: 402).

According to World Tourism Organization, cultural tourism makes up 37% of all tourist trips in the world and the demand for it rises by 15% per year (Crowd as cited in Leslie, 2001:113). Considering that the increase in the demand for total tourism in the world is around 6.5 percent from 1950 to 2007 (WTO web site), the increase in cultural tourism can be interpreted better. In this regard, cultural tourism can not only contribute to local and national economy of Turkey as an engine for development but also create a potential for sustainable tourism as an alternative to mass tourism by extending tourism opportunities over all 12 months. In order to do this, the following 3 factors may be used: a local cultural identity, a good infrastructure including high quality accommodation facilities and easy transport, and a high quality physical environment. The differences between these three factors show their effect on the attractiveness of the destination (Honggang, 2003: 182).

The purposes of this paper are to examine the perception of cultural tourism in Turkey and to suggest a marketing mix for it. This report first gives a brief explanation about basic concepts and the emergence of cultural tourism. It will then go on to explore diversification and the consumption of tourism in Turkey followed by perception problems in cultural tourism. Fi-

nally, the marketing mix for cultural tourism is developed based on 4Ps and some conclusions are highlighted for tourism policy-makers.

1. CULTURAL TOURISM AND ITS CLASSIFICATIONS

Cultural tourism has been defined many times. According to Silberberg (1995), it is the travels of foreign visitors motivated partially or fully by a society's, region's or group's history, art, science or lifestyle. With reference to Ondimu (2002: 1036), "cultural tourism implies that which is chiefly geared towards seeing a people's lifestyle in the past and present". Culture is a concept that contains peoples' thoughts (beliefs, ideas and values), behaviors (behavior models and lifestyle) and creations (artwork, handcrafts and other products of culture). Therefore, it includes a process (lifestyle and thoughts) and the products of this process (buildings, art, traditions, environment) (Richards, 2001a: 7). Variety in cultural resources thus meets the varied needs of people (Hughes and Allen, 2005:176).

Being such a large concept, culture affects the activities and destination choice of tourists. Cultural tourism is also a large concept and has thus been divided into various subgroups. The need for easier marketing of cultural tourism has also contributed to the birth of these subgroups which include heritage tourism, history tourism and ethnic tourism (Doğaner, 2003:1-2). Naturally, cultural heritage represents much more than the other subgroups, such as monuments, historical and architectural ruins, art performances in museums, traditions and art, abstract forms like philosophy, reminiscence of important events or people in history, different lifestyle, literature and folklore (McGettigan and Burns, 2001: 137). In addition to these, cultural tourism includes other values such as battlefields, grief, home, ancestry, religion, urban organizations, festivals and musical organizations.

The development of cultural tourism was made possible with the maturation of the tourism industry starting from the 1980s, resulting in its saturation and a search for new markets. This process gave birth to new types of tourism, among which cultural tourism and special interest tourism can be listed. Cultural tourism has thus, turned into a particularly important subset of tourism.

Among the most important reasons for this development are the emergence of a new "middle class" in the last 25-30 years which seems eager to consume heritage attractions in Europe and the increasing number of the "service class" (Richards, 1996: 261-269). In this era, motivations for travel

also underwent serious changes. While the main motivation for tourism until then was “getting away from the current environment and daily life”, it transformed into “enriching oneself” (McCain and Ray, 2003: 715). As a result of technological advances and globalization, the world has turned into a global village and thus people have become more knowledgeable about the world. In turn, this has made people more curious to see new places and meet new cultures. This new type of tourist looks for distinctiveness when consuming tourism and they meet this need by traveling to undiscovered faraway locations. Although their numbers may be smaller than that of the average tourist, they are the most active in the consumption of attractions related to heritage (Richards, 1996: 272-278).

2. DIVERSIFICATION AND CONSUMPTION OF TOURISM IN TURKEY

As the world shaped the concept of tourism in the 1950s, Turkey did not do much to develop it. However, the concept of tourism was discussed internationally as a tool to bring about economic development to developing countries following World War II (Cooper, 1997: 261). In Turkey, on the other hand, a single-faceted understanding of tourism started to emerge in the 1970s. It failed to recognize social, cultural and environmental values, and focused only on mass tourism. In fact, no other approach than mass tourism was developed until the 5th Development Plan (1985-1989), which underlined individual tourism albeit only partially. The 6th Development Plan (1990-1994) supported this new trend and emphasized the importance of developing alternative tourism including cultural tourism. However, no plan including the 7th and 8th Development Plans (1996-2000 and 2001-2005, respectively) correctly perceived these alternative types of tourism, particularly cultural tourism, and has therefore failed to develop marketing mix for them.

As accepted widely, tourism was the fastest growing social and economic event of the 20th century, and this trend will continue into the 21st century too. The modern day advances in transport and information technologies have eliminated borders and made the world (relatively) smaller. With this came more leisure time, economic power and the tendency to travel to faraway places. Kaufman and Scantlebury (2007: 215) state that culture/heritage tourism is further promoted by the increasing use of the Internet, the increase in weekend tours, and the increasing interest in holiday packages. As a result, internal and external tourism activities developed and the

number of tourists increased rapidly, thus making travel more available to a larger socio-economic segment. Therefore, social, cultural and economic developments have changed the needs, wants and expectations in each type of tourism and also gave way to new tourism movements (Alaeddinoğlu and Aliğaoğlu, 2005: 89). As one of these new movements, cultural tourism reflects the current and future needs and changes. With reference to Richards (2001a), this new pattern has enriched tourism with its new markets and attractions. This situation leads to some implications for marketer's and national tourism administrations.

Many markets exist where cultural tourism may flourish, and these markets are sometimes characterized by special interest tourism (Mabulla, 2000: 221). As advocated by many, culture and special interest tourism emerged in the last quarter of the 20th century. Its emergence in Turkey was much later and accompanied by perception problems. Such a change in tourism started initially with the cultural values existing in mass tourism markets but now continues in new and special markets. This was supported by people having more leisure time, income and satisfaction from holidays. This search directed people towards cultural tourism with its unique experiences rather than the sea-sun-sand tourism. Tour operators therefore, started to focus on this new tourism segment and Turkey's cultural values. However, the Turkish approach to cultural tourism has not been the same as in Europe and therefore the contributions of cultural tourism remained marginal in the country (despite Istanbul which is to become the 2010 European Capital of Culture). However, the survey study conducted by ATLAS since 1991 showed the increasing demand for cultural tourism in Europe (Richards, 1996: 269), actually making it Europe most developed tourism type (Hughes and Allen, 2005:176).

Seen from a Turkish perspective, cultural tourism is indexed to mass tourism destinations and complements mass tourism. To illustrate, the areas where cultural tourism is consumed most are the Mediterranean and Aegean. It is true that these areas are culturally very attractive; however, the interior of the country is at least as culturally rich as these areas and even more meaningful from an attraction motivation point of view. Despite this, - regions which do not attract mass tourists have never been popular places for the consumption of cultural values. In recent years, the personal efforts of local authorities who are seeking to bring economic income to their regions and the artificial cultural tourism attempts they create may be sincere but do

not help tourism develop at a national scale. What is needed to overcome this and to develop the right strategies is not to merely diversify the touristic product according to the expectations and habits of cultural tourists, but to develop the right strategies which consider regional potential at the same time. The nature of tourism gives it many aims. A tourism policy that identifies ways to accomplish these aims tries to maximize the economic, social and cultural gains obtained from tourism and minimize costs (Olalı, 1990: 30). Similarly, the aim of cultural tourism policies is to benefit from the various forms of cultural expression and, beyond this, to contribute to the social and economic development of the target region (Cano and Mysyk, 2004: 882). In order to benefit economically from tourism and cultural tourism, and to establish a new image, the first step to take is to establish local brands. In other words, the “developing tourism in Turkey” approach should be abandoned and these efforts should be concentrated to specific destinations and perhaps cities. Cities that have adequate cultural resources can achieve this and contribute to the development of tourism industry. Resources in these cities should be promoted together with other tourist attraction methods ranging from events to gastronomy, high quality social fixed capital investments to regional networks without the loss of various original and attractive elements. On the other hand, if the cultural resources in a destination are not enough to attract tourists or to extend their stay, the historical and cultural resources in the small museums around these places may be transferred to the bigger, safer and more modern museums of these cities and thus contribute to the cultural attraction image and the branding of this destination. Naturally, political worries must be eliminated in order to materialize this.

3. THE PERCEPTION PROBLEMS IN CULTURAL TOURISM

The perception of cultural tourism changes from country to country (Dunbar-Hall, 2001: 175). While music and dance performances are important in cultural tourism in Bali (Dunbar-Hall, 2001), the local culture in Australia (Aborigin heritage, art, handicrafts especially in the North) has been successful in the long term as a promotion strategy (Simons, 2000). Similarly, Malta’s cultural tourism is based on Malta’s rich history, Baroque churches, protected archeological areas and art (Markwick, 2001: 233). On the other hand, tourism in Finland is based on the nature but culture also has a part in its marketing. The nature is everywhere in Finland, whereas culture is limited to certain regions of it. Finnish festivals and museums are popular attractions of cultural tourism (Kantanen and Tikkanen, 2006: 100).

Also, art museums, theme parks and historical buildings are relatively important. If the visitor per attraction criterion is used, churches may also seem popular. Churches in cities are replaced by short festivals in the countryside (Honkanen, 2002: 378).

Unfortunately, no solid policy exists with respect to cultural tourism in Turkey. Cultural tourism has become a slogan in expressing historical and archeological values, and extending over time and place. In reality, cultural tourism in Turkey should not only take on the mission to extend over time and place, but at the same time profit from various expressions of culture and contribute to the social and economic development of target regions.

When examined from this perspective, the Turkish national development plans and local authorities display the wrong approaches to tourism, in general, and to cultural tourism, in particular. To illustrate, local authorities consider heritage tourism surrounding their cities, architectural work and museums more important than their artistic tourism (such as artistic events). In other words, cultural tourism in Turkey refers not to artistic event organizations but more to heritage tourism. In the 2002–2003 season, 135 plays (45 Turkish, 90 foreign) and 589 shows (228 Turkish, 361 foreign) in the 5 existing ballrooms were watched by 273,271 people. On the other hand, 173,217 were foreigners and only 100,054 Turks. Similarly, the 180 existing museums (66 archeology and history, 43 ethnographical and anthropological and 71 general) were visited by a total of 15,765,033 people in 2003. Out of these people, 9,155,761 were Turks and 6,609,272 foreigners (Cultural Resources and Museums General Directorate Statistics, 2007).

Also, cultural attractions such as museums and monuments have an important role in attracting not only guests but also investments into urban areas (Richards, 2001a: 11). For instance, the 17 museums in Istanbul were visited by 2,806,943 people in 2003, 1,696,209 of whom were foreigners and 1,140,734 Turks. While the number of registered immovable cultural and natural resources in Istanbul was 19,512, the number outside Istanbul is 48,583. Therefore Istanbul is a culture attraction on its own (Cultural Resources and Museums General Directorate Statistics, 2007).

Istanbul can assert itself with its distinctiveness but it would be a mistake to reduce the cultural values of the country to Istanbul. There are dozens of other cities that can be used for cultural tourism, which might compete

with European cities if only elements like intercity program products, music, theatre, opera and art exhibitions were to be held.

Museums play a massive role in the development of cultural tourism and its becoming available to masses. However, the understanding of museums in Turkey does not contribute enough to cultural tourism. Being successful at cultural tourism relies on designing stories around the destination and offering good cultural experiences. The elements of creativity are at least as important to consumers as they are to product development. In recent years, consumers have demanded that museum exhibitions become interactive as opposed to unchanging or static, and they have also asked for more freedom in the future cultural space for creativity (Richards, 2001b: 252).

Culture not only leads to the growth of urban spaces but it also creates increasingly more consumption places in rural areas (Richards, 2001a: 12). Especially in the interior and the cities that are not located on the coastline, the core of tourism is composed by these areas. In the coastline and in the interior alike, wrong or deficient perceptions exist about culture. With reference to Leslie (2001: 114), cultural tourism will have the following direct and indirect contributions to the invigoration of the rural area:

- Employment in support services and attraction,
- Fortifying the buildings,
- Environmental improvements,
- A positive image,
- Increasing the quality of social life.

4. MARKETING MIX OF CULTURAL TOURISM

Marketing is as important as perception. The marketing mix for a given product is traditionally determined by looking at the 4Ps: Product, Price, Promotion, and Place (McCarthy, 1960). Even the importance of these marketing mix change for each target market segment, the general framework is presented below.

Product: For a product to be placed in the international cultural tourism market, the foundations of cultural attractions in cities and culture zones must be explained. Is the foundation museums, art galleries, folklore or unique buildings and monuments? To be able to pull visitors away from the

sea and the sand, the attractions offered should be culture based and distinctive. In our day, though, most package tours focus on cultural cities, art galleries and museums. It is obvious that people who go on these tours are responsive to and demand artistic activities. Therefore, museums, classical music and art galleries should be determining factors in organising these package tours. Regional festivals reflecting the characteristics of the region or the country are also important. All of these can be achieved only if they are supported by other tourism infrastructure work. If this happens, international tourists may be attracted, and the slogan of extending tourism over time and place can become true.

Satisfying desires for travel, feeling physically good and heighten esteem by visiting/experiencing cultural and heritage attractions of Turkey are core product. As a tourism activity, experiencing high quality cultural assets of Turkey is intangible product. Augmented product is a combination of factors: World Heritage Sites, accommodation facilities such as hotels, and features of cultural assets. Before experiencing cultural tourism of Turkey, tourists need some supports, i.e., city and/or country culture maps, brochures, CDs which are termed augmented product. The potential product might be diversified cultural tourism products.

Price: It is generally known that the new consumers of cultural tourism are more knowledgeable, perceptive, intelligent, participative, widely travelled, rich, well-educated and older groups. Therefore, women, old people, highly educated people, professionals, managers and culture workers are more likely to go on a culture holiday. They do not attach too much importance on the price of culture product but they expect a high quality product. This includes not only the cleanliness and safety of cultural resources and their environment, but also accommodation options and services.

Promotion: Culture tourists are not widespread; but they are different from mass tourists with their needs and characteristics. That is why certain differences also exist between the promotional strategy of culture and mass tourism (Hughes, 2002: 169). What is needed for the promotion of a culture product is not a promotion and advertisement strategy supporting mass tourism but one that emphasizes the “distinctive product for the target market” (Hoffman, 2003: 296). This process necessitates serious involvement of the public and private sectors in the tourist product related to the destination (Murphy and Boyle, 2006: 113-114).

On the other hand, the promotional strategy also needs to consider aims of visitors. "The promotional strategy needs to differ according to whether culture is a core or peripheral aim for the target mass" (Hughes, 2002: 173).

If culture is the primary aim of the tourist, the museums, historical buildings and artistic elements of a certain destination for instance Istanbul can be used in promotional campaign. The important thing is to focus on cultural elements to attract tourists to the destination. Although the majority of tours to Turkey originate from European countries, cultural tourism is a prime factor for visitors from faraway countries such as the USA or Japan because people of these countries can find the sea, sand and sun in closer places to their countries. Therefore, they visit Turkey mostly for special interest area attractions. In target markets such as the USA or Japan, culture needs to be prioritized in the promotion of the country due to the expectations of the target group. However, Mc Kercher and Ho (2006: 485) state that cultural importance alone does not provide the necessary background for the marketing of culture and heritage resources as products of tourism.

On the other hand, if cultural tourism is a secondary aim, in other words if someone who is visiting a certain destination for other reasons wants to engage also in cultural activities, "the promotional strategy for this target segment should be destination-based" (Hoffman, 2003: 173). In order for information about cultural activities to reach them, promotional materials can be sent to hotels or billboards can be used. With reference to Perdue and Pitegoff (1990: 480), visitor centers can also be applied in order to distribute information to visitors and answers their questions about the attributes, attractions, and facilities in the destination.

Whichever is the tourists' aim for cultural tourism, promotional communication should generally aim to achieve a desired level of tourism demand by delivering right messages through the right channels in order to entice potential cultural tourists. In this regard, new information technologies can also help to increase awareness, interest, desire and action.

Place: Turkey traditionally have conveyed a wide range of information and tourism offerings to her target market through foreign tourism information offices. The places chosen should be positioned "in the main street of the capital city in order to secure visibility" (Bennett, 1999: 49) and near the Embassy to respond potential tourists' needs further information about visa

related issues. On the other hand, Internet should be used to access potential markets since majority of cultural tourists are online. Finally, travel intermediaries can help Turkey to reach and transmit her message to potential customers.

CONCLUSION

As a fast growing and changing industry, tourism contributes greatly to destinations that understand and use the right approaches. The diversification of tourism necessitates that the new tourism areas which emerge consequently name and structure themselves. World class cultural tourism areas are large places with a big number of tourists. However, these places are urban or rural brands that include local culture values. Recently, radical examples of this have been displayed by Eastern European countries (particularly in the late 1990s) by organising very aggressive (effective or strong) urban advertisements and promotion campaigns. Although these countries are not areas of mass tourism, the number of incoming tourists is quite high.

The representation of Turkey in the international tourism market must be built on urban brands. It is important to create the knowledge of existing culture heritage attractions and to encourage tourists to visit these places. While doing this, a cultural tourism policy must also be formed that is authentic, lively, community-based, product-based, sustainable, educative, motivated by values and participation of the public to the planning and management of tourism, and encouraging maximum income (Russo and Borg, 2002: 631). Cultural events within this new policy may extend regional tourism season or even create a mini season such as the Budapest Spring Festival (Puczko and Ratz, 2001: 200).

However, the misperceptions related to cultural tourism in Turkey involve not only cultural values and their diversification, but also image and motivation. Many studies have shown that visiting a destination or staying at a certain accommodation chain leads to a positive change in the image of this destination or change. As stated by Mill, if a tourist is strongly motivated for a search for historical culture holiday, that person is ready to be satisfied by a tour to, for instance, Quebec. If avoiding crowds is an important criteria, then an advertisement showing the crowds at an art festival in Quebec will have a negative effect on that person. Similarly, an advertisement expressing the fascinating scene in Quebec will not have a positive effect because this image runs counter to the one that motivates this person (Mill and Morri-

son, 1985: 22). Therefore Turkey should display an approach based on product diversification at smaller scales, treat the tourism market and tourist types in relation to this concept, and plan accordingly. Cultural tourism has many components due to its nature and these components, particularly tourism diversification, should be perceived rightly to develop the right strategies.

In sum, it is impossible to market a 779.452 km² country with only one product type and invest in line with this. It would be meaningless to do so due to the country's strategic vision for the future, unique culture, intact authentic beauties, tolerant and friendly people, and the existence of different cultural values in different regions. Allowing visitors to experience these during their holidays will be an important step. The characteristics of the country make it a unique destination, which should encourage investments in cultural tourism. However, this investment should go to smaller destinations which create a difference and a different marketing mix should be developed for each culture area.

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