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RELIGIOUS TOURISM AND TURKEY¹

DİNÎ TURİZM VE TÜRKİYE

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ABSTRACT

Tourism as a socio-economic phenomenon that involves the relations and activities taking place within a country and also within the circuit of material and spiritual values exchanged between countries while spending one's leisure time. Religion is a system of beliefs about the supernatural and spiritual world, about God, and about how humans, as God's creatures, are supposed to behave on this earth. Religion and tourism are always associated in different regions and beliefs. Turkey is known as the cradle of civilizations for more than 10.000 years incorporating prehistoric times. In this study, Turkey's role as a religious tourism destination will be analyzed.

Key Words: Tourism, Religiosity, Pilgrimage, Turkey, Religious tourism

ÖΖ

Turizm, bir kişinin boş zamanlarını değerlendirirken, aynı zamanda ülkeler arasında maddi ve manevi değerlerin karşılıklı olarak paylaşılmasına yol açan ilişkileri ve faaliyetleri içeren sosyo-ekonomik bir fenomen olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Din, doğaüstü ve manevi dünya hakkında, Tanrı hakkında ve Tanrı'nın yaratıkları olarak insanların bu dünyada nasıl davranması gerektiği konusunu düzenleyen bir inanç sistemidir. Din ve turizm kavramları her zaman farklı bölgelerle ve inançlarla ilişkilendirilmiştir. Türkiye, tarih öncesi zamanlara kadar uzanan ve 10.000 yıldan fazla bir süredir medeniyetlerin beşiği olarak bilinmektedir. Bu çalışmada, bir dini turizm merkezi olarak Türkiye'nin sahip olduğu rol incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Turizm, Dindarlık, Hac, Türkiye, Dinî turizm

1. INTRODUCTION

Religion and tourism are always associated in different regions and beliefs. Human migration has been linked to religion from the earliest times (Sigaux, 1966; Vukonic, 1996). Furthermore, religious tourism, whose participants is motivated either in part or exclusively for religious reasons, is widely considered to be one of the oldest forms of travel (Kaelber, 2006; Rinschede, 1992). Collins-Kreiner and Gatrell (2006) note that it is impossible to understand the development of tourism without studying religion and understanding the pilgrimage phenomenon. Religious tourism has increased both in scale and scope and now represents a significant sector of the international tourism market (Olsen and Timothy, 2006).

Historically the three main religions; Judaism, Christianity and Islam coexisted in Anatolia. Due to this historical and to some extent, modern day coexistence, Turkey is now the home for various religious monuments and remnants of deep cultural value for the three main religions of the world

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(www.goturkey.com). With its historically significant religious sites like Harran; the birthplace of Abraham, Mountain Ararat; the site where Noah's Ark was grounded, Ephesus; the town where the Virgin Mary lived for a certain period of her lifetime and Tarsus; where Saint Paul, the leading missionary of the Christian faith once lived and so on, Turkey has a lot to offer in terms of religious tourism (Kartal et al., 2015) When this great repertoire of historical treasures that Turkey has, it is obvious that Turkey may serve as a significant destination for religious tourism.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWOK

2.1. Tourism

The Dictionary of Marketing and Business defines tourism as a socio-economic phenomenon that involves the relations and activities taking place within a country and also within the circuit of material and spiritual values exchanged between countries while spending one's leisure time. The WTO Conference in Ottawa redefined tourism, stating that the term refers to the activities undertaken by persons during their travels in places outside their residential areas for more than 24 hours or at least one night and less than a year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited (Alecu, 2010). Analyzing these definitions, at least five elements appear as important to tourism activities (Matei, 2005);

- tourism activities go beyond routine and beyond the area in which the routine activities take place;
- tourism means travelling but not necessarily means of transportation;
- tourism means accommodation at the destination place for at least one night;
- regular meals provided at destination;
- there is a personal motivation; the destination motivates the consumer

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world getting currencies to global economy and creating new job opportunities as well as providing socio-cultural interactions. Depending upon to World Travel and Tourism Councils' (WTTC) data, in 2009, tourism industry employed 210 million people worldwide and it meant 7,6% of global employment. The industry generated about US\$ 5.5 billion of economic activity, which accounted for 9.4% of global GDP. Tourism practices have gone through radical transformations in the global era. First of all, improvements in and cheapening of transportation and communication technologies enable a greater mobility, which results in longer distances being traveled for less money in less time (Sampson, 1985). Second, globalization implies greater political and economic integration. The declining importance of national borders has increased the mobility of people. In fact, it even generated a new type of tourism activity based on border shopping (Timothy, 1995).

Turkey has one of the fastest growing tourism industries in the world. The availability of natural, historical, and cultural resources, as well as the welcoming investment environment provided under government incentives, makes tourism a developing sector in the economy. A major portion of Turkish tourism depends on seaside mass tourism and leading tourism destinations in Turkey are located along the Aegean and the Mediterranean coastline. Turkey is one of the most famous destinations with attracting more than 20 million tourists annually. The number of tourist arrived to Turkey was 5,3 million in 1990, it increased to 11,6 million in 2000 and 27,0 million in 2009. It generated more than 22 billion US dollars. Depending on these data, Turkey is one of the 10 most important tourist destinations around the world. Turkey has more comparable advantages by comparing its competitors. It has different alternatives to attract more tourists and also to get more revenues from world's tourism pie (Aykaç, 2005).

2.2. Religiosity

Religion is a system of beliefs about the supernatural and spiritual world, about God, and about how humans, as God's creatures, are supposed to behave on this earth (Sheth and Mittal, 2004). One function of religion is to provide a source of meaning and purpose for people (Yener, 2013, 2014a, 2015b). Religion can provide a framework which makes life understandable and interpretable (Vitell, Paolillo and Singh, 2005). It is a complex subject to understand the effects of religions on human behaviors. The studies have focused on the effect of the degree of commitment in religion on behaviors (Muhamad and Mizerski, 2010). Religion is a universal construct that have an impact on people's attitudes, values and behaviors (Mokhlis, 2009). Every religion contains attitudes that shape of its members in all areas of social life.

The studies in sociology or psychology discipline focus on the religion, but its role in consumer research

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has not sufficiently been held (Essoo and Dibb, 2004). Religious values are seen as a potential explanatory in predicting consumer behavior, but it is seen as a taboo subject in the field of marketing it was not studied in depth (Muhamad and Mizerski, 2010). Religiosity level affects people's preferences. Marketers cannot ignore the influence of religion on the behavior (Fam, Waller and Erdogan, 2004). Purchasing decision reflects consumers' personality and it is affected by gender, age, nationality and religion (Mokhlis, 2006). Islamic teachings include marketing and economic activities (Yener, 2015a, 2014b). People are required to implement all activities on the basis of religious rules throughout their lives (Saeed, Ahmad and Mukhtar, 2001). No tourism activities take place outside of this scope.

2.3. Religious Tourism

Religious travel has existed since antiquity. Religious travel of all kinds has a long history: experts point to pilgrimage being institutionalized in parts of India more than 1000 years ago, whilst some sources trace travel to sacred sites back 30,000 years. Islam, for instance, has been characterized by the concept of pilgrimage as one of the basic pillars of Islamic faith. The idea that there is relationship between religion and tourism is not a new one. Religion is considered one of the important factors in the decision-making process with regard to travel destinations (Collins and Tisdell, 2002; Essoo and Dibb, 2004). Weidenfeld and Ron (2008) argue that the relationship between tourism and religion constitutes a valid and important area of research. They further stated that satisfying religious needs in the tourism industry should be taken into consideration especially in the marketing process. They believed that religious needs should be met in all tourism businesses and facilities such as attractions, airports, visitor information centers, and food outlets. Religious tourism is more of a commitment than visiting a museum or historical site. For members of a religious organization and volunteers that work at these sites, religious tourism represents a commitment to their faith and the importance of religion in their lives.

Pilgrimage has been defined as "a physical journey in search of truth, in search of what is sacred or holy" (Olsen and Timothy, 2006). The definition of pilgrim is entirely determined by the motivation and destination of the traveler. Pilgrims usually travel to sites of spiritual importance. Pilgrimage is an important feature of the world's major religions: Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism. Pilgrimage is also an important subject due to its scope and spatial influence: each year, an estimated three to five million Muslims make the Hajj (the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca on a specific date), some five million pilgrims go to Lourdes in France, and approximately 28 million Hindu pilgrims visit the River Ganges in India (Singh, 2006). According to Collins-Kreiner, et.al. (2006), the motivations for undertaking pilgrimage include the following:

- to fulfill a commandment of the religion, usually resulting in enhanced status after the return home.
- as an act of devotion to be close to the site of a miraculous or religiously significant event, for example, an "epiphany".
- to perform a deed of gaining remission of sins by visiting a place of grace.
- to meet particular needs such as health.
- to appease a deity in the face of misfortune.
- to be at a site where miraculous events are expected in the future.
- to attend a prayer meeting with a religious leader, a saintly person, or a sage.
- to attend a religious ceremony.
- to join others in visiting a folk-religion site.

Unlike the Middle Ages, when pilgrimage was conceived mainly in terms of pertinence, expiation, purification and redemption, during the post-medieval period the emphasis was on the changes that took place in the individual during the journey. The central themes of pilgrimage such as destination and faith were replaced by the mere experience of travelling (Swatos and Tomasi, 2008). The concept of journey still stood as a force transforming individual personalities, mentalities and social relationships. The journey itself had a new focus which was the fulfillment of the individual through the expression of personal freedom by setting out on the journey. While for the ancients the journey was considered to be valuable in the way that it explained human faith and necessity, the modern individuals celebrated it as a manifestation of freedom (Leed, 1992). The period of transition in the European history which started by the Industrial

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Revolution between late 18th and mid 19th centuries and concluded with the advent of the 1900s, a century that saw great discoveries in a variety of fields, whose contribution to the birth and growth of tourism was decisive. The modern individual of the 20th century was principally the outcome of industrialization along with a diverse set of social processes which resulted in the birth of tourism and of religious tourism in particular. The emergence of tourism as an industry was the evident result of a set of novelties brought about by the new century; improved means of communication and road transportation as the external forces along with the increased self-awareness of the individual, greater social influence exerted by the society and most importantly the availability of the free time or leisure time of the modern individual which marks a time frame when the individual is free of immediate and specific obligations and can be in search of new experiences (Swatos and Tomasi, 2008).

Travel, as a vital component of tourism, also comprises an integral part of religious tourism; in other words, religiously motivated travel. Pilgrimages and religious tourism both comprise sacred journeys. Despite pilgrims and tourists share similar characteristics, they are significantly different. Comparisons between these two groups are most often drawn when looking at sites that attract both people that are religiously motivated (pilgrims) and those who are not (tourists). Pilgrims and tourists have also been differentiated by their understanding of place. When travelling to a location, it is argued that the tourist views the place as peripheral while the pilgrim sees it as central (Digance, 2003). Religious tourism can be briefly defined as a special tourist activity orientated by the religious culture in question, in the context of a specific ecocultural environment accompanied with specific tourist activities and practices based on worshipping, research, sightseeing and culture carried out by religious followers and lay tourists (Mu et al., 2007). Religiously motivated travel or as it is more commonly known as Religious Tourism, is increasing at a global scale due to the modern individuals` growing need for spirituality and seeking solace in a more than ever turbulent world. Religious tourism is said to have five characteristics (Da Graca, 2003). As a viable component of modern tourism, five major characteristics were defined by Santos to distinguish religious tourism from pilgrimage:

- Voluntary, temporary and unpaid travel
- Motivated by religion
- Supplemented by other motivations
- The destination is a religious site (local, regional, national or international status)
- Travel to the destination is not a religious practice.

The basic distinction between the two forms of faith-based travel; pilgrimage and religious tourism; is that, in addition to the religious motivation, religious tourism is also characterized by other forms of touristic motivations such as cultural, sociological, special interest and heritage related. A deeper understanding of faith and an overall awareness of any given faith or religion to a larger audience become possible through religious tourism.

According to Ostrowski (2000), the distinction between religious tourism and pilgrimage lies in the motivation behind both concepts. As for pilgrimage there is a strong religious devotion to the idea of reaching the destination regarded as sacred and the whole practice is performed in a systematic framework, which is connected with prayers, specific rituals, penance and other forms of cult performed both along the way and at the pilgrim age destination. In the context of religious tourism however, in addition to the religious motives, educational and cultural motives are also at play. Either a single sacred site or a multitude of sacred sites can be visited on a religious tour/religious tourism journey while these sacred sites are not considered as ultimate points of destination. Even though the tourists may participate piously in the religious rituals which would lead to religious contentment and spiritual enlightenment during and after the journey, the sites visited contribute to general human knowledge by satisfying cultural needs. Visiting Mecca as a tourist and going to Mecca for the Islamic pilgrimage (hajj) is different.

2.4. Turkey as A Destination for Religious Tourism

As often known as the cradle of civilizations for more than 10.000 years incorporating prehistoric times, ancient Anatolian civilizations (Hittites, Assyrian, Urartu, Hatti, Hurrian, Byzantine Empire (Eastern Roman Empire), Seljuk Empire, Ottoman Empire and eventually the modern Turkish Republic; Turkey extends as a bridge between Europe and Asia. Historically the three main religions coexisted in Anatolia. Due to this historical and to some extent, modern day coexistence, Turkey is now the home for various

religious monuments and remnants of deep cultural value for the three main religions of the world (www.goturkey.com). Turkey, played a significant role in the history of Judaism and Christianity, with its historically significant religious sites standing as a proves: Harran; the birthplace of Abraham, Mountain Ararat; the site where Noah's Ark was grounded, Ephesus, Tarsus and Cappadocia region.

With the Faith Tourism Project enacted in the year 1993, Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism came up with a huge inventory of the sacred sites inherited through the three monotheistic religions (Judaism Christianity and Islam) which coexisted in the Turkish soil through the centuries. The inventory is based upon the following criteria:

- Being of prominent religious significance and attracting a large number of visitors.
- Having a prominent significance in terms of the history of art.
- Having a unique and interesting architectural characteristic
- Being located at a fairly reachable location and being included in the itineraries of Travel Agencies.

All the preparations were made to enhance and preserve the architectural structures, remnants and surroundings of the historically significant sacred sites built through the centuries all around Turkey in commemoration of the three monotheistic religions. Through the planned enhancements in terms of environmental planning, lighting and transportation, the objectives are to promote them to increase the number of visitors and to preserve these invaluable hereditary remnants for future generations. Within the context of the Faith Tourism Project the following 9 sacred sites and structures which played a significant role in the history of Christianity, have been determined to be preserved and promoted (http://yigm.kulturturizm.gov.tr/TR,10173/inanc-turizmi.html);

- Hatay: St. Peter`s Cave Church
- Mersin-Tarsus: St. Paul`s Museum
- Izmir-Selcuk: The House of Virgin Mary
- Antalya-Demre: St. Nicolas Church
- Bursa-Iznik: Hagia Sophia Church
- Manisa-Sard: Sard Synagogue
- Manisa-Alasehir: Alasehir Church
- Manisa Akhisar: Akhisar Church
- Isparta-Yalvac: Antioch of Pisidia
- Nevsehir-Derinkuyu: Derinkuyu Orthodox Church

3. CONCLUSION

Geographically situated as a bridge between Asia and Europe, Turkey covers the whole of Asia Minor and stretches toward the shores of the Mediterranean, Aegean and the Black Sea. Offering the perfect climate with four seasons and impeccable coastline along the Mediterranean, Aegean and Black Sea, Turkey is mostly renowned as a coastal tourism destination. Also, as a rich heritage land dating back to prehistoric times, Turkey is, at the same time, a major religious tourism destination due to its various sites of religious and historical significance. Turkish heritage of the religiously sacred and historically significant sites is so vast that the country is also known as the land of the New Testament as much of which was written by the three major apostles St. Peter, St. Paul and St. John in Asia Minor, where modern day Turkey is located, as part of the first spread of Christianity without which the religion could not thrive and become a major world religion as it is today.

When this great repertoire of historical treasures that Turkey has, is combined with the globally increasing tendency for religious tourism due to the global rise of spirituality, the need for seeking peace and solace in an increasingly turbulent world and modern individual's urge to track down their own religious and cultural heritage, it is obvious that Turkey may serve as a significant destination for both religious and cultural heritage tourism. The Faith Tourism Project launched by the Turkish Republic Ministry of Culture and Tourism in the year 1993, with the purpose of preserving and promoting the historical sites with religious

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and cultural significance, should be sustained and expanded. Turkey, as a land filled with Jewish and Christian heritage sites is not promoted and marketed the way it deserves both as a religious and cultural heritage destination enabling the descendants of the both cultures and believers of both religions to seek traces of their ancestors and creating awareness for the rest of the world with respect to the cultural treasures of humanity.

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