

The Importance of Cultural Tourism in the EU Integration Process

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Introduction

Thanks to the developments in the transportation - communication technologies, the space independent working concept has emerged, the distance problem has been solved, free and spare times of the employees have increased, social security - education level and international business / commerce contacts have increased, and congresses, exhibitions, symposiums or such other international activities are emphasized by multinational companies, which all cause the tourism sector within the services sector to realize an accelerated improvement (Tuzcuoğlu, 1992).

After all these changes, faced in social and economic life, the requirements / expectations of tourists as well as the concept of tourism have changed. From that point of view, as an alternative to the concept of tourism based on entertainment and resting, the cultural tourism has developed with the efforts to gain new information and experiences as well as knowing about different cultures.

The cultural tourism is defined as the events and relations formed by the special interest travels for the purpose of knowing about historical places and events¹. Cultural tourism involves visiting of cultural and natural resources, historically preserved places, structures, museums, cities or such other historical values that are unique from the point of science and culture, also attending to theaters, cinemas, art galleries or festivals.

In addition to the socio-cultural dimension, cultural tourism has also an economic dimension, and accordingly, competition for cultural tourism product variation and marketing in the cities increase considerably. For that purpose, in the destinations, the historical values which form a basis for cultural tourism are emphasized while the structural renovations aimed at providing the integrity of history and culture are realized and various activities are organized.

The cultural tourism, which increases the interaction between different cultures, makes shared values meet on the same platform, develops positive images and relations of the societies is therefore supported by the European Union(EU) (Hughes and Allen, 2005). In the process of EU integration the importance of cultural tourism increases for the İstanbul metropolis as it has been designated as the European Capital of Culture (ECC) for 2010.

¹ www.turkyasam.com

Cultural Tourism

Culture is a component of the variety within a country or between the countries forming the international societies (Francioni, 2004). Culture involves visiting museums, artistic activities, galleries, cultural heritage zones or traditional culture, also includes the lifestyles formed by beliefs, languages, nutrition habits, dressing of people, architectural buildings, handworks and related atmosphere (WTO, 2005).

Particularly as of the beginning of 1990s, the socio-cultural and economic cooperation and integration have been initiated between countries. In this process of integration, culture has emerged as a significant tool. The cultural accumulations forming the social structure have been carried outside the existing culture and new cultures are introduced, which are in fact one of the dimensions of globalization. Tourism is the most important process and tool which provides this cultural transmission (Niray, 2002).

Cultural tourism prevents ceasing of local - cultural values against globalization, which also includes tourism and culture sectors². The relation between culture and tourism is to a larger extent a symbiosis. Both increase the incomes and cultural resources and provide sustainability. The people participating in the cultural tourism are well educated, rich and travel interested people, and they are generally acceptable upper level "tourists". From that point, cultural tourism forms a type of culture that is new, improving and attractive (Hughes and Allen, 2005).

Thoughts and lifestyles form the creation process of culture, while structures, artistic products, traditions, customs and medium form the products of these processes. The historical areas, monuments, parks etc. or other cultural - social qualities form the "passive tourist environment providing formation of the cultural tourism, while cultural activities, festivals, exhibitions etc. form the "activity oriented environment" (Cohen-Hattab, 2004). Cultural tourism contains the "heritage tourism" related to the past products and "art tourism" with the contemporary cultural products.

Cultural attractions can be grouped on the basis of the cultural resources offered to tourists. Cultural resources are divided into two, namely, static attractions (monuments, museums, theme parks, architectural and artistic works or sculptures) and events (cultural - historical events, music and dance, theater, language and literature, festivals and artistic events) - (Figure).

According to this typology, 3rd group contains "traditional / historical" cultural attractions based on the cultural products of heritage and past (museums, monuments or galleries). 1st group contains language schools, artistic exhibitions or such other culture based contemporary attractions. 2nd and 4th group cultural tourism attractions are focused on providing entertainment, and considers the requirements of the cultural attendants. 2nd group contains the attractions related to entertainment such as art festivals or representations. Theme parks are located on the border of the 2nd or 4th group. Because, in these parks, contemporary entertainment is offered in addition to historical themes or attractions. 4th group has restricted the historical centers with a number of attractions that are the mixtures of entertainment an education components, also including the folklore festivals. Cities diverged from the past resources (3rd and 4th group) and oriented themselves towards contemporary cultural forms(1st and 2nd group) to emphasize their cultural products (Richards, 2001a).

² www.tarihikentlerbirligi.org

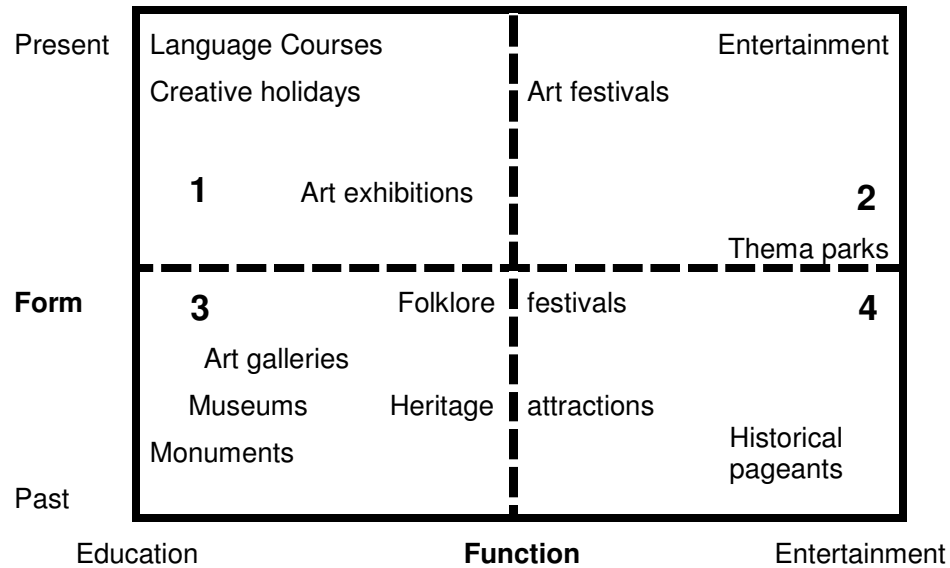


Figure: Typology of the cultural tourism attractions
Source: Richards, 2001a

As evident, cultural attractions do play a very important role in cultural tourism and increase the number of tourists. According to a study carried out by the European Commission, 60% of the European tourists are interested in cultural inventions in the process of their journeys while 20% of the tourism visits in Europe are aimed at cultural attractions (Cabirini, 2003).

The reasons for attending to cultural tourism can be classified as follows (Lohmann, and Mundt, 2002).

- Language learning, computer education and painting, design and photography courses or such other education aimed travels
- Classical learning travels
- Festivals, theaters, recitals, art exhibitions or such other cultural activity participation aimed journeys
- The travels for the purpose of cultural experience gaining
- The travels of the holiday tourists who are interested in culture, or who visit cultural regions or activities
- Business travels for the purpose of improving some cultural activities

The Importance of Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism provides development, in addition it is a social change agent which brings together the societies in the unity of senses and activities in the contemporary international relations (Demirtaş, undated).

From the second half of the 1990s, the EU has determined a tourism policy peculiar to EU. Tourism's key role in forming the Europe identity, supporting of the Medium and Small Scale Companies in the sector and increasing the tourism incentives through structural and regional funds were resolved (DPT,2001).

EU tries to reveal its cultural identity and heritage. EU cultural policy has been issued for supporting the national cultures of the member countries. For that purpose, three fundamental purposes were developed for the social movement in the cultural field;

- Contributing to the export of the cultures of the member countries while respecting the national and regional variety, also at the same time, emphasizing on the cultural heritage
- Encouraging the formation of the contemporary cultural formations
- Developing the cooperation and international organizations between member countries and third world countries (Richards, 2001b).

In line with the shared culture policy, every year, ECC organization takes place. With this project, the cultural values of the city designated as ECC are introduced, a culture focus identity is provided to the city to emphasize the prestige of the city and convert it into a tourism attraction center (Erginöz, 2004).

The cultural tourism competition is increasing from day to day between the cities in Europe. For being designated as the 2008 ECC, 14 cities of UK have contested (Landry, 2003). The cities designated as ECC are introduced, their infrastructures and cultural products are renewed and the number of tourists visiting the city increase (WTO, 2005).

In the process of EU integration and becoming a ECC, cultural tourism is important for both Turkey and Istanbul. In case EU integration process is completed, the number of tourists visiting Turkey will increase both with regard to quality and quantity, foreign capital investment to tourism will increase, and the resources for the infrastructure investment for tourism sector will increase thanks to utilization of structural funds³.

In the future, with the increasing education level and demand for information, cultural tourism demand and supply will continuously increase and localize, cultural tourism market will expand towards mass tourism, based on its products, it will be commercialized and new cultural product groups will emerge (Richards, 2001b).

Suggestions to Improve the Cultural Tourism of Istanbul, the European Capital of Culture for 2010

Istanbul has become important city through history with its strategic location connecting Asia and Europe and served as capital to Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman Empires. With its different religions, cultures and the products of those cultures, Istanbul allows cultural integration. In 1985, Istanbul's historical sites with a cultural quality were included in the UNESCO World Heritage List⁴.

Designated as the ECC for 2010, Istanbul, being a special city from the social and political point of view, is the main theme for the project. The project emphasizes the soil, water, air and fire, so called the primary elements of the universe. As the city of four elements, "soil" is represented by historical monuments reflecting cultural richness, "air" is represented by the religious richness of the minarets and gong towers, "water" is represented by the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn, and "fire" is represented by modern arts, youth and technology⁵.

Cultural tourism is becoming prominent in Istanbul for increasing attendance to regional and

³ <http://www.sedefed.org>

⁴ www.kultur.gov.tr

⁵ http://www.cnnturk.com/KULTUR_SANAT/

international activities and provision of local / global integration. From the cultural tourism products, Istanbul has a cultural heritage, artistic activities (contemporary representations and visual arts) and creative industries (design, fashion, contemporary architecture, advertising etc.).

The purpose must be turning Istanbul into a cultural destination, attract tourists and provide cultural attendance of its residents. With the strategies evaluated in the short and long term, the city should preserve its nature as the ECC.

It should be also checked if becoming an ECC is a good vehicle for accessing special policy purposes or the same could be used as an advertising in the short term. The strategies should be developed considering that without a structural cultural improvement program, ECC's fail to sustain their nature (Richards and Wilson, 2001).

In the 8th 5 years Development Plan, it is stated that while forming an image in the tourism product, the factors to be emphasized are Istanbul's being a center for the past civilizations, the civilization, product and climatic varieties of the country as well as the multi-ethnic structure of the society (DPT, 2001). From that point of view, cultural tourism programs that will support local employment and social development, contribute to infrastructure development and local & national identity (Steinberg, 2001).

Cultural tourism establish a dialogue between various cultures and approximate them to each other. Culture tourist is a silent and sincere vehicle for his / her own country culture and is a means to know about other cultures. The suggestions made to improve culture tourism of Istanbul in the process of EU integration could be listed under two different titles.

Cultural static attractions

As a result of the gradually increasing integration in the global economy, many places improve at the competitive framework, and the landscaping, infrastructure and elements in such places resemble each other much more. Cities for that purpose, seek the ways to become different. Heritage tourism, art tourism and lifestyle, and creative industries that are components of the cultural tourism can challenge competition. For improving the urban image, creating a competitive advantage and "leaving a trace", unique structures which generally have a high financial cost are determinants of the urban strategies (Richards and Wilson, 2001). Guggenheim Museum / Bilbao and Jewish Museum / Berlin could be counted as examples to the renovative structures with their unique architecture (Landry, 2003).

A balance should be established between preservation and utilization of the cultural assets, which are the fundamental components of the cultural tourism. Protection by using / preserving should be aimed. Museum, theater, cinema and concert halls within the city, historical structures, urban landscaping components should be increased with regard to quality and quantity and differentiation strategy should be followed in marketing those products of culture. While developing the current structures for that purpose, world's well-known architects, painters, sculptors, graphic designers or such other industrial groups should join to form unique and new structures in Istanbul.

The museums, which are among the attractions of cultural tourism, should provide tourist inflow to the city / country both with their architecture or renovative approaches. Sabancı Museum in Turkey brings the works of the renowned artists such as Picasso and Rodin for the last two years so that city and country people find the opportunity to see international works. On the country scale, the examples such as Sabancı Museum, which bring a different / renovative approach should be increased. New dimensions should be brought to the understanding of State Museums for the purpose of renovation and revitalization of museums.

Cultural events

By means of regular film, theater, concert, dance, sports, fashion, architecture or such other purpose activities, meeting of different cultures should be provided and cultural tourism will show a variety and improvement. In Istanbul, which hosted different civilizations in the past, projects - activities which allow integration of European and Islamic Countries in the same space should be developed.

For the purpose of rendering Istanbul as a local and a national cultural destination, the cultural products satisfying the changing tourism concept should be developed as well as cultural tourism consciousness should be created in the local / national scale. With the cultural heritage tourism, joint offering of different culture products should be provided for the tourists who want to see the representative - visual arts and creative industries together. With the activities through the entire city, the cultural infrastructure of the city should be reinforced, and attendance of the art-lovers as well as the city residents should be realized (Tok, 2002).

In the ECC examples, it is observed that cultural festivals and activities bring together the people of different cultures. The festivals and activities held on certain dates provide tourists with regular cultural products so that they revisit the place (WTO, 2005). Activities can aim the contemporary requirements of today's societies also, have the purpose to recall the past to keep it alive – like Spoleto Festival in Italy (Landry, 2003). Harrison A. Price, a tourism researcher stated that for improving tourism "the understanding that creating a brand new thing was the most common method in creating a tourism region (Olali, 1990). For that purpose, the number of festivals and activities which offer the presentation of different and unique cultures in Istanbul should be increased both in quality and quantity, also an international presentation should take place.

Within the festival, the works of the internationally renowned writers and poets who lived in or visited Istanbul and their impressions on Istanbul should be discussed. The "European Film Festival", "European Literature - Poem Meetings" or such other theme content works, activities, English Agatha Christie, French Pierre Loti (Louis Marie Julien Viaud) and such other "writers and poets" focusing "culture and literature" activities or congresses should be organized so that the city is kept vivid in any season.

The cultural variety of Istanbul is an important resource for improving the cultural tourism. The cities like London, Brussels and Rotterdam used the ethnical structure, particularly the "ethnical spaces" and cultural spaces to attract tourists and they are still using them - Banglatow and Spitalfields in London (WTO, 2005).

"Cherry Festival" is held each year in June in Polonezköy, which turn the district into a typical one and help the region to live its tradition and provide integration with the Polish visitors. The extent of the festival should be increased and it should be turned into an international activity. Thereby, integration of spaces and people with different cultural backgrounds should be better integrated.

Turkey should organize activities which emphasize the features and importance of the architectural works belonging to Roman, Ottoman or such other periods, in European and Islamic countries as the products of shared cultures. Each year, cooperation such as "sister city organizations" should be developed between the cities adopting a various architectural style and culture and Istanbul. Activities where unique architectural products leaving a trace in Istanbul are discussed should be organized and visited.

For improving the cultural tourism, the existence of cultural assets as well as the organized

activities should be continuous and renovative and detailed weekly cultural programs issued for cities should exist (Fainstein et al., 2003). To this extent, an efficient cultural tourism strategy for Istanbul should be determined in relation with historical, political and cultural processes.

Considering that the importance of internet is increasing from day to day in reaching the cultural destination, the cultural tourism products should be efficiently marketed within the World Wide Web so that the number of people attending to tourism is increased. Within the frame of the policies for the purpose of promoting the city, the ads and newspaper advertisements emphasizing the cultural heritage and infrastructure of Istanbul should be continued. The occupation rate of the urban accommodation facilities should be kept at the optimum level with the promotion strategy for the purpose of rendering a high quality and effective service.

Attraction (uniqueness, natural-artificial-social attractions) of the destination which is influential in the destination preference process, the facilities / services in the destination zone (accommodation, restaurants, transportation etc.), accessibility, image and price should be considered so that strategies for the entire city are developed (Çıracı, Kerimoğlu, 2002).

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