A Research on the Middle East Market within the Context of Turkey

Tourism

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Extensive Summary

Introduction

For the last six decades, tourism showing a continuous improvement in the world economy has been one of the fastest and most widely growing industries. Despite the periods of shocks occurring, international tourist arrivals continued to increase almost without interruption. International tourist arrivals reached 25 million in 1950, 278 million in 1980, 528 million in 1995 and 1.035 million in 2012. According to Tourism Towards including United Nations World Tourism Organization’s long term estimations (UNWTO, 2013, p.14), by the year 2030 worldwide international tourist arrivals from 2010 to 2030 with an increase of % 3.3 will reach 1.8 billion.

While showing a rapid development in the world, tourism has showed a very rapid growth both in terms of economic policies and within micro base. Having studied the tourism activities in the country, it is seen that revival of tourism activities took place in 1980’s, there is an increase at record levels in the number of tourists and tourism revenues (Çımat and Bahar, 2003, p.2). The increase has continued in the following years. Turkey mostly attracts tourists from Western European Countries and tourists from the Middle East come second (Mengü, 2008, p. 46). Conjunction emerged in recent years and as a consequence of the policies Turkey has applied, the Middle Easters’ interest towards Turkey has increased and consequently it is detected that there is a significant increase in the number of the Middle Eastern tourists visiting Turkey. Rize - Ayder Tourism Center took its share and it is seen that there is a significant increase in the number of the Middle Eastern tourists.

From this point of view, in this paper marketing approaches of tourism enterprises in Ayder Tourism Center are studied to be revealed. Accordingly, the pints studied in this paper are like that; the place of the Middle Eastern tourists in target markets of tourism enterprises in Ayder Tourism Center, perceptions of tourism enterprises towards the Middle Eastern tourists; whether there is sufficient diversity of products and services for the market tourism enterprises serve and how tourism enterprises segment the market.
In this context, to ensure a common concept, first of all, the term “Middle East” implied in the literature will be clarified, after market segmentation and target market is implied briefly; research method, findings and research results will be studied.

The term “Middle East” thought to be a western-based subjective conceptualization is available in several languages and used in many studies. Furthermore it is realized that that the term “Middle East” and “Arabic World” are used in many studies synonymously. According to the aim of the studies carried out and researchers’ preferences, it is seen that the geographical area this term implies either broadens or narrows (Arifin and Hasim, 2009; Dursun, 2005; Mengü, 2008; Salman and Hasim, 2012).

Market segmentation is done to have a better understanding of the characteristics of tourists and create marketing strategies (Park et. al., 2002). This method helps marketers to determine customers’ needs and desires precisely by segmenting large heterogeneous markets into smaller sections (Dolnicar, 2007; Goldsmith and Litvin, 1999; Kotler, 1980; Kotler, Bowen and Makens, 2003; Swarbrooke and Horner, 1999). Kotler (1980) predicates market segmentation on four bases; demographic, geographic, psychographic and behavioral. Kotler’s (1980) segmentation criterion is used in different combinations by researchers (Tkaczynski, 2009). Rizaoglu (2004) implied about segmentation according to the marketing factors in addition to these four bases.

With the market segmentation, the enterprises decide which market or which segment of market get into; in other words they choose their target market or markets.

Method

In this research, qualitative research method was used. As the method of data collection, semi-structured interviews including open-ended questions are used. We tried to interview with representatives of 32 different types of accommodation facilities and representatives of 9 food-beverage enterprises at the destination where the research done, however, as the interviews are made on a voluntary basis, representatives of 16 different types of accommodation facilities and representatives of 3 food-beverage enterprises have been interviewed. For the protection of confidentiality of representatives, an alphabetical code is assigned to each representative interviewed.

In the analysis phase of the data obtained as a result of face to face interviews; the steps like data reduction used in many types of analysis, data representation and deduction are used (Huberman ve Miles, 1994; Marvasti, 2004; Merriam, 1998). To improve the validity and reliability of the research, the principles of qualitative researches – reliability and validity are taken into consideration. Due to the financial and time limitations, the research was carried out in a regional destination, that constraints the limitations of the research.

Findings

Unlike tourist-oriented market segmentation studies, market segmentation is examined in terms of service providers not demanders in this paper. In this respect, primarily to reveal the characteristics of tourists, representatives of tourism enterprises are negotiated with and tried to understand which sorts of market segmentations is used in their business.
According to the data obtained from the representatives of the enterprises it is understood that tourists from all ages come to Ayder Tourism Center where the study is carried out, according to the level of income the ones come to the destination are mostly middle income people, mostly university graduate tourists who have a higher level of education come to destination, in terms of nationality mostly domestic tourists come and in terms of foreign tourists mostly the Middle Eastern tourists come. Once again, according to the data obtained from the representatives it is determined that tourists visit this destination mostly for its nature and these tourists stay here for short terms and in the mean time they spend mostly on accommodations and food-beverage services.

From this point of view, it can be said that almost all of the representatives of the enterprises can group the tourist according to the most commonly used 13 market segmentation variables except gender variable in the literature. And according to the representatives’ statements, most of the enterprises in this destination do not make changes in their services according to tourists’ desires and provide the same service for every tourist. In this destination, it can be said that most of the tourism enterprises apply undifferentiated market strategy aiming at all the tourists in stead of aiming at one market segment.

**Discussion**

Most of the different sorts of tourism enterprises in Ayder Tourism Center have continued their existence for 5 years or more; however almost none of these enterprises have their own marketing department. The reason for this situation can be shown as most of the enterprises in this destination are represented as small family business. Most of the representatives are either directors of the enterprises or the owners of the enterprises. The ones who determine marketing strategies are either the directors or the owners. There are no marketing activities in a professional manner in these enterprises and what is understood for the concept marketing is the introduction of the enterprise. It is seen that these enterprises do not make an extra effort at keeping visitors statics that should be done primarily for marketing activities. The statics kept about the visitors in these enterprises do not go beyond credentials they get during the inflows of tourists (check-in) into the enterprises.

Some of the interviewed representatives stated that the Middle Eastern tourists have higher level of income; however they bargain while spending. In the studies to identify the Middle Eastern tourists’ income level it is stated that this tourist group have a higher level of income. From this point of view, representatives’ opinions about the Middle Eastern tourists’ level of income can be acknowledged as true. As these enterprises are active in tourism sector in this destination they have opinions about the characteristics of the tourists come to the destination. Nevertheless a professional study is not carried out in these enterprises to determine the tourists’ concern, demand and characteristics. This situation results in that the Middle Eastern tourists identified in the literature as the tourist group which spends most, doesn’t spend enough in this destination. Moreover, the enterprises’ being small scales and having limited opportunities to serve high quality services also restrict the expenditures of the Middle Eastern tourists who demand higher qualities of services. When representatives are asked whether they want the Middle Eastern tourists to come or not and what do they think about the Middle Eastern tourists as the target market, a significant portion of the representatives claim that the Middle Eastern tourist are not their target market and they
will not make an effort for the Middle Eastern tourists to come. That results in that they cannot get enough efficiency in terms of expenditures made by the Middle Eastern tourists. Furthermore the representatives who don’t want the Middle Eastern tourists to come, state that the Middle Eastern tourists behaves as if they were at their home while accommodating and disturb the other tourists. The studies conducted on the characteristics of the Middle Eastern tourists, show that the Middle Eastern tourists usually travel in large families and staying at the hotels is less attractive while they are away from their homes for long term. Thus, the countries like Lebanon and England which allocate Vacation Homes for international tourists have become more attractive for the Middle Eastern tourists (Mengü, 2008). The representatives’ opinions on this matter confirm the studies in the literature.