

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF URBAN TOURISM FOR HOTEL MARKETING POLICIES: THE CASE OF ESKIŞEHİR**

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**Abstract:** Urban tourism is becoming increasingly important both for private entrepreneurs and local authorities. Because of the impact tourism can have, both the private and public sectors have to get involved more in promoting their city as a destination. The present paper tries to analyze the marketing efforts made by four hotels in Eskişehir (Turkey) and present a series of practical solutions for the hotels and the local authorities in order to improve the city's image.

**Key words:** marketing, promotion, urban tourism, planning, local authorities

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### **INTRODUCTION**

During the last decades urban tourism has increased constantly. With regard to tourism strategies, cities should be evaluated according to their hotel industry capacity. Depending especially on local conditions, hotel businesses are responsible with urban tourism development and this makes it harder to determine a single administrative structure (Çiraci et al., 2008, Kowalczyk, 2009).

While hotel organizations are searching for the best sales and marketing operations, it is easy to admit that different types of hotels have different sales and marketing operating characteristics. Whether a hotel can be an independent or branded hotel, a major hotel chain or hotel management company, it can stay ahead of its competitors and capture new market share with an effective sales and marketing efforts and also hotels compete to attract tourists by emphasizing the experience they have to offer (Page, 1995).

Hotels' marketing departments of today have many innovations to work with that are intended to make the marketing efforts easier and more effective, as well as produce more bottom line results for the hotel and the city.

### **URBAN TOURISM – AN EMERGING FORM OF TOURISM**

Throughout history, towns and cities have been a focus of tourist activity, providing accommodation, entertainment and other facilities for visitors. However, although much of the world's tourism activity occurs in urban areas from major cities like Paris and

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London to coastal resorts, it is only recently that urban tourism has been identified as a significant sector of tourism worthy enough for academic attention. Sharpley has identified two main reasons for this. Firstly, since the early 1980s, the potential contribution of tourism to urban regeneration, particularly in towns and cities not traditionally associated with tourism, has become more widely recognized. Tourism is now a virtually ubiquitous element of urban regeneration policy. Secondly, transformations in the demand for travel and tourism, influenced particularly by the expansion of low cost, no-frills flights, have put many more towns and cities on the tourism map, significantly increasing competition within the urban tourism sector (Sharpley, 2006, Pearce, 1993).

According to the Dictionary of Travel, Tourism and Hospitality (Çiraci et al., 2008) urban tourism consists of trips and visits with a focus on town and city destinations, also known as city tourism. A fast growing form of tourism, stimulated by historical and cultural attractions, as well as shopping and event attractions, and by business travel, it offers much scope for urban regeneration. At the same time urban tourism tends to be accounted for as the product and creativity of an expanding tourist industry, a series of disparate activities with disparate histories and origins amalgamated and placed in taxonomy of tourism businesses (Franklin, 2003).

Urban tourism is distinguishable from other forms of tourism by a number of features which, while they are not applicable to all urban destinations and may be applicable to some non-urban destinations, characterize urban tourism destinations as a whole. Significant numbers of tourists in urban areas are visiting for a primary purpose other than leisure, including business, conferences, shopping, and visiting friends and relatives (Edwards et al., 2008; Ashworth & Page, 2010; Bramwell & Lane, 1993).

**Table 1.** Most visited cities in 2010

(Data source: Weiner, M. [http://travel.usnews.com/features/Worlds\\_Most\\_Visited\\_Cities/](http://travel.usnews.com/features/Worlds_Most_Visited_Cities/))

City	Country	Million visitors
Paris	France	15.1
London	Unite Kingdom	14.6
New York	USA	9.7
Antalya	Turkey	9.2
Singapore	Singapore	9.2
Kuala Lumpur	Malaysia	8.9
Hong Kong	China	8.4
Dubai	UAE	8.3
Bangkok	Thailand	7.2
Istanbul	Turkey	6.9

From a touristic point of view, cities can supply numerous opportunities. They can be split into core (primary) elements and secondary elements. The core elements, belonging mostly to the public domain consist of a mix of attractions, considered unique and capable of attracting tourists to the city or town (e.g. museums, urban architecture, theme parks and exhibition halls).

The second group consists of urban facilities which support and complement the tourist's experience (e.g. hotels, restaurants, transport facilities and bars).

The relationship between tourism and urban areas was examined by numerous authors, who distinguished three elements of city resources. Primary elements such as cultural and historical facilities, amusement facilities, physical characteristics and socio-cultural features provide the main reasons of tourist visits. Secondary, such as accommodation, catering facilities, shopping and markets are very important elements but are not the most significant. The last group represents additional elements such as

accessibility, transportation and parking and tourist information which are also very important for urban tourism success (Kowalczyk, 2009).

At the same time, there are cities (Table 1) which need planning to deal with the millions of tourists that visit all year long. The pressure on the city's infrastructure and local population is immense, but at the same time tourism can represent an important source of income. So it is the task of city officials to find the balance between the two in order to take advantage of all the benefits (Faulkner & Tideswell, 1997, HwanSuk & Sirakaya, 2006, Roberts et al., 1991).

### **TOURISM IN ESKİŞEHİR, TURKEY**

As tourism is becoming much more important for the Turkish economy as for other countries, these days there are lot of discussions about how to improve the performance of the establishments in the industry. According to figures of World Tourism Organization 2020 estimations, Turkey will double the number of tourists in the next decade. Therefore, hotel performance is gaining much more importance, because if they cannot follow the trends in the macro environment and respond, they have less chance to be successful.

Eskişehir is located in Central Anatolia, and over the years, the city has become a livable and lively college town with amenities and cultural activities. Eskişehir is an important industrial, tourism and transport center in western Turkey. Though its name means „*Old City*”, what you'll see of present-day Eskişehir (alt. 730 meters/2400 feet, pop. 600.000) is mostly modern, in spite the fact that the Roman city of Dorylaeum was located nearby ([www.Eskişehir.gov.tr](http://www.Eskişehir.gov.tr)). When we look at the socio economic development level of Eskişehir (SPO, 2004) it holds the 5th position and is part of the 2nd most developed province in Turkey in 2008. The city has a significant population of Crimean Tatars. It also attracted ethnic Turks emigrating from Bulgaria and Romania who contributed to the development of the city's metalworking industries.

Most of Eskişehir was rebuilt after the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1922). It is a well-functioning attractive place, but with few old attractions. One exception is the Kursunlu Camii Mosque. Near Eskişehir lies the site of the ancient Phrygian city of Dorylaeum. According to the Tourism Action Plan prepared by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2007 (Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey 2023 Action Plan, 2007) there is the Frig valley which passes through Eskişehir and is defined as 'Frig Culture and Thermal Tourism Development Zone' and it is stipulated to be developed as an open air museum and to be put forward as a culture and thermal tourism area in the international plane (Çiraci et al., 2008).

The region called Phrygian Valley, situated between the cities of Afyonkarahisar, Kütahya and Eskişehir is an area that native people living in the city are uninformed about despite its historical, cultural and natural importance for tourism. Phrygian Valley, which is one of the most important historical settlements in Anatolia, has been managed by the governors of the three provinces. In antiquity, Phrygia was a kingdom in the western central part of Anatolia. The Phrygians (Phruges or Phryges) initially lived in the Southern Balkans, according to Herodotus, under the name of Bryges (Briges), changing it to Phruges after their final migration to Anatolia, via the Hellespon.

Yunus Emre Village (Sarıkoy) is the burial place of Yunus Emre, the great 13th century poet. His poetry continues to live today, its messages of love and humanity being as relevant as ever and commemorative celebrations are held in the town every May. In addition to his grave, visitors can see a small museum dedicated to his life and works.

Turkey is set to become an international thermal tourism destination as a result of a thermal tourism master plan drawn up by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The project aims to highlight Turkey as a major health and thermal destination in the world

by 2023. Overall, 25 tourism destinations in four regions were identified as thermal and culture tourism development destinations as part of the master plan.

Eskişehir was selected due to the fact that it has promising areas in terms of thermal sources and also for its cultural and natural assets.

### CURRENT TOURISM POTENTIAL OF ESKIŞEHİR

The tourism statistics collected by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey cannot be used to analyze the consumption patterns of tourists, but it does give us a useful picture of the city's tourism in general.

**Table 2.** Eskişehir's current tourism potential (2008)  
(Data source: Figure was created based on the statistics from DİE web page – Governmental Institute of Statistics www.die.gov.tr)

	Number of visitors	Number of overnights	Average length of stay (overnights)	Occupancy (%)
Foreign	18 502	56 319	3.1	3.74
Domestic	204 056	314 901	1.5	45.99
Total	223 558	361 320	1.6	49.73

Eskişehir's tourism industry has developed rapidly since the beginning of the 2000s. At that time the city had to increase bed capacity in order to respond to the demands of the travelers. Hence, tourism investment focused on the superstructure by the private sector and the infrastructure by the government and the local authorities. If the dates are analyzed, it can be observed that domestic tourism has performed better than all other foreign arrivals in the city (Table 2). It can be seen in Table 2 that the number of foreign tourists who visited Eskişehir is 18,502 and the number of domestic visitors are 204,056.

**Table 3.** International tourist arrivals by country of destination in 2010  
(Data source: UNWTO – World Tourism Barometer, April 2011, p.21)

Rank	Country	International Tourist Arrivals
1	France	76.8 million
2	United States	59.7 million
3	China	55.7 million
4	Spain	52.7 million
5	Italy	43.6 million
6	United Kingdom	28.1 million
7	<b>Turkey</b>	<b>27.0 million</b>
8	Germany	26.9 million
9	Malaysia	24.6 million
10	Mexico	22.4 million

The total number of visitors who visited Eskişehir in 2008 was 223,558. If we consider that Turkey was visited in 2008 by 25 million tourists (Table 3) we can conclude that, Eskişehir has the potential to attract a larger number of tourists in the future.

The number of overnights of foreign tourists in Eskişehir is 56,319 and domestic tourists' number of overnights is 314,320. The situation is different according to the average length of overnights; the foreign tourists' average is 3.1 and domestic ones' average is 1.5 and the total average is 1.6 days. In 2008, occupancy ratios of the hotels in Eskişehir were 3.74% foreign tourists and 45.99% is domestic visitors and the total amount is 49.73%.

Eskişehir's current lodging potential: Bed capacity in Eskişehir is 2,115 in 2008. The number of hotels in Eskişehir is 23, and the total number of rooms is 1160.

## METHODOLOGY

In the study, the interview method was employed. Firstly we should consider what an interview is. Frey and Oishi (1995, p.01) define it as “a purposeful conversation in which one person asks prepared questions (interviewer) and another answers them (respondent)”. This is done to gain information on a particular topic or a particular area to be researched. Interviews are a useful tool which can lead to further research using other methodologies such as observation and experiments (Jensen & Nicholas, 1991).

Four marketing and sales directors of four hotel enterprises (Anemon, Dedepark, Ibis and Roof Garden hotels) (Table 4) constitute the total field of the study. There are two important reasons as to why a hotel enterprise was chosen as the field area. Firstly, it is assumed that hotels have stronger organizational structure, human resources policies, management and marketing principles compared to travel agencies. Secondly, it is accepted that the application will be handled easily by limiting the survey field as the study method is interview.

**Table 4.** Basic information about the studied hotels (2008)  
(Data source: field study at the hotels)

Name	Number of stars	Number of rooms	% of total rooms in Eskişehir
Anemon	5	174	15%
Dedepark	4	64	5%
Ibis	3	108	9%
Roof Garden	3	57	4%
TOTAL		403	34%

Within the scope of this study, a visit to the hotels was organized in order to gather information about current efforts of the marketing department. The mentioned hotels were informed about the scope of the study in order to create a common ground and to secure their help during the study phase. First, the sales and marketing directors were contacted with telephone and later they were interviewed. The hotels in our study are assumed to be closely related with tourism development in the city.

We prepared questionnaires for the directors of sales and marketing department of the hotels. The questionnaire, which was originally developed in Turkish, was translated into English, and the questions were pre-tested with a sample of 20 hotel marketing managers in Ankara, Turkey. Questionnaires were gathered by face to face interviews as it is summarized in Table 5.

## HOTEL MARKETING POLICIES ANALYSIS

The competition between cities' effective marketing of urban tourism products will become extremely important in the next decade. The purpose of the study was to examine and compare the sales and marketing efforts of four hotels in Eskişehir. The names of the hotels are: Anemon Hotel, Ibis Hotel, Dedepark and Roof Garden Hotel.

During our field study we visited the hotel while collecting as many information as possible via internet in order to get a clear picture of the hotels. Business generated by the Internet is rapidly increasing. The central point of this strategy is the development of the hotel's own web site, in addition to their franchise web-presence (if any). Regarding the website information available languages, address/routing/map, room photos and downloading brochure possibility were taken into consideration. Initially, all of the hotels have their own website in various languages.

Except Ibis Hotel, the other three hotels offer their website both in English and German. In addition, all hotels' websites contain information about address, routing, map and room photos. Also, every hotel offers brochures in their websites except Ibis Hotel. The websites slightly differ from each other. The only two exceptions are language availability and downloading brochure opportunities. Thus no strengths or weaknesses related to the websites can be determined.

Table 5. Questionnaires Results  
(Data source: The questionnaires applied during the interviews by the authors)

	<b>Anemon Hotel</b>	<b>Dedepark Hotel</b>	<b>İbis Hotel</b>	<b>Roof Garden Hotel</b>
Languages	English German	English German	English	German English
Address/route/map	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Room photos	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Download brochure possibility	Yes	Yes	No	No
Own website	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility	- Near the highway - Average access by car - Average access by public transport 15 minutes from the train station - 10 minutes with public transport to the city centre	- 5 minutes' walk to the city centre - 5 minutes' walk to the train station	- Average access by car - Average access with public transport - Near the train station	- Near the highway - 15 minutes from the railway station
Special offer	- Early booking discount from \$109 - Hot deals from \$99 - Winter offers from \$110,- for 2 persons	- City tour special up to 15% discount	- The city tour special 2 nights for 2 persons \$100	- The city tour special 2 nights for 2 persons \$80
Accepted credit cards	- American Express - Visa - Euro/MasterCard - Diners Club - ATM Card - Maestro	- American Express - Visa - Euro/MasterCard - Diners Club	- American Express - Visa - Euro/MasterCard - Diners Club	- American Express - Visa - Euro/MasterCard
Superior room Price in low season for business	\$99	\$89	\$83	\$79
Price in high season for business	\$139	\$109	\$109	\$89
Distribution channels	- Telephone - Own website - Online Booking - Brochures - Travel agency - Facebook	- Telephone - Own website - Online Booking - Travel agency - Facebook	- Telephone - Own website - Online Booking - Brochures - Travel agency - Facebook	- Telephone - Own website - Online Booking - Brochures - Travel agency
Membership	- Loyalty Card	-	- Membership card with points	-

Accessibility might be considered as one of the most significant elements for business hotels. For business guests, the location of hotels, access to city centre and transportation facilities plays a major role in choosing the hotel. Ibis and Dedepark Hotel are nearly the same if we consider the distance from the city centre. They are both located about 5 minutes on foot from the city centre. Furthermore, Dedepark is near the highway and 5 minutes away from the railway station. Anemon is located 10 minutes away from the city center but nearby the highway. However, Roof Garden is located 6 minutes from

the city centre and also has an average access both by car and public transportation. In contrast, Ibis Hotel was constructed only 1 minute far from the railway station.

Thus, accessibility remarkably differs from one hotel to the other due to their location. We can consider accessibility an advantage for Ibis compared to the other hotels.

In consideration of distribution channels, information about hotels can be gathered in various different ways. Guests can contact all hotels by telephone, travel agency, and website and also do online booking. In addition, Anemon, Dedepark and Ibis Hotels offer brochures as it was mentioned before. Also, guests can gather information about Anemon, Dedepark and Ibis Hotels through Facebook. Thus, all hotels seem to pay attention to the distributions to improve their guests' satisfaction. One big advantage of the Anemon is that they belong to a national chain, and thus their distribution channels are spread globally.

The information of offering a member card is provided only from Anemon Hotel, no conclusion can be given about this aspect. It is assumed that the other three companies offer this service too, however it is only for loyal guests and therefore not an information that is published for everybody.

We can conclude that the Anemon wants to attract more tourists who are interested in their membership card which is actually provided for loyal customers.

In consideration of attracting more loyal guest, providing more benefits and opportunities to loyalty card owners might be a suitable way. According to the management team's research, a few elements were decided which might be implemented or provided, such as free internet service, free fax and print facilities and by collecting points, a free one night stay or a special gift. These were considered as attractive for loyal guests and also might have positive effects on the satisfaction of the guests.

Regarding free internet service, we consider it an indispensable necessity for business guests and it might be important for guests who do not have the loyal card right now. It also increases guest satisfaction and comfort. By implementing this service, guests can use internet anytime and anywhere in the hotel without being charged. It would give an opportunity to the hotel to improve guests' satisfaction. Thus, allowing guests to use this service free can be considered an appropriate way to appeal to more loyal guests.

It can be considered that the business guests' fax and printer services needs should not be ignored. According to the management team, fax and printer services can also be free for loyal card owners. This strategy mainly focuses on business guests and can be implemented easily. Since, these services are already being provided at the hotel, thus there is no need to invest in new equipments. It is beneficial because providing loyal guests free fax and printer service might reveal the hotel's positive approach to loyal guests. Hence, this strategy can be considered as an appealing one and should be taken into consideration.

We consider that these strategies' purpose is to increase the number of loyal guests and also provide higher quality of service in order to maintain and increase guest satisfaction. From an innovation perspective, the goal is to deliver more products and services, thus improving guest satisfaction and the number of loyal card owners. The measurement is the percentages of the new loyal guests.

In relation to customer perspectives, the goal is to satisfy already existing loyal guests as well as attracting new ones. This is done by offering the above mentioned services in order to meet their expectations. A way of measuring the satisfaction can be by interviewing the loyal guests and make use of surveys. Regarding to internal business the goal is to improve profit in a proper way by increasing the number of loyal members which can be measured by counting the changes of new members. Regarding the financial perspective, the profit made by loyal guests should be increased by appealing more to the needs of these customers, which can be measured by focusing on the profit only made by loyal customers.

The study was confined to four hotels in Eskişehir, Turkey: it's representatively for the whole of Turkey cannot be claimed, and any generalizations from the research to

other geographic regions should be treated with caution. It is recommended that the marketing efforts of hotels be incorporated as a variable to establish whether there are differences between hotels of different sizes, and ownership type within the different grading of hotels.

The next stage of the research should be focused on the main types of tourism practiced in Eskişehir and their impact on the hotel industry and the development of urban tourism from the authorities' point of view.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Sharpley (2006) considers the principal purpose of developing urban tourism to be the socio-economic regeneration of urban spaces, such as dockland areas or inner cities, thereby stimulating economic growth, inward investment, infrastructural improvements, and so on. A variety of strategies may be employed, depending upon the attributes of different cities: event-led strategies (e.g. Olympic Games), attraction-led strategies (creating a core, critical mass of attractions), business-led strategies (e.g. conference tourism), culture strategies (promoting heritage or contemporary culture), and leisure-activity strategies (e.g. shopping, cinema, theatre, etc.).

Urban tourism is an increasingly important source of income and employment in most metropolitan areas, and therefore it warrants a coordinated and concerted effort to make it grow. This growth is best nurtured by the role a visitor's bureau can play in continually improving the scope and caliber of services the city provides to corporate and association meeting planners, to individual business travelers, and to leisure travelers (Goeldner et al., 2000).

There are critics (Asworth & Page, 2010, Wheeler, 1993, Timur & Getz, 2002) who argue that tourism impacts upon cities in general are almost certainly overestimated and extrapolated from a few well-known. It is salutary to remember that even in such world-class premier tourism centers as these, only a small fraction of the city's physical extent, facilities and services and indeed residents are actually affected by tourism to any significant degree. Equally, it should be remembered that although tourism as a whole is one of the world's most important economic activities, its economic significance to particular cities may be relatively less important than many other economic sectors.

It is said that organizations in the tourism industry have been slow in adopting the principles of marketing, even though these would enable them to improve their performance and customer retention (Appiah-Adu et al., 2000).

From the interviews we can conclude that hotels have a somewhat similar policy regarding its clients and all the four hotels of our study are very well developed in the field of marketing.

For a service organization, such as a hotel to acquire customers, it is important that marketing strategies be developed to improve own ability to compete with other hotels, gain a competitive advantage and thus retain a greater number of customers. All of these strategies are believed to have a great impact not only on the profit of the hotel but also on the image.

The strategy of loyalty guests is very important because the hotel wants to attract more loyal customers in the near future. Together with the development of new technologies, Anemon can improve this aspect even more. It is assumed that many business guests own loyalty cards and therefore they prefer Anemon.

It is seen that to focus loyal card is very important to determine the loyal guests. Extra services, such as free use of internet and the fax, photocopy and print services are offered together with the loyalty card. This as well should increase the number of loyal guests as well as satisfying the existing ones. We can only speculate about the types of tourists that choose the four hotels of our study, but we consider that the main motivations behind the tourists' visit to Eskişehir are culture, history and its modern



lifestyle. Besides them, Eskişehir is planning to become a tourism attraction for its natural riches, food varieties and shopping possibilities.

Göçeli Tarhana (soup with dried yogurt), harşil, çerkez sofrası (Circadian meal), çiğ börek (raw pastry), katlama böreği (folded pastry) could be counted among the local traditional cuisine. Objects crafted from meerschaum such as pipes and jewelry are the most beautiful and significant souvenirs of the region (Cornell & Turkoglu, 2004). Odunpazarı was the first district of modern Eskişehir to be settled and is now being recognized as a cultural center in its own right, particularly because of its old homes, which are wonderful examples of Ottoman architecture. With new life brought to Odunpazarı through a municipality project, focused not only on restoring architectural structures but also on the social and economic life of this district, it is fair to say that Odunpazarı is heading toward being a true tourist center in Turkey. Visitors, both local and foreign, are stopping by to enjoy the atmosphere and in fact, Odunpazarı has been promoted by many tourism agencies in recent years.

In the case of hotels, and other private entrepreneurs for that matter, we consider important to try and implement the following ideas in order to help promote the destination as a whole:

- Create partnerships or associations as marketing expenses per unit will be smaller;
- Employ third party companies to create and promote the image of the town;
- Improve the quality of services by exchanging ideas in the framework of the association;
- Find or develop local attractions for the foreign tourists, as to extend their length of stay.

Local authorities have their own agenda, but tourism incomes cannot be neglected. Their tasks are mainly to create feasible frameworks for the private firms to conduct their business responsibly.

Some other tasks can be:

- Invite the tourism businesses to present their problems and find solutions;
- Supply infrastructure needed by both tourists and firms;
- Assure safety and security because tourists and tourist areas possess a range of characteristics that make them vulnerable to crime (Barker & Page, 2002).

In conclusion, we consider marketing strategies of hotels extremely important for urban tourism. Although we cannot talk about a unitary strategy to promote Eskişehir nationally or internationally, hotels are putting into practice numerous marketing instruments in order to attract a larger number of tourists and increase tourists' satisfaction. The main focus in the near future should rely on the shoulders of the local authorities to organizing the private entrepreneurs in order to establish Eskişehir on the touristic map of Turkey.

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