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The role of travel intermediaries in the development of sustainable mountain tourism. The case of Turkey

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Abstract: The aim of the study is to investigate the current situation of mountain tourism and its sustainability in Turkey as a new and ascending tourism product. In addition, tourism policies of Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism in the mountain tourism area are scrutinized. Not only the tourism policies of the government are enough to promote a new alternative tourism type, but also the role and effects of tourism middlemen such as travel agencies, tour operators, and tour wholesalers cannot be denied in the promotion of a destination. Mountain tourism can be accepted and classified as one of these mentioned alternative and newly developed types of tourism in many destinations. Therefore, mountain tourism could be one of the best alternative tourism opportunities for many destinations if they have sufficient resources, namely naturally attractive mountains and related infra and/or superstructure.

Keywords: Sustainability; Mountain Tourism; Alternative Tourism; Tourism Product; Intermediary.

Title: El papel de los intermediarios de viajes en el desarrollo del turismo sostenible de montaña. El caso de Turquía

Resumen: El objetivo de este estudio es investigar la situación actual del turismo de montaña y su sostenibilidad en Turquía como un nuevo y ascendente producto turístico. Además, las políticas turísticas del Ministerio turco de Cultura y Turismo en el área de turismo de montaña son objeto de revisión. En la promoción del nuevos tipos de turismo alternativo no sólo se encuentra implicada la política turística desarrollada por el gobierno, sino que influyen sobremanera el papel y los efectos de los intermediarios turísticos, tales como agencias de viajes, operadores y mayoristas turísticos que promueven un destino. El turismo de montaña puede ser aceptado y se clasifica como una de estas alternativas a los productos más convencionales y se inserta en los tipos de reciente desarrollo en muchos destinos. Por lo tanto, el turismo de montaña podría ser una de las mejores oportunidades de turismo alternativo para muchos destinos si tienen los recursos suficientes, las montañas como atractivos naturales y condiciones infra y superestructurales.

Palabras clave: Sostenibilidad; Turismo de montaña; Turismo alternativo; Producto turístico; Intermediarios.

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Introduction

Turkey is one of the most popular emerging tourism destinations with respect to its natural beauty and cultural heritage. While 3S has been assumed as one of the most important attractions in Mediterranean countries, the recent developments show that the tourists are seeking for different purposes and expectations nowadays. There is no doubt that the consumer preferences definitely shape the policies and programs of the countries to develop further attractions and new tourism products to survive in the rival. Hence mountain tourism can be considered as the newly developed and accelerated type of tourism in Turkey with the support of the Turkish Government.

The incoming tourists are generally interested in resorts and historical locations in Turkey. In addition the ingoing tourism movements are focusing on 3S, thermal and winter tourism consequently. With respect to the globalized expectations and needs of the consumers in 20th century, new and shining tourism type "*mountain tourism*" is getting familiar and popular. With regard to the geographical resources in Turkey, the incoming demand points out some important locations with the necessary natural foundation such as the mountains *Ararat (Ağrı)*, *Hakkari-Cilo & Sat*, *Rize-Kaçkar*, *Kayseri-Erciyes* & *Niğde-Aladağlar etc.* Despite the fact that mountain tourism is getting familiar in Turkey as well, gaining advantage from this side of tourism mostly depends on the planned, settled developments targeting ingoing tourists. The most effective branch of mountain tourism is winter tourism and it is gaining importance day by day. National tourists used to relaxing in summer time, try to escape from the hard times of winter & weather conditions, air pollution in the low season. That is why the new pursuit of relaxing in this part of the year emerged a new kind of tourism such as "winter tourism" and a new concept such as "*Winter Sports*". Especially the increase in number of mobilized people in Turkey, weekend holidays, and the increase in consumption power stimulates the participation in winter tourism beside summer tourism.

Since these issues stated above signify the importance of mountain tourism in Turkey, this research tries to enlighten the important aspects of this alternative tourism type. Further from this point, literature review concerning mountain tourism, some related definitions and the hidden and important sides are indicated. The efforts and policies of Turkish Government is analyzed in the following section and the last part of the research is consisting of the field research which is questioning the role of the intermediaries in the development process of this recently emerging alternative tourism type.

Literature Review

Mountain tourism has been a research area in tourism literature which is examined thoroughly addressing

the economical & natural advantages (Kruk et al, 2007; Snowdon, 2000), tourists' attitudes, perceptions and risks involved (Holden, 2003; Pomfret, 2006), and its link with sustainability (Kostopoulou, S., & Kyritsis, I. , 2003; Perchlaner, 2005;). Researchers agree that mountain tourism provides some opportunities and challenges in terms of employment, income, conservation of natural heritage whilst some threats such as the constraints on communication and mobility, isolation psychology, effects on environment and ecology (Banskota & Sharma, 1998; Geneletti & Dawa, 2009; Godde et al, 2000; Kruk et al, 2007).

In many developing countries, tourism is widely accepted as a way to contribute to economic development, job opportunities and foreign revenues. Due to these factors tourism in the mountain regions worldwide has developed rapidly in the last decades (Geneletti & Dawa, 2009). The advantages of mountain tourism and the live examples from different parts of the world encourage countries with adequate natural resources to find out the ways of conducting efforts aiming sustainability in this area (Perchlaner, 2005) because sustainability can be easily connected to almost all kinds and scales of tourism activities and environments (Clarke, 1997; Saarinen, 2006). On the other hand, mountain tourism in developing countries is also considered as a growing environmental concern because of its affect on seasonality, lack of suitable infrastructures and planning (Geneletti and Dawa, 2009).

Due to the mentioned importance of mountain tourism, researchers are interested in various aspects. Mostly researchers consider mountaineering as a popular form of adventure tourism (Beedie and Hudson, 2003; Pomfret, 2006). Buckley (2007) states that mountaineering and mountain biking are among the most popular activities of adventure tourism. Besides there is a potential risk in adventure tourism and the tourists seeking for adventure usually get face to face with some dangers which are too much involved in mountain tourism. For example; winter sports are activities of mountain tourism such as skiing (Falk, 2008; Fredmen & Heberlain, 2003; Lasanta et al, 2007; Needham & Rollins, 2005)and some risky cases included are "*skiing accident*," "*getting lost on a ski tour*", "*cable car accident*", "*natural hazards (thunder, storm)*".

The interests of the tourists who seek adventure are also analyzed through researches and the need plus interest in special adventurous events are questioned because adventure tourism is often described in terms of its motivation. Mountains, lakes, oceans, jungle, desert islands, and other wild places represent escape locations that offer excitement and potential adventure. This escape from the ordinary to the extraordinary provides a pleasurable experience that is central to tourism (Beedie and Hudson, 2003). Some traditional approaches describe the motivation of such sports in terms of risk and uncertainty seeking while sometimes because of thrill and exalted state they may encompass. This "*risk theory*" describes the inherent motive for these endeavours as being the challenge and danger posed by harsh or extreme natural circumstances (Gyimothy & Mykletun, 2004). Trauer (2006) investigates

the motives for special interests thoroughly and signifies the facts lying beneath the desire for risky activities such as mountain tourism. According to Trauer, the tourists may have some motives such as “*increased importance of outdoor activities, awareness of ecological problems, educational advances, aesthetic judgement and improvement of self and society*” therefore this self-improvement may aspire tourists to participate in adventure and sport activities. Tourists belonging the stated profile participate in activities such as mountain biking, mountaineering (*scrambling, rope-work, travelling across glaciers, use of ice axes and crampons, acclimatisation and navigation*), skiing, snowboarding, snowmobiling, snow shoeing, rock climbing, trekking, wildlife watching, backpacking and hunting (Pomfret, 2006). For example; backpackers are considered as the tourists fulfilling their feelings of risk, excitement and this kind of an experience has a profound impact on their lives (O'Reilly, 2006).

When the movements of the tourists worldwide are analyzed it is seen that increases in downhill skiing appear to have decreased in many places, while hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling increases (Fredman and Heberlein 2001). Skiing is seen as a potential alternative tourism type that may attract many tourists especially during the off-season in Mediterranean countries. Winter tourism and sports are the alternatives to extend seasonality therefore ski resort-based tourism development brings many economic benefits to a region as well as improvement of services and infrastructure (Lasantia et al, 2007). However, although skiing is getting very popular in many countries, climatic conditions and global warming is considered as one of the most important threats. Climate induced changes would probably have negative impacts but it cannot be possible to forecast the longer terms since there are still some uncertainties in climate change projections (Scott et al, 2007).

On the other hand the management of mountain areas must strive for a careful balance between the protection of natural resources, the needs of local people and the desires of tourists. Prime objective of any tourism strategy must be to protect the environment on which tourism depend. If tourism impact too much on the environment, visitors may degrade the very thing they are coming to enjoy. A sustainable approach must also embrace the social and economic effects of tourism ensuring that visitors enjoy their visit, local economy benefit, living standards are protected and the skills of local people are harnessed (Pechlaner, 2005)

Mountain Tourism Policies of Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism

Turkey has a rich geo-morphological and tectonic multi altitudinal structure which offers mountaineers attractive and interesting resources both for winter sports and trekking sort of activities. Many people visit these areas for mountaineering purposes each year (<http://www.kul->

[tur.gov.tr](http://www.kultur.gov.tr)).

Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism defines 17 different types of tourism types, two of which are classified as mountaineering and winter tourism. Winter tourism is identified with skiing that is why it can be classified as part of mountain tourism as well. This classification draws attention to the most important tourism types in Turkey which are accepted as the sources of tourism revenues. Since Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism defines this tourism type with importance, it defines some important policies concerning mountain tourism (<http://www.kultur.gov.tr>).

First policy is about the legal regulations. In this frame, foreign tourists living outside Turkey should ask for permission in order to participate in mountaineering tourism. This permission procedure starts with the demand from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs through foreign representative offices. Foreigners living in Turkey should follow the same procedure if there exist a representative office and if not to the Turkish Ministry of Internal Affairs. In Turkey, the role of the intermediaries exists when the tourists apply to them and the travel agencies are obliged to transmit this application to the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. This application process should follow a deadline period. Accordingly, applications through foreign representatives outside the country should start two months in advance, and one month before if they live in Turkey. The visa applications should be well matched with their arrival objectives.

The important mountains which are convenient with mountaineering and so-called activities are classified as; *Mounth Ararat* (Ağrı)- *Ağrı Dağı* (5165 m.), *Antalya-Beydağlar* (altitude 3069 m.), *Kayseri-Mounth Erciyes* (3916 m.), *Mersin-Bolkar Mountains* (the highest is 3524 m.), *Niğde-Aladağlar* (3756 m.), *Rize-Kaçkar Range of Mountains* (3932 m.), *Tunceli-Mercan (Munzur) Mountains* (3370 m.) and *Van-Mounth Süphan* (4058 m.).

Apart from mountaineering, the most familiar tourism type is winter tourism and according to Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, mountaineering is also included within this tourism type. Therefore most of the policies in this sense are linked to winter tourism.

With respect to winter tourism opportunities and skiing, the defined and labelled sites are seen below (<http://www.kultur.gov.tr>). These skiing sites which are available for winter sports (20 sites) are shown on Figure 1. This Figure is a very well reflection of how Turkey has wealthy resources in terms of mountain tourism.

Ministry of Culture and Tourism announced “Turkey’s Tourism Strategy 2023” recently. According to this strategy there are important approaches concerning the development of tourism in Turkey. In this frame, there are some defined Tourism Development Regions, Tourism Corridors (hallways), Tourism Cities and Eco-Tourism Regions.

In the Strategy, the vision supports the sustainable development of tourism with respect to sustainable environmental policies. For the sustainability of tourism, it is



Figure 1. Winter Sports Sites. **Source:** Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, <http://www.kultur.gov.tr>

indicated that the tourism products should be diversified and the seasonality factor should be eliminated by expanding tourism to 12 months. This seems possible with emerging different types of tourism such as congress, winter, and health tourism. In this frame, **winter tourism** is encouraged and accepted as a way of promoting tourism in low-season and maintaining sustainability. Accordingly, the strategy concerning winter tourism is determined as below (<http://www.kultur.gov.tr>);

- A detailed analysis is going to be made in order to find out the most appropriate areas for winter tourism
- The winter tourism regions will be handled in relation to thermal tourism, culture and congress tourism, **mountaineering** and eco-tourism.
- The planning efforts will be improved by the incentives and infrastructure practices of Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism
- In order to develop winter tourism, young generation will be lead to sports activities

In addition, one of the tourism corridors in Strategy 2023 is identified as “**Winter Corridor**”. In the light of “Winter Tourism Master Plan”, Erzincan, Erzurum, Ağrı, Kars and Ardahan are included as the most important cities with current potential resources to winter tourism. In these areas, new accommodation facilities are going to be developed and the quality will be improved. The stakeholders in this development process are considered as Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Local Government, Sectoral Establishments, Government Agencies and Turkish Skiing Federation.

Research Objectives

This study promotes three main objectives. First, it attempts to analyze the perceived image of mountain tourism of travel agencies in Turkey. Second, it examines and studies to determine the role of travel agencies' development efforts for mountain tourism in the country in terms of either inbound or domestic markets. Third,

it aims to determine the general approach and perceptions of travel intermediaries about the public policies and strategies for developing mountain tourism in Turkey. Despite the growth of tourism industry, the interest towards it and the development of alternative tourism activities, few empirical studies approach the development of mountain tourism in Turkey.

The rest of the study is structured as follows; the methodology is described in advance, including specifications of the data collection, measures, and applied methodology. Then, the findings are illustrated, and finally, the conclusion and the consequent discussion indicate the utility of this research and note some limitations and future recommendations.

Methodology

Data Collection

In this study, the survey method is conducted and questionnaire technique is used to gather data from A Group Turkish Travel Agencies. The research was considered as exploratory research and the sampling method is probability random sampling. The universe of the research is totally identifiable and attainable via e-mail but since most of them haven't replied the questionnaire, only the respondents were considered as a sample. The total number of the agencies (*universe*) is almost 4.600 in Turkey mostly located in a few largest cities of the country (*Istanbul, Antalya, İzmir, Muğla etc.*). The data was obtained from the official web page of the *Association of Turkish Travel Agencies (TURSAB)*. More than 3,000 e-mail addresses could be gathered from this web page and the web based questionnaire was sent to the agencies identified. 541 out of 3,000 agencies could be reached via e-mail messages, between May – August 2009. And finally, 83 of these 541 agencies responded the questionnaire and sent them back to the e-mail address given to them beforehand.

The questionnaire consists of 32 questions which include two categories and three types of them were addressed to the respondents. The first category involves 8 questions and was designed to collect information about the demographics; profile of agency and general tourism services offered to their clients. This group of questions was considered as first group variables in order to cross tabulate the questions and for chi-square analyses. Second category involves mountain tourism related 24 questions which aim to measure the opinions of the respondent agencies about mountain tourism and they were considered as second group variables while analyzing cross tabulations of the responses. Most of the questions are multiple choice and respondents were generally supposed to mark more than one choice. For that reason, the

total percentages are more than a hundred percent for most of the questions. The responses were analyzed by SPSS to test some hypotheses, which were formulated by the researchers.

Measures and Data Analyses

Sample Profile

According to the results, the distribution of the agencies observed are; 25 out of 83 agencies are located in Istanbul (30,1 %) - the largest city-, followed by 14 in Antalya (16,9 %), and 12 in İzmir (14,5 %), 10 (12,0 %) in Muğla, 8 in Ankara (9,6 %), 5 in Nevşehir (6,0 %), and the remaining in other small cities (11,9 %) respectively. The activity duration (as years) of the agencies are; 40 of them have been operating for more than 13 years (48,2 %), while 16 for less than 4 years (19,3 %), 11 for 5 – 7 years (13,3 %), 8 for 7-9 years (9,6 %) and the remaining 8 for 10-12 years (9,6 %) . In summary, more than half of the agencies have been operating for more than 10 years and therefore they are supposed to be relatively experienced travel intermediaries (Table 1).

As for the employee profile, we know that agencies are mostly small and medium sized enterprises thus they employ fewer personnel than many other service operations. The results confirm this feature of the agencies. 45 of the agencies (54,2 %) employ less than 7 personnel, and only 22 of them (26,5 %) employ more than 15 staff. The number of personnel of the remaining (18 %) changes between 8 – 14.

Location	Number of Agencies	Relative Share (%)
İstanbul	25	30,1
Antalya	14	16,9
İzmir	12	14,5
Muğla	10	12,2
Ankara	8	9,6
Nevşehir	5	6,0
Others(small cities)	9	11,9
Total	83	

Table 1 : Locational Distribution of Travel Agencies by Region

With respect to the main services offered by the agencies; mostly *domestic tours* (78,3 %), *hotel reservations* (69,9 %), followed by *airline ticket sales* (65,1 %), *blue tours* in Southern Anatolia and *yachting* (50,6 %), *outbound* (international) *tours* (50,6 %), *meeting and congress organisations* (50,6 %), *car rentals* (47,0 %), *cruising* (28,9 %) and *faith tours* to Mecca (16,9 %) respectively.

Type of services	Number of Agencies	Relative Share (%)
Domestic tours	65	78,3
Hotel reservations	58	69,9
Airline Ticket sales	54	65,1
Blue tours and yachting	42	50,6
Outbound tours	42	50,6
Meeting & Congress Organisations	42	50,6
Car rentals	39	47,0
Cruising	24	28,9
Faith tours to Mecca	14	16,9

Table 2: Services offered by Travel Agencies (more than one services)

As one of the very effective communication and marketing tool, *internet connections* and *web page ownership* are considered to be the most important tools for agency sales and promote their services to the potential buyers. Most of the agencies have their own web page (75.9%), but only a few of them (37,3 %) are connected to a CRS system to develop their sales and to offer better services to their clients.

The final profile question was concerning the categories of domestic tours if available. In this section, the leading tour categories are as the follows; *historical and cultural tours* (80,7 %) *sightseeing tours* (78,3), *sports related tours* (48,2 %), *rural tours* (45,8 %), *health tours* (44,6 %), *golf tours* (13,3 %), *meeting & congress* (25 %), *special interest tours-like bird watching* (15 %). As seen, mountain tourism could be categorised as a part of *sports related tours* like *downhill skiing*, *trekking*, *climbing*, and *paragliding* etc. according to the Travel Agencies participating the survey.

Type of services	Number of Agencies	Relative Share (%)
Historical and cultural tours	67	80,7
Sightseeing tours	65	78,3
Sports related tours	40	48,2
Rural tours	38	45,8
Health tours	37	44,6
Golf tours	11	13,3
Meeting & congress	21	25,3
Special interest tours	13	15,6

Table 3: Categories of Domestic Tours offered by Travel Agencies (more than one services)

The Views of Travel Agencies Concerning Mountain Tourism

In this part of the survey, responses for 24 questions are analysed. The frequency analysis indicate that, 44 of the agencies (55,4 %) organised *mountain tours* at least once so far and only 27 (32,5 %) respondents indicated that they have employed a *specialist guide* for mountain tour. On the other hand, 61 (72,3 %) agencies responded that they would organize mountain tours if there were *sufficient demand* in the near future. These findings show that, most of the agencies in Turkey consider the mountain tourism as an *alternative activity* or *product* for their business objectives and they have a *positive approach* about mountain tourism.

Respondent agencies were asked concerning the relative share of mountain demand in their sales. 11 agencies explained that the relative share of mountain tourism demand is 30 % or more in their total sales, while for 13 agencies the share is less than 5 %, for 6 agencies the share is 7- 10 %, for 4 agencies it is 11 – 15 %, for 3 agencies 16 – 20 % and for 3 agencies the share is 21 – 29 %. The remaining 43 out of 83 agencies didn't give any response. This data shows that there is *no serious demand share* mountain tourism in total sales. For very small number of agencies, mountain tourism is still a negligible tourism activity.

For the demographics of the demand for mountain tourism, the data shows that most of the visitors are *students* (53 %), *self employed* (47 %), *academicians* (38,6 %) and *businessmen* (36,1 %). Their income categories are upper-middle income (63,9 %), and their age categories are 31 – 40 (57,8 %), 26-30 (44,6 %) and 19-25 (41 %). The average group size is mostly 10 to 15 (95,2 %) and rarely tours are organized with the groups more than 20 or more participants (13 %). Finally the most popular periods are concentrated on March through September. The distribution of the periods are, March-April (9,6 %), May-June (15,7%), July-August (27,7 %) and September-October (14,5%). There is a low demand for the periods of January-February (8,4 %) and November-December (3,6 %).

Agencies were questioned whether there was a sufficient supply for mountain tourism in Turkey in terms of infrastructure and superstructure. They marked positively the option "yes" at 50 % response rate, 25,3 % marked negatively as "no", and while 12 % marked the "no idea" option. 12 % of the agencies didn't respond.

The following question was about the *types of activities* which could be categorised or considered as mountain tourism. According to the responses, *trekking* marked as the highest percentage (90,4 %), the second is *stating at mountain resorts and/or buildings* (80,7 %), *mountain climbing* is the third (78,3), the next is *winter skiing - mostly downhill* (66,3 %), others are *mountain sports including paragliding* (57,8 %), *cavern tours* (54,2 %), *bird watching/ornithology* (44,6 %), *hunting* (43,4 %), and *rafting* (41 %) respectively.

Most popular and *top three mountains* for tourism in Turkey are; *Kaçkar Mountains* (66,1 %) in the Northern

Anatolia, *Mount Ararat* in the Eastern Anatolia (59 %) which is the second, and *Erciyes Mountain* in Central Anatolia as the third popular mountain. The other popular mountains are as follows; *Aladağlar* in Central Anatolia (39,8 %), *Bursa Uludağ* in the Western part of Anatolia (39,8 %), *Ilgaz and Karadağ* in Northern Region of the Country (38,6 %).

The other question was about the complementary activities or tours for mountain tourism. The respondents stated that these tours include; *Sport tours* (63,9 %), *Historical tours* (60,2 %), *Winter tours* (55,4 %), *Eco-tours* (55,4 %), *Cavern visits* (47 %), *Rural tours* (45,8 %) and *Youth tours* (44,6 %).

Two types of questions were designed to find out the basic *advantages* and *disadvantages* of mountain tourism. According to the results, the most important three advantages are, its *integrity* with the nature and its sustainability (79,5 %), its active and *dynamic* feature (75,9 %), and *exploratory characteristic* (71,1 %). The other advantages are, its *exciting feature* (66,3 %), *healthiness* (66,3 %), goodness for *physical development* (65,1 %), environmental *sensitiveness* in nature (55,4 %), *scenic attractiveness* (43,4 %) and its *novelty* (30,1 %).

With regard to disadvantages of mountain tourism, the most indicated disadvantages are; its requirement of *special equipment* (57,8 %), *riskiness and dangerousness* (55,4 %), and "it doesn't fit to each *age categories*" (54,2 %). Other disadvantages are, requirement of *physical power* (47 %), sometimes *harmful for the nature* (if there is no attention) (44,6 %), its *unsuitability for disabled people* (39,8 %), *relatively expensiveness* (38,6 %), *strenuousness* (32,5 %) and *heavy infrastructure and superstructure requirement* for some types of mountain tourism like winter skiing (34,9 %).

According to the Respondent Agencies, the most popular and favourable regions for their foreign clients are; the *Great Mount Ararat* (47,0 %) (5,157 mt altitude) - East, *Kaçkar Mountains* (39,8 %) – Northeast (3,932 mt), *Beydağları* (26,5 %) – South (3,086 mt), *Mounth Erciyes* (24,1 %) – Centre (3,917 mt), *Suphan – Nemrut* (19,3 %) – South East (4,058 mt), *Bursa Uludag* (15,7 %) – West (2,543 mt), *Bolkar Mountains* (13,3 %) - Center (3,254 mt.), *Ilgaz and Mountblack (Karadag)* (9,6 %) – Northwest (2,587 mt), *Mount Hasan* (7,2 %) – Centre (3,278 mt) .

The other question aimed to investigate the *likely reasons for insufficient internal (domestic) demand* for mountain tourism in Turkey. The highest possible reason was indicates as *insufficient promotion, marketing efforts* and lack of *information* about mountain tourism resources at 81,9 % response rate. The second reason was the *lack of specialist guide* for mountain tours (at 54,2 % rate), the third reason was indicated as the *underdevelopment of mountain tourism* in Turkey (48,2 %). Other reasons are, *insufficient number of agencies* specialized for mountain tours (39,8 %), the *requirement of special equipment* for mountain tours (38,6 %), lack of *sufficient interest* for mountain tours (32,5 %), *insufficient income level* of the potential domestic visitors (25,3 %), its somewhat *riski-*

ness (24,1 %), it's recognition as an *activity for young individuals* (24,1 %), not finding *any harmonious group* (21,7 %), it's relatively *expensiveness*.

The final three questions addressed to the respondents were about the thoughts of the agencies for the policies implemented by Ministry of Tourism and Culture. The first question was about whether the ministry had effective policies for developing mountain tourism in Turkey or not. The option "yes" was marked as 14,5 %, while "no" is as 51.8 % and "no idea" is as 33,7 %. Second question aimed to investigate whether the policies of the ministry for developing mountain tourism were sufficient or not. The responses as yes: 2,4 %, no 69,9 % and no idea: 27,7 %. Final question was about if there were any *bureaucratic barriers* and obstacles for organizing a mountain tour in Turkey or not. The results were consequently; yes: 53,3 %, no: 15,7 % and no idea: 31.3 % response rate.

These three results explain us the agencies are complaining the lack of interest of the ministry for mountain tourism and there are considerable amount of obstacles to organize a mountain tour.

Cross-tabulations and Chi-Square Analyses

In this part of the study, meaningful associations between the variables are analyzed especially between independent *profile variables* and dependent variables signifying *agencies' thoughts* about mountain tourism.. Each independent variable was considered as potentially in relation to the dependent variables and then there could be some associations among some of the independently variables themselves. These associations were devised as hypothesis tests at the same time. For this purpose, almost 30 associations were considered most likely meaningful and they were included into chi-square analysis procedure by using statistical package program (SPSS 13.0). According to the results of the analyses, only 9 statistically meaningful associations were found. The hypothesis tests and the results of chi-square analyses are as follows where the Hypotheses were stated in the null and alternate;

Analysis - 1

H1₀: There is no association between the *location of the agencies* and the *service categories* they offer.

H1₁: There is an association between the *location of the agencies* and the *service categories* they offer.

Pearson Chi Square: 938,023

p = ,000

Likelihood ratio: 768,625

Ho: *rejected* and so there is an association between these two variables.

Analysis - 2

H2₀: There is no association between the *location of the agencies* and the agency thoughts about the *bureaucratic barriers (obstacles)* imposed by government for organizing a mountain tour.

H2₁: There is an association between the *location of the agencies* and the agency thoughts about the *bureaucratic barriers (obstacles)* imposed by government for organizing a mountain tour.

Pearson Chi Square: 28,030

p = ,031

Likelihood ratio: 29,293

Ho: *rejected* and so there is an association between these two variables.

Analysis - 3

H3₀: There is no association between the agencies that have organized a mountain tour so far and the relative share of mountain tourism demand of the agency sales.

H3₁: There is an association between the agencies that have organized a mountain tour so far and the relative share of mountain tourism demand of the agency sales.

Pearson Chi Square: 16,654

p = ,011

Likelihood ratio: 19,293

Ho: *rejected* and there is an association between these two variables.

Analysis - 4

H4₀: There is no association between the agencies that have organized a mountain tour so far and the agencies that employ a specialist guide for mountain tours.

H4₁: There is an association between the agencies that have organized a mountain tour so far and the agencies that employ a specialist guide for mountain tours.

Pearson Chi Square: 34,905

p = ,000

Likelihood ratio: 40,241

Ho: *rejected* and so there is an association between these two variables.

Analysis - 5

H5₀: There is no association between the agencies that have organized a mountain tour so far and the agency's thoughts about the seasons for organizing mountain tours.

H5₁: There is an association between the agencies that have organized a mountain tour so far and the agency's thoughts about the seasons for organizing mountain tours.

Pearson Chi Square: 17,802

p = ,007

Likelihood ratio: 19,063

Ho: *rejected* so there is an association between these two variables.

Analysis - 6

H6₀: There is no association between the agencies that have organized a mountain tour so far and agency's

thoughts whether there is a sufficient demand for mountain tours in Turkey or not.

H6₁: There is an association between the agencies that have organized a mountain tour so far and the agency's thoughts whether there is a sufficient demand for mountain tours in Turkey or not.

Pearson Chi Square: 15,733

p = ,007

Likelihood ratio: 19,567

Ho: *rejected* so there is an association between these two variables.

Analysis - 7

H7₀: There is no association between the agencies that have organized a mountain tour so far and agency's thoughts about the mountain tourism policies implemented by Tourism Ministry in Turkey.

H7₁: There is an association between the agencies that have organized a mountain tour so far and agency's thoughts about the mountain tourism policies implemented by Tourism Ministry in Turkey.

Pearson Chi Square: 15,496

p = ,000

Likelihood ratio: 16,932

Ho: *rejected* so there is an association between these two variables.

Analysis - 8

H8₀: There is no association between the agencies that would like to organize a mountain tour if sufficient demand is available and the agency's thoughts whether there is a sufficient demand for mountain tours in Turkey.

H8₁: There is an association between the agencies that would like to organize a mountain tour if sufficient demand is available and the agency's thoughts whether there is a sufficient demand for mountain tours in Turkey.

Pearson Chi Square: 15,082

p = ,050

Likelihood ratio: 16,943

Ho: *rejected* so there is an association between these two variables.

Analysis - 9

H9₀: There is no association between the agencies that would like to organize a mountain tour if sufficient demand is available and the agency's thoughts about the *bureaucratic obstacles* imposed by government for organizing a mountain tour.

H9₁: There is an association between the agencies that would like to organize a mountain tour if sufficient demand is available and the agency's thoughts about the *bureaucratic obstacles* imposed by government for organizing a mountain tour.

Pearson Chi Square: 14,129

p = ,028

Likelihood ratio: 14,417

Ho: *rejected* so there is an association between these two variables.

Conclusion

Traditional 3S and culture or sightseeing oriented tourism have been the most popular types of tourism all over the world and especially in a country full of geographical beauties and a natural heritage such as Turkey. With a quick glance at the tourism figures and statistics issued by WTO and/or government bodies, it is apparent that the very high percentage of tourists visiting tourism destinations participates in so called activities as indicated above. In other words, leisure tourism demand depends heavily on the purposes of resting, actively or passively participating in sport activities, sunbathing, swimming, shopping and relaxing. All these destinations are generally open to mass tourism that is why more and more number of visitors generally create many environmental problems either on the natural or social environment.

Many destinations and governments (local or central) that realised the increasing potential of those kinds of problems have already started to develop new tourism types which are especially sensitive to the environment. The most popular and developing new types of tourism might be mountain based tourism such as skiing, climbing, paragliding, mountaineering, hiking and trekking, where these activities are addressed only as a small and specific part of total tourism demand in many destinations.

Most of the above mentioned activities cannot be participated without any specialist intermediary such as a travel agency or a tour operator. In this study, the conditions of the mountain tourism and the policies imposed by government are enlightened where the role and functions of the intermediaries for developing mountain tourism in Turkey was also questioned depending on the data gathered from leading travel agencies in Turkey.

According to the data, there are some mountain based tours in the country organised by the agencies, but they are at insufficient level in terms of the number of participants and expenditures for this activities. Only the limited number of agencies is organizing mountain based tours, but most of the firms are volunteer to take part of this alternative tourism option. Considerable amount of the agencies pointed out that there is no effective mountain tourism policy and so the necessary regulation imposed and implemented by the official authorities, while the country has noteworthy resources and attractiveness for mountain tours. Respondents also pointed out that mountain tourism could be complementary tourism activity for many other types of tourism such as sport tours, historical tours, winter tours, eco tours, cavern tours, rural tours etc. Despite some of the disadvantages of mountain tours, the firms agree that mountain tourism is a significant alternative to sustain the development of tourism in the country.

This study aims to give some general information about the mountain tourism in Turkey and the roles of

intermediaries. It is not an in depth analysis of demand side or supply side of this specific kind of tourism. It also aims to open a door for the further research about mostly demand side analyses of mountain tourism.

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