

EXAMINATION OF EASTERN BLACK SEA REAGION TOUR PROGRAMMES ORGANIZED BY TRAVEL AGENCIES FOR PLATEAU TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

Turkey in order to be in a better position in terms of income and the number of coming tourists and to minimize the enviromental problems emerged by tourism, beginning from the 90's has started to implement policies for diversifying tourism and spreading tourism over all regions and over the whole year. In accordance with these policies, other than tourism based on sea sun sand triology, it started to improve alternative types of tourism and among these kinds of tourism, tourism based on natural values. In relation to this Eastern Black Sea Region and plateaus came forward. With the usage of the tradition of going up to plateau, which is carried out for cultural and economic reasons for centuries, for tourism significant increases has taken place in the number of organized tours to the region.

The region's attractiveness for plateau tourism and inspite of the increase in the organization of tours to region it is a fact that in this type of tourism the desired improvement cannot be implemented and plateuos stil cannot be presented to the market as good touristic products. Among the reasons why plateau tourism as a touristic product is not on the desired level, there is the responsibility of travel agencies. In this examination, the current situation is tried to be defined by analysing the content of the organized tour programs to region by agencies and suggestions about tours organized by travel agencies to contribute to plateau tourism are made.

Key Words: Plateau, plateau tourism, travel agencies and tour program.

ÖZET

Türkiye, gelir ve gelen turist sayısı açısından daha iyi konumda olabilmek ve turizmin ortaya çıkardığı çevresel sorunları en aza indirmek amacıyla, 90'lı yıllardan başlayarak turizmini çeşitlendirerek tüm bölgelere ve tüm yıla yaymaya yönelik politikaları uygulamaya başlamıştır. Bu politikalar doğrultusunda, deniz-güneş-kum üçgenine dayalı turizmin yanı sıra alternatif turizm çeşitlerini ve bu turizm türleri içinde de doğa değerlerine dayalı turizm türlerini geliştirmeye başlamıştır. Bu doğrultuda, Doğu Karadeniz Bölgesi ve yaylalar ön plana çıkmıştır. Yüzyıllardır kültürel ve ekonomik amaçlı olarak sürdürülen yaylalara çıkma geleneğinin, turizm amaçlı olarak kullanılmasıyla bölgeye düzenlenen tur sayısından önemli artışlar gerçekleşmiştir. Ancak yayla turizmine yönelik bölgenin tüm çekiciliklerine ve bölgeye düzenlenen tur sayısının çoğalmasına rağmen, bu turizm türünde istenilen gelişmenin gerçekleştirilemediği ve yaylaların hala iyi bir turistik ürün olarak pazara sunulmadığı da bir gerçektir. Yayla turizminin turistik ürün olarak istenilen düzeyde olmamasının nedenleri arasında seyahat acentalarına da sorumluluk düşmektedir. Bu çalışmada, bölgeye acentalarınca düzenlenen tur programlarının içerikleri incelenerek mevcut durum belirlenmeye çalışılmış ve acentalarca düzenlenen turların yayla turizmine katkısının artırılmasına yönelik öneriler getirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yayla, yayla turizmi, seyahat acentaları ve tur programı.

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INTRODUCTION

Turkey has an extremely important position with its natural beauties including mountains, rivers, plains,coasts, lakes, its historical values that bear the traces of lots of civilizations and its regions in which climatic features of four seasons of the year can be observed. Turkey's having various products and being attractive with its traditional life culture and values which today stil continue to exist are its important features. However, giving importance to tourism based on sea,sun sand trilogy (3S) at the first stage is started whilst the studies for expanding tourism are being conducted. Fort his reason with various encouragin strategies particularly with tourism encouragement Act Numbered 2634 Antalya and Egeon Regions giving priority to Antalya and Mu la are started to open up for tourism and determined targets have been reached by the systematic studies made. In these regions, while the investments in tourism are being made and tourism activity is continuing to take place, various problems about enviromental values have began to occur.

Tourism requiers a clean envirement its permanency depends on that. Tourism and enviremont correlation is of considerable importance in various perspectives. While the rise of, especially, environmental problems in a region destroy the region's attractiveness in terms of tourism, tourism itself may be a cause of pollution (çöz,1994:20-21). In order to preclude the problems that are mentioned about from preventing tourism expansion, to create alernative to holiday tourism, studies for diversfyng tourism have started from early 1990'sand under the execution of these studies, for the purpose of diversifying tourism products, spreading the attention over regions and the whole year, diversifying the market policies on diversifying tourism are started to be implemented.

According to identified targets, in Turkey studies on the holiday tourism depend on sea-sun-sand trilogy also on congress, culture, belief, golf, Silk Road, yacht, winter, youth, air sports, health and thermal tourism, as well as on development of alternative tourism types have begun. Plateuo, hunting, cave, bird watching, photo safari, wildlife watching, angling, cycling, balloon, agriculture and farm, camp and caravan,botany, stream, trekking, rafting, paragliding, horse trekking, mountaineering and underwater diving tourism types are the primary ones that come to mind among alternative tourism types (Erdo an 2003:120). Nevertheless, among these tourism types especially ecotourism and its sub-species plateau tourism have began to come to foreground. With this

study tour programmes organized by travel agencies for Eastern Black Sea Region are examined and these programmes' conditions are tried to identified in terms of tourism development.

PLATEAU TOURISM AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN TURKEY

The Notion of ecotourism which shows improvement in 1990's as a reaction and alternative to mass tourism, includes pastoral and cultural tourism's elements and it is expressed as the most proper tourism type that can be developed in sensitive natural and cultural areas. Ecotourism is seen as an important instrument in providing sustainable development against the damages of uncontrollably developing mass tourism movement on environment and society (Aslan, 2011:1.Access date:12.10.2011). Under the tourism diversification policies, Turkey is a touristic charm with its untouched natural structure, living region culture, peace, quietness and dozens of advantages that we can count. The continuation of existing of most of the natural and cultural values and the heritage in Turkeyshows the presence of the great potential for developing plateau tourism in Turkey's lots of regions (Yücel, 2004:1). In physical geography plateaus defined as plain and high places (Emiro lu 1977:6, Öngör, 1980: 105, Tosun ve Altın 1986:5, Var 1987:63 ve Güllap 1995:67) described as open spaces in a forest or natural mountain grassland which is located on limit of tree and animals are brought to graze usually in summer months and which cannot be reached in winter. However, the beginning of understanding the importance of environment and environmental values and according to changes in consumer preferences it is started to be taken advantage for tourism (Kızıllırmak, 2006:720).

Today, the tourism demand presents development in preferring plateaus because of escaping from monotony and the nedd of quest of change and recreation activities for nature and quietness plateau tourism includes basically accomodation in traditional places in plateaus, relaxing, sightseeing around and observing activities either for natura lor cultural purposes. Among these activities, they include series of activities such as being together with differenet cultures, watching the activities or festivals that are organized on particular days in a year and presents traditional culture and present traditional culture, watching or participating in traditional plateau life, tasting and buying the products that are produced on plateaus.

Furthermore, extremely convenint for plateau tourism with suitable climatic features, outstanding

landscape values, mountaineering/climbing, horse trekking, trekking, paragliding, examination of flora and fauna, jeep safari etc. convenient areas for extreme sports (<http://kultur.gov.tr> Access date: 10.11.2011). By accepting plateau tourism as an important touristic charm in Turkey especially in Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea Regions, "Plateau Tourism Project" was initiated by culture and tourism ministry in 1990's. Under the extent of this Project, spreading tourism over the whole country and year, decreasing the pressure created by tourism in Mediterranean and Egean Regions, diversifying tourism and exploiting the tourism potentials in regions are aimed (Ministry of Tourism, 1993:10). Under the extent of plateau tourism Project, 60 plateaus are identified in Turkey (TO, 1997:41-43). Significant ones of these plateaus are located in Eastern Black Sea Region which includes Sinop, Ordu, Giresun, Trabzon, Rize, Artvin, Gümüşhane and Bayburt. In relation to these improvements in demanding tourism, Eastern Black Sea Region has become a popular destination in national tourism market and lots of tourism agencies have begun to organize tours that include the region.

RESEARCH FOR EXAMINATION OF TOUR PROGRAMMES ORGANIZED TO EASTERN BLACK SEA REGION FOR PLATEAU TOURISM

Purpose Of The Research

The purpose of the research is the examination of tour programmes that are organized by travel agencies plateau tourism which has become a very charming touristic product in all over the world as in Turkey in recent years. It is important to determine whether these tours, which are organized by various travel agencies, are organized in a conveniently regarding the plateau tourism's features or not. By disclosing the details of the tour programme, it is intended to create policies parallel with tourism diversifying targets for the improvement of plateau tourism in Turkey and in region, to contribute to spreading tourism over all months and regions and the development of region's tourism.

The Method Of The Research

The research is based on the content analysis which is among resource review techniques and is a data analysis technique. Content analysis is a data analysis technique which includes the actions of evaluation of elements which constitute written, visual or auditory message in respect of the research's purpose. With this technique, tried to reach the evidences related to the research purpose of any incident or phenomenon. Behaving objectively in the identification of elements that take part in the process,

forces the research to be in a position in which concrete information can be attained (Ural and Kılıç, 2006:68-69). Under the extent of research, for the purpose of identifying travel agencies that operate tours to Eastern Black Sea region in the months of June-July in 2011; by interviewing with tourism companies in the region agency names are identified. Furthermore, by examining the programmes in newspapers in which tour programme advertisements take place, content analysis is implemented.

Results Of The Research

The results below are attained by examining travel agencies tour programmes for East Black Sea region for the purpose of plateau tourism. However; under the extent of the research, tour programmes contents belong to 29 agencies which organize tours to Eastern Black Sea region are examined. Nonetheless, because the number of agencies that organize tours to region are more than 29, it cannot be generalized for other travel agencies' tour programmes and it is a fact that it will be valid only for 89 tour programmes organized by 29 travel agencies. Presenting the evaluation of results on the chart by using clauses will be beneficial in terms of understanding the matter.

1-In chart 1, when we examine the starting points of the organized tours, it is observed that İstanbul, Ankara and Trabzon are the first three cities and in total they have 71 % rate. According to the organized tour numbers, İstanbul with 22, Ankara with 19 and Trabzon with 11 tour departures become the first three cities. The fourth one is İzmir, which is again a big city, with 11 tours. In Turkey, as in all countries in the world, it can be seen that the people who live in crowded and urbanized cities want to take more part in tourism activities. Among the preferences of the people who live in big cities there is seeing environmental attractiveness which they cannot see in the place they live and it is known that tours organized to regions for this purpose are more attractive.

Chart 1. The Cities Where The Tours Organized To Eastern Black Sea Region Start

2-When we examine the categorization of tour programmes on web pages, it is observed that 9 tours are evaluated as cultural tourism and the remaining 80 tours are evaluated on web pages of agencies as domestic tours. Although tour programmes are organized mostly as plateau tours, agencies do not use this type of tourism in presentation and/or selling and it is marked that it is generally presented and/or tried to sell as a domestic tour.

3-In chart 2, when we examine the duration of the tours organized by 89 travel agencies, one-week-

tours take the first place with 20 tours and 22,4 % rate. It is understood that the tours organized to the region last one week on average. It is seen that 7 nights 8 days tours which requires one more night accomodation than the former one, take the second place with 14 tours and 15,7 % rate and 3 nights 4 days tour programme organized by plane take the third place with 11 tours and 12,4 % rate. It is again seen that the other tours organized by plane are regulated as 4 nights 5 days (7 tours) and 2 nights 3 days (1 tour).

Chart 2. The Duration Of The Tours Organized To Eastern Black Sea Region

| Duration of the tour | The number of the tour programmes | % |
|--|-----------------------------------|------------|
| 6 nights 7 days | 20 | 22,4 |
| 7 nights 8 days | 14 | 15,7 |
| 3 nights 4 days | 11 | 12,4 |
| 5 nights 6 days | 9 | 10,1 |
| 4 nights 5 days | 7 | 7,9 |
| 5 nights 7 days | 7 | 7,9 |
| 6 nights 8 days | 7 | 7,9 |
| 4 nights 6 days | 3 | 3,4 |
| 8 nights 9 days | 3 | 3,4 |
| 9 nights 10 days (with 8 nights accomodation) | 3 | 3,4 |
| 7 nights 9 days | 2 | 2,2 |
| 1 night 2 days | 1 | 1,1 |
| 2 nights 3 days | 1 | 1,1 |
| 10 nights 11 days | 1 | 1,1 |
| TOTAL | 89 | 100 |

On the basis of agencies' identifying the tour duration as 7 days, as a result of using bus as a transportation nearly two days pass on the road, tour's including the whole region and lots of touristic charms are added to programme. However, duration stays permanent in programmes for plateau tourism and other alternative tourism types, instead of lots of places and regions, less places or regions and according to this it has to take more time. Unfortunately in these kind of programmes, it is seen that the basic principles for understanding the plateau tourism are not followed.

4-When we examine the numbers of participants of the tours, it is seen that the groups are constituted by filling the busses for 45 people, only 2 of the agencies organize tours with maximum 14 people. The organized tours with this feature, it is understood that the organized tours, which are far from the characteristics of plateau tourism, are organized as

mass tourism tours. However these tours are preferred by more participants because of their low prices. On the other hand, it is seen that the tours with less participants, because it is organized as high-priced, have less participants and the number of the organized tours are less. When we examine these kind of tour programmes, it is identified that one agency is regulated as fourteen-person groups and one agency as 6-14 person groups.

5-Although tour contents belonging to 29 agency are generally regulated according to plateau tourism, when we examine tour programmes' names on chart 3, it is observed that 89 tour programmes are in 48 different tour programmes names. Since most of the organized tours' names are same, it is possible to divide the identified 48 tour names in two groups. It is seen that the names of 31 tour programmes, which are in the first group, are formed with the name of Eastern Black Sea region and of the names related to it. It is seen that in the names of 17 tours which form the second group, the name plateau is mentioned. However, in the process of grouping the tours, using the names related to plateau tourism or alternative tourism and presenting the tour in this way are indicators of paying attention to the matter.

Chart 3. The Names Of The Tour Programmes Organized To Eastern Black Sea Region

| The Names Of The Tours | The Names Of The Tours |
|---|--|
| Black Sea | Black Sea Plateau Tour |
| Black Sea Dream | Black Sea and Plateaus Tour |
| Black Sea Trip | Plateau Safari Trabzon |
| Black Sea Tour | The Trip Of Eastern Black Sea Plateaus |
| Short Black Sea Tour | Eastern Black Sea Plateau and Culture Tour |
| Eastern Black Sea Trip | Plateau Of Black Sea and Daily Batum Trip |
| Classic Black Sea Tour | Black Sea's Far-end and Plateaus Tour |
| Throughout Black Sea | Classic Black Sea and Plateaus Tour |
| Step By Step Black Sea | Classic Black Sea and Plateaus |
| Middle and Eastern Black Sea Tour | The Green Plateaus Of Eastern Black Sea |
| In the valleys of Black Sea Autumn Tour | City By City Black Sea and Plateaus Tour |
| Black Sea With Its Nature | Time For Plateau |
| Throughout Blue-green Black Sea Tour | Step By Step Black Sea and Plateaus Pour |
| Eastern Black Sea Tour | Economic Black Sea and Plateaus |
| Batum and Eastern Black Sea Tour | Prestige Black Sea and Plateaus |
| Laz Alps | Alternative Black Sea Plateau Ttour |
| Trans Kaçkar | |
| Macahal -Kaçkar-Pokut | |
| Macahal, Ayder, Uzungöl, | |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| kizdere Tours | |
| Trans Kaçkar Classic | |
| Black Sea Photo Safari | |
| Black Sea and The Pearls Of The East | |
| The Route Of Ay e Arman | |
| Artvin in All Aspects | |
| Firtuna Valley Mansions | |

In the basis of not preferring the names related to plateau tourism in tour programme's names there is the intention of showing the other beauties of the region other than plateau tourism and making the other participants, who have different expectations, buy the tours. Having 35,41 % rate in tour programmes in which plateau tourism is mentioned, puts forward that tour organizers do not serve for his purpose and they cannot give the necessary importance because of economic problems.

6-When we examine the accommodation types of the tours organized to Eastern Black Sea region, it is observed that 64 of the 89 tours are half board and the remaining 25 are full board. The first reason why half board is preferred in tour programmes is the purpose of keeping the tour prices low. Being high of the prices of full board accommodation, creates disadvantage in selling the tour programmes and in competing with other agencies. Agencies organize the tours as half board accommodation for the purpose of selling the tours to more participants by keeping the price low. In 25 tour programmes as full board accommodation, it is seen that plane is used as a transportation, they are boutique tour programmes with more special content for maximum 14 people and their prices are higher than other tour programmes.

7-When we examine the transportation used in the organization of the tours, tours with busses come first with 66 tours and it is seen that 21 tours are organized by plane. It is seen that the other two tours are the ones organized by the tourists that come to Trabzon with their own facilities. The characteristics of these tours are consisting of maximum 14 participants and using minibus or other small types of transportation. In the tours organized by bus, in the areas where the bus cannot be used, tour programme is continued with minibuses as additional transportations.

The main reason of the organization of the tours to region mostly by bus is having participants up to 45 people and as a result of that the cost decreases so keeping the prices of tours. However it is unfortunately ignored that the fact of the tours organized with lots of participants cannot be tours for plateau tourism and these tours are not different from mass tourism tours. This situation in plateaus which are delicate in terms of nature, causes environmental destruction. In case of using planes in tours as transportation, it is seen that the

tours last less than seven days and the departure points are chosen in big cities. It is specified that 9 of these tours depart from Istanbul, 1 departs from Adana and 1 from Zmir.

8-When we examine the tour programmes organized to the region, it is seen that in the tours organized by bus, starting from the departure point the city centres of Amasya, Çorum, Samsun, Ordu, Giresun, Trabzon, Rize, Artvin, Gümüşhane are included within the programme. Again within the programme, it is determined that small breaks for food and taking photographs are taken and the certain plateaus are visited. Especially in the return of the programmes departed from Istanbul, it is determined that the cities of Sinop, Kastamonu and Safranbolu are included into the programme. The main purpose of the organization of the tour in a very intense way is increasing the sales by highlighting the tour's intense activities by including lots of cities and touristic charms in the tour in a short time. Nevertheless, it is not possible to live, see, learn and implement the desire of practice the culture, traditions and charms of the region.

It is also seen that the tours organized by planes include the cities of Trabzon, Rize, Artvin and Gümüşhane, are more comfortable when compared to the tours organized by busses and are suitable for understanding the traditional way of life and culture by spending more time in the region.

9-When we examine the prices that are set by the travel agencies, which organize tours to the region, according to chart 4, the differentiation of prices is observed according to the number of days, the number of nights, the situation of accommodation, the type of hotel, the content of the tour, the number of participants, the departure point of the tour and the type of transportation used during the tour.

Chart 4. The Examination Of The Tours Organized To Eastern Black Sea Region In Terms Of Duration And Price Correlation

| Duration Of The Tour | The Lowest Price | The Highest Price | Explanation |
|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|---|
| 1 night 2 days | 180 TL | ----- | -The tour's starting from the nearby city Samsun |
| 2 nights 3 days | 639 TL | ----- | ----- |
| 3 nights 4 days | 375 TL | 800 TL | -Starting of the low-priced tours from Samsun -Having 14 or less participants in high-priced tours |
| 4 nights 5 days | 675 TL | 799 TL | -The organization of the low-priced tours by bus -The organization of the high-priced tours by plane |
| 4 nights 6 days | 790 TL | ----- | ----- |
| 5 nights 7 days | 599 TL | 840 TL | -The regulation of the low-priced tours as half board -The regulation of the high-priced tours as full board |
| 6 nights 7 days | 820 TL | 1416 TL | -The regulation of low-priced tours as half board |

| | | | |
|---|---------|---------|---|
| | | | -The number of the participants of the high-priced tours are between 14 and 20. -The starting point of the most of the high-priced tours' being Trabzon -The organization of high-price tours as boutique tours with content and these boutique tours' consisting of the tours named Ay e Arman Route, Plateau Safari Trabzon, Firtina Valley mansions and Laz Alps by plane etc. -Organization of high-priced tours as full board |
| 6 nights 8 days | 599 TL | 796 TL | -The length of accommodation in low-priced tours' being 4 nights, -The organization of high-priced tours as 6 nights |
| 7 nights 8 days | 831 TL | 1474 TL | -The organization of the low-priced tours by bus as half board -The regulation of the high-priced tours as full board -The number of the participants of the high-priced tours' being 14 -The organization of most of the high-priced tours by plane -The starting point of the most of the high-priced tours' being Trabzon |
| 9 nights 10 days (8 nights accommodation) | 799 TL | ----- | ----- |
| 10 nights 11 days | 1000 TL | ----- | ----- |

CONCLUSION

The most significant result laid bare by tour programmes by travel agencies mainly the ones in İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir for alternative tourism types mainly plateau tourism is that the content of tour programmes is not suitable for plateau tourism's general structure. In plateau tourism it is needed to pay attention to participants' having the understanding of protecting the environment for minimizing the environmental damage and implementing the tourism activities in a way that the pressure should not be put on the region's capacity of coming tourists.

However, when the organized tour programmes are examined, it is identified that a policy which is against this situation is adopted and that the number of the participants is high. It is seen that the tour programmes are organized for the purpose of seeing more places and a very short period of time is spent on visiting the places. This situation affects the presentation of the region in a negative way. Not giving sufficient detailed information about the region's flora and fauna richness to participants is an extremely negative situation for presentation. However, as a result of these negative situations, it is identified as the most

important planning errors that the guides in tours are not chosen from the guides who are professionals and local guides are not included whenever needed. In a relation to plateau tourism within this time, all plateaus are tried to be visited but not giving an extra time other than short walking and break for taking photographs constitute the tours the most important deficit. The length of the time that is spent by tourists is extremely important in terms of continuation of the demand.

It is seen that the tours organized by travel agencies to Eastern Black Sea Region is far from characteristics of plateau tourism. It is understood that the agencies, which organize the tours, do not organize tours as appropriate to plateau tourism because of reasons such as the region's having become a popular brand in recent years, commercial concerns and rivalry, the provision of making more people participate into the tours, the desire to earn more, the short period of the tourism season in the region and not having sufficient information about the subject. However, in the tours environmental values by approaching in a sensitive way to environment in accordance with alternative tourism types. For this purpose the tours should be organized as consciously with less participants, making the participants aware and using the smaller transportation which does not cause pollution. During the tour it is necessary to have mentality which respects to the traditional life of the people live in the region and which helps understanding the culture. For this purpose, in case of taking the aforementioned easy but useful for protecting the environment precautions the region can host the journeys for ecotourism mainly plateau tourism for long years and it will be possible for participants to see natural, historical and cultural beauties that they cannot find in the place they continuously live and to get rid of the exhaustion of the whole year.

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