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Opportunities of utilizing natural and cultural resources of Bornova (Izmir) through tourism

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Abstract

Bornova district in Izmir has undergone a continuous renewal with its urban functions and economic structure. Recently, the sectors of industry and services have left their marks on Bornova. On the other hand, although the nine villages affiliated to the district maintain their existence through agricultural sector, each has various problems (such as shrinkage of agricultural lands, reduction in diversity of products and productivity, migration to the city, and migration received from outside). According to the findings of the research, which is the subject of this paper, the rural areas of Bornova have not lost their natural resources (such as valleys, forests, scenic beauties and water sources) yet. With the addition of proximity and easy access to the city, it is not so difficult for these resources to transform into attractions for ecotourism. The cultural resources of Bornova might be divided into two as urban and rural. However, beyond all, the finds dating to some 8,500 years earlier with the excavation at Yeşilova Mound within the district borders also cast light on the history of settlement in İzmir. The urban cultural resources of Bornova include the cultural centers of the Ege University alongside the mosques, churches, tombs and Levantine mansions at the district center, whereas the rural cultural resources mostly include assets of the local culture in the villages and even though they are getting lost, at least their cultural landscapes are preserved. The aim of this paper is to put forward how the natural and cultural resources of Bornova might be utilized through ecotourism, rural tourism and cultural tourism provided that they are turned into touristic products. The research, which is the subject of the paper, has been prepared with the approach of tourism geography and completed after performing the stages of data collection, geographical observations, interviews with the authorities, mapping, analysis and synthesis. It can be concluded that Bornova offers supply potential where types of ecotourism, rural tourism and cultural tourism as well as innumerable activities based on them might be developed. It is possible to state that urban population and primarily the youth at university and the university staff are ready to demand this potential and, therefore, marketing cannot be difficult at all.

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1. Introduction

In its new conceptual structure, tourism has become far from being dependent on sand-sun-sea and holiday and it has become a phenomenon that integrates with requests such as entertainment, sport, excitement, discovery of culture, and gaining of health. So, demands for places with a wide variety of services and high quality have increased as much as those for conserved, extraordinary, interesting and isolated places. Places that create demands for tourism have acquired these features depending on the presence of some of their strengths. These sources of strength are also called *attractions*. Attractions constitute a significant portion of a touristic product and play a role in a tourist's preference of his destination to another place. A touristic product is mostly offered as a compound product. A compound product in tourism consists of complementary products such as natural and cultural resources, transportation, accommodation, eating & drinking, and entertainment services.

Attractions are also directly correlated with the quality of the services that are provided, beyond natural, cultural and social attractions. The availability of establishments to meet all needs of tourists constitutes the facilities in an attraction. Moreover, the image of a destination in regional, national and international platforms has an impact on personal preferences, too. Each attraction has a specific image or images. The real aim of the marketing of an attraction should be to develop and alter images or to make images permanent so as to influence the expectations of potential tourists. The prices applied in an attraction are also a crucial factor that plays a role in the selection of a resort. In other words, they are the source of attractiveness and the competitive power.

Diversification of touristic products has recently been referred to as establishments' and countries' presentation of new products, which will create some direct strength of attraction, to the market in order to maintain or develop their market shares [1]. Diversification of touristic products primarily depends on the supply potential. Those countries which are willing to acquire more income from tourism and to take a good place within international tourism market have to extend tourism throughout the whole year. Therefore, it is required to diversify tourism. Concentration in specific places is also prevented with diversification of touristic products. So, it is possible to reduce spatial and temporal concentrations through diversification of touristic products.

When developing a new product in a touristic attraction, those products which will not inflict damage to the existing image of the attraction should be created. At the same time, it is necessary to offer those products, with which individuals to be the target mass of the new product will not feel ordinary but special and different. A new touristic product should mediate to realize the following [1,2].

- It should have the qualifications to answer the change in demand;
- It should provide an increase in employment;
- It should provide tourism with new regions;
- It should be able to solve the problems experienced in tourism;
- It should have competitive power.

Types of tourism such as youth tourism, third age tourism, plateau tourism, golf tourism, faith tourism, health tourism, thermal tourism, winter tourism, cave tourism, congress tourism, hunting tourism, rural tourism, white water tourism, cultural tourism, yacht tourism, botanic tourism, ecotourism and sports tourism might be utilized in diversification of touristic products.

Alternative tourism is one of the concepts that are mentioned in the context of diversification of touristic products. There are two basic approaches to alternative tourism: the first one is that it is dependent on and complementary to other types of tourism, whereas the second one is that it is stimulated with more special issues with features that are different from those of traditional tourism.

Under the present competition conditions, it is necessary to renew the existing touristic products or to develop new ones. Those destinations which fail to accommodate to this change will be confronted with losing their market shares.

Bornova is one of the metropolitan districts of İzmir. It is located some 11 km east of the city center of İzmir and the Gulf of İzmir (Fig. 1).

According to the results of ABPRS (Address-based Population Registration System) of 2009, the

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