

KONYA-TOURIST DESTINATION AND COMPONENT OF TOURISM PRODUCTS OFFERED BY TURKISH TRAVEL AGENCIES

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Abstract: Turkey is a well-known tourist destination, mostly for European tourists, with many opportunities for different type of tourism based most on natural, historical and cultural resources.

In the present article authors presents Konya as a tourist destination and a component of Turkish tourism agencies. After the presentation of the main tourism objectives of Konya, authors selected 15 travel agencies from Turkey after their importance and consulted their offers. The purpose of travel agencies consultation was to observe if Konya as a tourism destination is a component of their tourism products.

The article highlights that tourist destination Konya is found in touristic offers of those travel agencies from Turkey who were included in study and this destination is it is suitable for cultural tourism and religious tourism.

Key words: Turkey, tourism, destination, culture

INTRODUCTION

On the "world map of tourism statistics", according to many factors, are occurring periodically changes. So, some countries are leading, others are in decline, while others are rising in the world rankings [3].

Spread over two continents (Asia and Europe), with an area of 783,562 km² and a population of 84,339,067 inhabitants, Turkey is divided into 7 regions (Marmara, Aegean, Black Sea, Central Anatolia, Eastern Anatolia, Southeastern Anatolia and the Mediterranean) and is considered a tourist brand and a destination in the list of top 5 countries by number of international tourist arrivals [9,10,29,55,56].

According to World Tourism Organization, in 2020 Turkey was a tourist destination for 15.9 million international tourists, tourists who spent 10.2 USD billion (15th rank in the world), with an average per arrival of 643 USD (76th rank in the world). Regarding the share of tourism of total exports, this is 7% (13.8 USD billion) and places Turkey on 43th rank [10].

Related to inbound arrivals, in 2020 the main emitting countries are Russian Federation (13%), Bulgaria (7%), Ukraine (7%), Germany (7%) and United Kingdom (4%). Most of tourists arrived in Turkey by air (77%), while 20,5% traveled by land and 2,8 by water. The main purpose of foreign citizens is vacation, while 20,5% came in Turkey for personal reasons and 3,8% for businesses [12].

According to the information provided by World Travel & Tourism Council, the contribution of travel and tourism sector to GDP was 5% (35.5 USD billion) in 2020. The travel and tourism sector generated 2,189.5 jobs, 8.1% of total employment [12].

Related to Turkish tourism and travel competitiveness, in 2019, it was on 43 place (from 140), according to the data provided by World Economic Forum [8,11].

It is necessary to mention that year 2020 was not a proper year for tourism sector in all of the world and information mentioned above does not necessarily characterize tourism sector from Turkey.

Turkey is a tourist destination that tourists tend to choose more and more, due to the variety of relief that allows the practice of mountain tourism, but also the coast, as well as

a wide range of leisure activities. [1,2,6] Turkey has a large number of natural attractions (Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, Marmara Sea, Cappadocia, Pamukkale, Salda Lake, National Park Aladağlar, National Park Beyşehir Lake, National Park Göreme, National Park Köprülü Canyon, National Park Nemrut Dağı etc.), historical and cultural sights (Sultan Ahmed Mosque, Dolmabahçe Palace, Grand Bazaar, Efes, Aspendos, Troya, Topkapı Palace, Aya Sofia, Myra, Assos) [7].

The most popular forms of tourism practiced in Turkey are natural tourism, ecotourism, winter tourism, coastal tourism, speleological tourism, heritage tourism, cultural tourism, health and thermal tourism, congress and expo tourism, religious tourism, faith tourism, gastronomic tourism and thematic tourism [5,6,23,24].

The purpose of this article is to highlight Konya's potential as a tourist destination and its place in Turkish travel agencies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to highlight Konya as a tourism destination and a component of tourism products offered by travel agencies from Turkey the authors took the following steps:

- study of literature and statistical reports;
- selection of 15 Turkish travel agencies;
- elaboration of an observation form used to consult the offers of travel agencies;
- websites consultation of selected travel agencies and filling in the observation form;
- analysis and interpretation of obtained information;
- drawing conclusions.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Considered the largest province of Turkey, with a surface area of 39,000 km² and 875,530 inhabitants, Konya is adjacent to the provinces of Ankara, Aksaray, Niğde, Mersin, Karaman, Antalya, Isparta, Afyon and Eskişehir on the Central Anatolian plateau[55].

Konya, which has the oldest history in Anatolia, is a very rich city in terms of culture and history. Konya, which has hosted many civilizations, has many historical artifacts such as madrasahs, tombs and inns from every civilization [1,2,4,30].

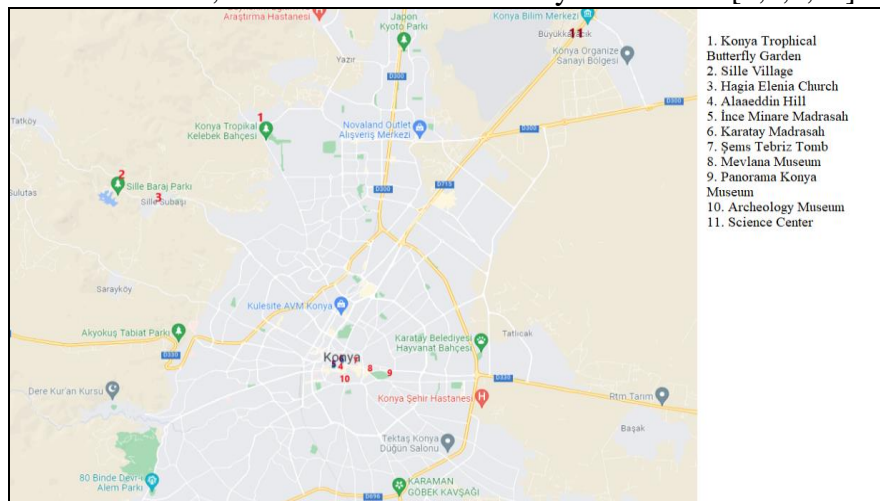


Figure 1. Map of Konya with touristic sights

Source: <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Konya> [22]

In the 13th century, for almost two centuries, Konya was the capital of Anatolian Seljuks. Konya can be described as a city where scholars, artists, poets and writers were blended. In the Early Christian Period, Konya was also an important center for Christians.

This can be a proof that Muslims and Christians have coexisted in peace and brotherhood. The appearance of a saint and a priest in Konya bazaar emphasizes the understanding and tolerance from that period to this period. The most important touristic sights and attractions are based on history and culture [1,2,4].

Mevlana Museum is a representative image of Konya with its green conical dom and host the tomb of Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi, known as poet, philosopher and religious leader [36,39,53].



Figure 2. Konya Mevlana Museum



Figure 3. Mevlana's Tomb



Figure 4. Konya Archeology Museum

Source: author's personal archive

Şems-i Tebrizi Tomb and Masjid are adjoining one to another and are located in a great park to the east of Konya Alaeddin Hill. The tomb is of the customary Seljuk cupola type and it is covered with a lead roof, which was later covered, and there is a large sarcophagus under the dome, which is acknowledged by the body of Shams-i Tabrizi. Hz. The Tomb and Masjid of Şems-i Tebrizi, which has a very important place in the intellectual life of Mevlana, is one of the most visited and sighted places in Konya [21].

Konya Archeology Museum is the second oldest museum from Turkey after Istanbul. The history of the museum dates back to 1901 considering the whole history. It was established inside the historical Karma Secondary School by the governor of Konya, Mehmet Ferit Pasha, and became a repository in the compose of the Konya branch of the "Museum-i Hümayun".

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk came to Konya in 1923 which the year the republic was founded and visited the museum warehouse, Mevlana Lodge and Tomb. After this visit, the Mevlana Lodge was opened as a museum in 1927 and the artifacts in the museum were transferred there. It was moved to the İplikçi Mosque firstly from there in 1953 and then was last opened to visitors in its new building in 1962. The most striking ones in the museum are the artifacts uncovered during the diggings in old settlements such as Çatalhöyük and Kara Höyük [33,50].

Ince minareli madrasah. The madrasah is the highest education institution in the education system of the period. Ince Minareli Madrasah exists and is among the first universities of Anatolia. Ince Minareli Madrasa, which was built in 1264 by Vizier Ata Fahreddin Ali during the reign of Seljuk Sultan Izzeddin Keykavus II, to teach the science of hadith, takes its name from the aesthetic feature of its minaret.



Figure 5. Ince Minaret Madrasah, Konya



Figure 6. Ince Minare Madrasah, Konya



Figure 7. Wall Tiles, Karatay Madrasah

Source: author's personal archive

Ince Minareli Madrasa, which is on the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List and is considered as one of the most important works of Turkish-Islamic art, takes its visitors on a journey through history with its crown gate, tile decorations, and geometric and floral motifs [32,49].

Karatay Tile Works Museum. Karatay Madrasa is used as the Museum of Tile Works. The interior of the madrasah is covered with mosaics and tiles.

The madrasa was built during the Seljuk period to teach the sciences of hadith and commentary and it is made of sille stone. It was abandoned at the end of the 19th century, but was reopened in 1955 as the Museum of Tile Works. Seljuk and Ottoman works are exhibited inside. In addition, tiles belonging to the Kubadabad Palace are exhibited here[34,51].

Konya Tropical Butterfly Garden Konya is the largest butterfly flight area in Europe and one of the few in the world with its 1,600 square meter butterfly flight area, it has a total usage area of 7,600 square meters, of which 3,500 square meters is a sightseeing area.

Konya Tropical Butterfly Garden, provide a natural habitat to approximately 10 thousand butterflies of 45 different species from tropical countries, also has approximately 20 thousand plants belonging to 98 species, as in including different animal species.

In the Butterfly Garden, which has a tropical climate, the temperature is kept constant at 28 degrees and the humidity at 80 percent. There is also the Butterfly Museum, the Beetle Museum, and the Nature Education Class. The butterfly house hosts scientific occurrence for students about fungi, birds, insects, and on special request, reptiles and other attractive creatures [13,31,52].

Konyanuma Panorama is a museum that presents the social life of 13th century Konya. The sema that Mevlana made in the covered bazaar is included in this panorama. In the museum is emphasized that together with the tolerance of Hz. Mevlana, all members of religion live in fraternity in Konya. Panorama Konya Museum is Turkey's 2nd Panorama Museum [20,35].



Figure 8. Tropical Butterfly Garden, Konya



Figure 9. Konyanuma Panorama Museum Miniature Section



Figure 10. Konyanuma Panorama Museum, Panorama Section

Source: author's personal archive

Konya Science Center hosts science festivals and includes many activity areas. Inside, there are various workshops and laboratories such as Physics laboratory, Mathematics laboratory, Life Laboratory. The artificial image of the sun, stars, planets and other celestial bodies is projected on to the dome-shaped ceiling with a special reflector[15].

Çatalhöyük is one of the oldest settlements in the world. Çatalhöyük was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2012. Çatalhöyük is placed within the borders of a small village on the Konya Plain in Central Anatolia, 52 km southeast of Konya, 11 km north of the Çumra District. Karadağ, which is about 40 km away from the south and east, is surrounded by Karacadağ and Hasan Mountain. It consists of two mounds, East and

West. The mound is called Çatalhöyük because of the forked shape of two hills with different elevations. East mound BC It consists of 18 Neolithic layers dated between 7400 and 6200 BC. The western mound, on the other hand, exhibits features from the Chalcolithic period, dated between 6200 and 5200 BC. Çatalhöyük represents the first settled society. It is one of the largest known villages or towns in the Near East.

The settlement in Çatalhöyük, which does not have a street, exhibits a unique feature with the adjacent houses that can be entered through the roofs. The main difference of Çatalhöyük from other Neolithic settlements is that it has gone beyond a village settlement and has lived through the phase of urbanization. The inhabitants of this settlement, which is one of the oldest settlements in the world, were also one of the first agricultural communities [17,48].

Sille Village. Sille is a place that has been inhabited in each period of history. Sille is an important religious center on the pilgrimage route between Istanbul and Holy City, one of the first centers of the early Christian era. In the Byzantine period, these hills were easily carved and chapels were created for Christians to hide and worship. Today, there are stone quarries that have been used for centuries. The stones extracted from the region were named "Sille Stone" and this stone was used in the buildings during the Seljuk period.

In studies undertaken regarding on the name Sille, ideas such as that it came from Silene during the Phrygian period, that it came from the Roman commander Sylla, and that it came from Silenos have emerged [35,54].

Aya Elena Church is one of the first churches of Anatolia. In the present time, the church is a museum. In 327, Helena, mother of Emperor Constantin, during her pilgrimage to Jerusalem, has stopped in Konya. She was impressed by the struggle of the believers for religion and worship despite the difficult conditions and she had the Christians build a temple in Sille [41,45,54].



Figure 11. Çatalhöyük Neolithic City, Konya



Figure 12. Example of Çatalhöyük House, Konya

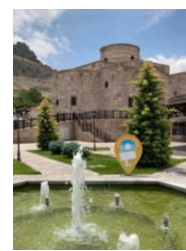


Figure 13. Aya Elena Church and Museum, Konya

Source: author's personal archive

Konya's cultural and historical heritage is the starting point in the practice of tourism, mostly being represented by cultural and religious tourism.

The practice of tourism in Konya and its surroundings is based on the existence of natural and anthropic tourist resources, especially the cultural and historical heritage. Tourism is largely represented by cultural and religious tourism.

The tourist objectives can be visited individually by the tourists, but also by purchasing the tourist packages offered by the travel agencies. In this sense, we wanted to find out how present Konya is, through its tourist objectives, in the offers of travel agencies from Turkey.

Thus, the websites of 15 travel agencies in Turkey were viewed in order to identify whether in their offer there are tourist packages that include tourist attractions in Konya and surroundings. The 15 travel agencies were chosen based on articles and rankings found in the online environment, some being popular and others with the best financial results[16,46,47].

Table 1 shows the results obtained after viewing the websites of the selected travel agencies.

Table 1.

Results of undertaken study on 15 travel agencies from Turkey

| Travel agency | Is Konya found in touristic offer? | Tourism product | Services included | Touristic sights/ Touristic attractions | Availability |
|---------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---|---------------|
| 1 | YES | THEMATIC TOURIST PRODUCT | 2 nights accommodation on hotel with HB Plane and bus transport Touristic guide | Sems-i Tebrizi Tomb Mevlana Museum Ince Minare Madrasa Karatay Madrasa Sille Village Trophical Butterfly Garden Sema ceremony Aya Eleni Church | December |
| | | CIRCUIT | 1 night accommodation on hotel with HB Plane and bus transport Touristic guide | Sems-i Tebrizi Tomb Mevlana Museum Ince Minare Madrasa Karatay Madrasa Sille Village Trophical Butterfly Garden | All year long |
| 2 | NO | - | - | - | - |
| 3 | YES | THEMATIC TOURIST PRODUCT | 1 night accommodation on hotel with HB Touristic guide Bus transport | Sems-i Tebrizi Tomb Mevlana Museum Ince Minare Madrasa Karatay Madrasa Sille Village Trophical Butterfly Garden Sema Ceremony Aya Eleni Church | December |
| 4 | YES | THEMATIC TOURIST PRODUCT | 1 day tour Bus transport Touristic guide Health insurance Sema Ceremony Ticket National Park Fee | Mevlana Museum Şems-I Tebrizi Tomb Sema Ceremony | December |
| | | THEMATIC TOURIST PRODUCT | 1 night accommodation Bus transport Touristic guide Health insurance Sema Ceremony Ticket National Park Fee | Aladdin Mosque Karatay Madrasa Inceminare Madrasa Yesil Dome Mevlana-Shams-i Tabriz Mausoleum Sema Ceremony Akşehir Nasreddin Hodja Tomb Trophical Butterfly Garden Sille Village Aya Elena Church | December |

| | | | | | |
|----|-----|--------------------------|---|--|---------------|
| 5 | YES | CIRCUIT | 1 night accommodation on hotel with HB Bus transport Touristic guide | Mevlana Museum Şemsi Tebrizi Tomb Karatay Madrasa Meram Sema Ceremony Sille Village | All year long |
| | | THEMATIC TOURIST PRODUCT | 1 night accommodation on hotel with HB Plane and bus transport Touristic guide | Mevlana Museum Şemsi Tebrizi Tomb Karatay Madrasa Meram Sema Ceremony Sille Village | December |
| 6 | YES | THEMATIC TOURIST PRODUCT | 1 night accommodation on hotel with HB Train and bus transport Entrance fees to tourist sights Sema Ceremony Ticket Touristic guide | Mevlana Museum, Sems-i Tebriz-i Tomb and Mosque, Seb-i Arus Ceremony, Sille, Hagia Eleni Church, Karatay Madrasa, Tropical Butterfly Garden | December |
| 7 | NO | - | - | - | - |
| 8 | NO | - | - | - | - |
| 9 | YES | THEMATIC TOURIST PRODUCT | 1 night accommodation on hotel with HB Touristic guide Travel Insurance | Mevlana Museum Şems-i Tebrizi Tomb Karatay Madrasa Akşehir Nasrettin Hoca Tomb Seyyid Mahmud Harani Tomb | December |
| 10 | NO | - | - | - | - |
| 11 | YES | CIRCUIT | In-car breakfast and lunch package Touristic guide Transportation with Luxury Vehicles and In-Vehicle Water Service | Karatay Medresesi Alâeddin Camii İnce Minareli Medrese Şems-i Tebriz Türbesi Mevlana Müzesi Tilâvet Odası Mermer Zincir 18 Çile Kubbesi Düğün Gecesi | All year long |
| 12 | NO | - | - | - | - |
| 13 | YES | THEMATIC TOURIST PRODUCT | 1 night accommodation on hotel with HB Touristic guide Travel Insurance Ceremony Ticket Bus transport | Sems-i Tebrizi Tomb Mevlana Museum Ince Minare Madrasa Sille Village Trophical Butterfly Garden Sema Ceremony Aya Eleni Church Nasreddin Hodja Tomb | December |
| 14 | YES | THEMATIC TOURIST PRODUCT | 1 night accommodation on hotel with HB Bus transport Touristic guide | Sems-i Tebrizi Tomb Mevlana Museum Ince Minare Madrasa Sille Village Trophical Butterfly Garden Sema Ceremony Nasreddin Hodja Tomb | December |
| 15 | NO | - | - | - | - |

Source: own researches [14,18,19,25,26,27,28,29,37,38,40,42,43,44]

As can be seen most of selected travel agencies sell touristic packages which include the tourist attractions of Konya and its surroundings, tourist packages are in the form of circuits and thematic tourist products. Circuits include the most important touristic sights from Konya and are available all year long. Thematic tourist products are related to Sema Ceremony which is organized in December.

CONCLUSIONS

Turkey is a tourist brand and a destination ranked on 5th in the world by number of international tourist arrivals.

The tourist activities carried out in Konya are related to natural, historic and cultural heritage. The forms of tourism practiced in Konya are natural tourism, heritage tourism, cultural tourism, faith tourism and gastronomic tourism.

As a home of many civilizations during the time, Konya is very popular for its natural beauties, historical and cultural heritage like mosques, tombs, churches, historical and archeological vestiges, urban and natural sites, tells, palaces. Currently, tourist attractions of Konya and its surroundings are found in the tourist offer of analyzed travel agencies.

According to the results obtained after consulting the websites of the selected travel agencies, the tourist packages that include visiting the tourist attractions in Konya and its surroundings and are sold by them are tours (circuits) and thematic tourist products.

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