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SEVEN CHURCHES OF THE REVELATION VISITED IN ROUTE TOURISM IN TURKEY

AS SETE IGREJAS DA REVELAÇÃO VISITADAS NA ROTA DE TURISMO NA TURQUIA

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ABSTRACT

Turkey has many historical and cultural riches belonging to Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as well as "Gobeklitepe", the oldest religious center of the world 11,500 years ago. There are many places in Turkey that are mentioned in the Bible. The most mysterious of these places are the Seven Churches (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea). Today it is observed that there is an current demand especially by Christianity groups who came from Europe, America and the other countries for Seven Churches. The aim of this study is to evaluate the route of Seven Churches in religious tourism in Turkey. In this study, a 6-step content analysis model was used. There are 24 travel agencies that organize The Tour of Seven Churches in Turkey. However, there are no logos, emblems and motto of the Seven Churches. In the study present implications to distinguish, promote and contribute to the creation of an effective image of the Seven Churches from other cultural assets in Turkey.

Keywords: Religious Tourism; The Revelation; St. John; Seven Churches

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INTRODUCTION

From early times, belief has been a powerful source of motivation, from early pilgrimage to holy places to modern travels. Religious structures, rituals, festivals and ceremonial activities are more attractive for religious followers who represent particular religious beliefs, as well as those for ordinary people (Henderson, 2013). Today, people are increasingly their travel interested in cultural areas and their specific differences (Meydan-Uygur & Baykan, 2007).

Turkey has many historical and cultural riches belonging to prehistoric and historic ages, as well as "Gobeklitepe", the oldest religious center of the world 11,500 years ago. Turkey is also a unique geography thanks to the valuable assets of the Jewish, Christianity and Islam (Kunt & Gülcan, 2017).

Modern Turkey has brought its historical and cultural heritage to the present. Today there are many places in Turkey that are mentioned in the Bible (Acts 2: 9-10, 9:30, 11: 19-30, 27: 2, John Revelation, 1: 11). Few of these places are the Seven Churches (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea) in Revelation, the last section of the Bible. The Seven Churches in Revelation are located in the Aegean Region within the boundaries of Turkey today (İzmir, Manisa and Denizli provinces) (Küçük, 2013; Wilson, 2010). Today it is observed that there is an current demand especially by Christianity groups who came from Europe, America and the other country for Seven Churches.

The study included excavations and modern studies on the Seven Churches. Seven Churches evaluated one by one. There are pictures of the churches showing their present remnants in this context. The development of religious tourism in

Turkey was evaluated in chronological order. In the method part is explained preferred method of study in detail. In the results part, a table showing the activities of the travel agencies organizing the Seven Churches in Turkey, the tour route, the duration and the name was prepared. Although it seems to be a positive situation that there are many agencies organizing the Tour in Turkey. It is determined that the Seven Churches are not introduced with any logo, motto or slogan, The Seven Churches, considered sacred by Christians, have a separate importance because both the Christian world and Turkey have a potential in terms of religious tourism. In the study present implications to distinguish, promote and contribute to the creation of an effective image of the Seven Churches from other cultural assets in Turkey.

Conceptual Framework

In this part of the study was given general informations about Seven Churches and their pictures of its present remnants are included. Later, was presented the development of religious tourism in Turkey by chronological. It has been argued that more empirical works should be done in order for the Seven Churches to be effectively positioned in the Turkish religious tourism.

Seven Churches

Christianity is one of the the most followed religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) that have survived from various periods and reached daylight. St. Jesus and the Bible formed by the teachings which it has notified and which belongs to Christians information. The second part of this Holy Book, the New Testament, known as the Revelation of the Apostle John. As mentioned in this book, The Seven Churches, which are sent

messages, are considered to be the first churches of Christianity, and the seven is the borders of Turkey in the Aegean Region "(Kartal, Tepeci & Atlı, 2013; Küçük, 2013, p. 283; Öter & Çetinkaya, 2016, p. 3).

In fact, it would not be right to say that interest in Seven Churches is new in Turkey. The result of the birth of the Messianic Movement of Sabati Sevi in Izmir (Smyrna) and the intense interest of the English Christians in 1666 by the Christ movement enabled the Seven Churches to gain importance in the history of Christianity. In order to rediscover the Seven Churches in Anatolia, many researchers have traveled to places where there are Seven Churches in Anatolia. Paul Rycout's role in the establishment of a counseling center in Smyrna for the Levant Company played a key role in the beginning of the interest in the Seven Churches (Wilson, 2017).

In 1678 Rycout published the current state of Armenian and Greek churches during his travels to the Seven Churches during the rediscovery of the Thyatira Region (Baker & Biger, 1992, p. 52).

In the same year, in 1678, Thomas Smith published a study titled "A survey of the Seven Churches as they now lie in their ruins" in the

notes that the Seven Churches had concluded the visit. This work was translated into English shortly after it was first published in Latin (Thomas, 2011).

Francis Arundell, who later served as a priest in a Chapel in Smyrna, published a study entitled "A Visit to the Seven Churches Asia" in 1828. In 1837, writer Fisher sent notes to Thomas Allom, a famous artist, for sketches for Asia Minor.

A year after 1837, the sketch titled "Constantinople and the Scenery of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor" was staged together with important engravings. This sketch was written by Robert Walsh, a former (retired) Protestant pastor in Istanbul.

In 1869 Alexander Svoboda performed the earliest photographic record of the Seven Churches. These photographs show impressive images of the 19th century of the Church of Smyrna (Wilson, 2007).

William W. Ramsay visited Smyrna for the first time in 1880's. The inheritance of Ramsay's pioneer continues to break ground in Anatolian literature today (Ramsey, 1904). You can see from Figure 1 the names and locations of the Seven Churches in his famous work with title "The Letters to the Seven Churches in Asia".

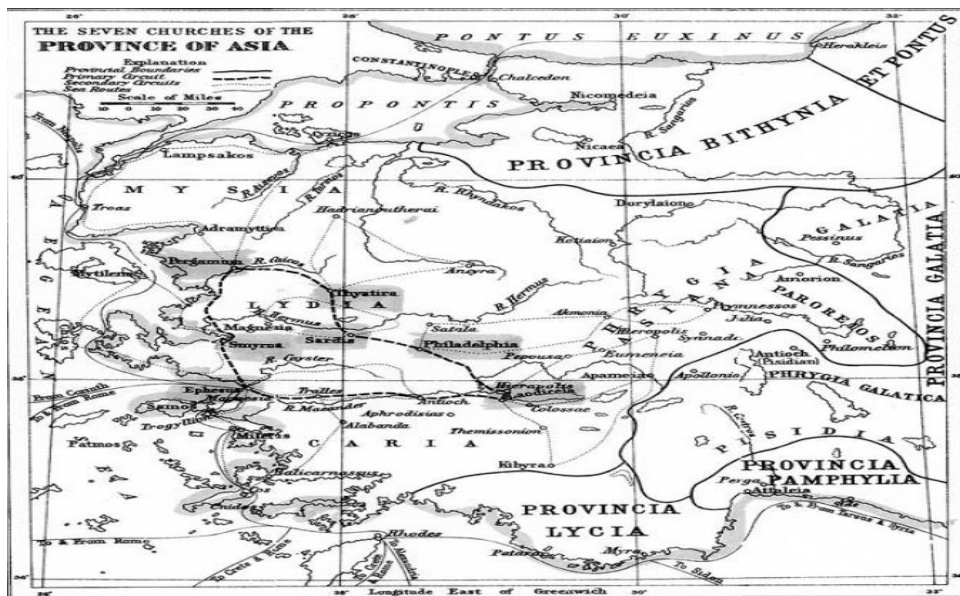


Figure 1 - Names and Geographical Locations of the Seven Churches in the Roman Period
Source: Ramsay, (1904:345).

In today's Christianity, the belief that Jesus will be established on the third day by death, his apostles seeing him asking the biblical message to spread to all the nations, raising him to the God and establishing the Divine Kingdom by completing the work that came to the earth again at the end of the world has become a central doctrine (Aydın, 2007). In this context, there is a close relationship between Aziz Yuhanna (Yitik, 2001, p. 37) and the Seven Churches appointed for the Asian Province. As compared to other saints, St. John seems to have a privilege as a person to whom Jesus is crucified and who entrusts his mother (Kitabı Mukaddes, 2010, p. 115-116).

The mysterious last book of the New Testament is "The Revelation of St. John. He was following the instruction Jesus Christ had given

him in a vision while he was on the island called Patmos: "What you see, write in a book and send to the seven churches which are in Asia, to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea" (Revelation, 1:11).

Ephesus Church

Ephesus Church (Double Churches / Consul Church) (Selçuk / İzmir) is considered among the first Seven Churches (Küçük, 2013, p. 292). It is thought that this church located in Selçuk "Ephesus Ancient City" opposite the Byzantine baths is one of the first seven churches of Christianity in the world, so it is thought to be very important for Christians (Visitizmir, 2017a). The remains of the Ephesus Church in the present day are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 2 - Ephesus Church (Double Churches / Consul Church)
Source: Visitizmir, (2017a).

It is stated that in the early periods of Christianity (69-155) the name of this church came to mean "to be followed" and "to be loyal" (Küçük, 2013, p. 284). Smyrna Church, Konak District of İzmir, Akdeniz District, Gazi Osman Paşa Boulevard, Necatibey (İzmir, Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, [IPDCT] 2017) is one of the earliest structures of İzmir

which is founded on the area where the Boulevard and Kazım Dirik Caddesi intersect. İzmir is one of the places where the "Seven Churches" in the Book of Revelation of the New Testament is located. However, it is not known which church and where church is. As a result, the Polikarp Church, which is characterized as the Incarnation of the Aegean, is considered

among the first Seven Churches in history and has been included in religious tours (Kunt, 2014, p. 66; Küçük, 2013, p. 284) Smyrna Church circles and the ceiling show frescoes about Polycarpe's life and martyrdom.



Figure 3 - Smyrna Church (St. Polikarp Church)
Source: Visitizmir, (2017b).

Pergamum Church (Bergama Church / Red Church)

The Pergamum Church is located in the province of Bergama in İzmir. Because of the red bricks on top of it, it is also called "Red Courtyard / Red Church". Inside the temple is considered among the first Seven Churches because of the construction of a church dedicated to John

(Küçük, 2013, p. 285-286). The remnants of the Pergamum Church today can be seen at Figure 3. At the same time, a total of 1.392.94 people visited the Red Basilica between 2009 and 2013, and 243,400.00 TL tourism revenue was obtained from the Basilica (The Strategic Plan of Metropolitan Municipality of Izmir (2015-2019) [SPMMI] 2017, p. 53-56).



Figure 4 - Pergamum Church
Source: Visitizmir, (2017c).

Thyatira Church

The possibility that this church may be the Basilica of Thyateira, which means constant sacrifice and tightness, is emphasized (Küçük, 2013, p. 287). One of the Seven Churches (the first seven churches of Christianity) established in Western Anatolia is in Thyateira. A part of the remains of the city of Thyateira can be seen today on the site of Tepe Mezari in the city center of Akhisar (Manisa Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism [MPDCT], 2017a.)

Excavations were carried out between 1962 and 1971 in the so-called Tepemezeri in Akhisar District of Manisa. As a result of these excavations, a church remains that was evaluated in the "First Seven Churches" (Küçük, 2013, p. 287). The remains from the excavations of the city, which was visited as the site of the Seven Churches Thyateira Church dating from the early ages of Christianity, can be seen in Figure 4 (Turkey Culture Portal, 2017).



Figure 5 - Thyatira Church
Source: Turkey Culture Portal, (2017).

Sardis Church

There is a church thinking as Sardis Church in Salihli, Manisa. However, it is being discussed its location (Küçük, 2013, p. 288). In the ancient city of Sard, there is a church built of bricks and small stones beside the Temple of Artemis. It is stated that this church is one of Seven Churches and that its name means "to remain" and "to walk with me" (Aksoy, 1998, p. 27). In the Revelation section of the Holy Book, Sardes, which is called as one of the Seven Churches in Western Anatolia, plays an important role in spreading

Christianity to the West. It also has a separate aspect in terms of religion (MPDCT, 2017b).

Philadelphia Church

It is thought that the church in Manisa's Alaşehir district of Himaye-i Eftal is one of Seven Churches (Aksoy, 1998, p. 27; Kunt, 2014, p. 74). The name of the Philadelphia comes from the nickname "II. Filadelfus" which means "someone who loves Attalos". This church, was attributed to John of the apostles of Jesus in the 6C AD. The name of this church also means "fraternal love /

brotherly love" and "open door" (Küçük, 2013, p. 290). From the Apostle to St. Ioannes. The Jean Church is one of the Seven Churches dating from the early periods of Christianity in the Aegean region. Today, this church has a wall of rubble

stone and brick, basic remains and two sculptures made of cut stone can be seen in Figure 5.



Figure 6 - Philadelphia Church
Source: MPDCT (2017c).

Laodicea Church

The remains of the Seven Churches were found as a result of the excavations carried out in the ancient city of Laodicea located in Pamukkale, Denizli. The word "Laodicea" consists of the words "Laos" (locals) "Domena" (voice) (Küçük, 2013, p. 292). The ancient city of Laodicea can be seen in Figure 6. Laodicea is very important because of the city is in the 4C AD. it became a pilgrimage center for the Christian world. For this reason, it is thought that the

creation of such a church in a city which is mentioned in the Bible and sent a letter on behalf of Laodicea Church (expressing the people) is thought to increase this holiness one more time (Denizli Provincial Directorate Culture and Tourism [DPDCT], 2017a) .Laodicea ruins increased by 22% compared to the same period of 2014 with 35 thousand 604 visitors in January-June 2015 period (Denizli Metropolitan Municipality [DMM], 2015).



Figure 7 - Laodicea Ancient City

Source: Denizli Provincial Directorate Culture and Tourism [DPDCT], (2017a).

Three of the Seven Churches (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum) are located on the border of Izmir province, the other three church are on the border of Manisa province (Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia) and last church is on the border of Denizli province (Laodicea). Six of them (Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea) are considered in the ancient city, while one (Smyrna) is noted as the church in use. Both the place of Smyrna and Sardis are discussed.

Religious Tourism in Turkey

From early on, religion has become a powerful source of motivation for travel. Religious tourism, defined as "visiting sites of sacredness, participating in religious ceremonies and monitoring religious visits in the form of observing visits or activities in tourism understanding" (Küçük, 2013, p. 26), is combined with other historical, cultural and natural riches

seems to have the opportunity to become a high-potential tourism type for Turkey.

The first study with religious tourism in "Turkey" was made by the State Institute of Statistics in 1965 and the religious purpose was the first place to visit. For that reason, at that time, it is shown that the Petrus Church and the Virgin Mary's House are being declared a pilgrimage place for Christianity, or that the work related to it is being increased. After 1965, until 1987, there was no numerical study on religious tourism" (Aksoy, 2002, p. 426-427). This situation also indicates a shift in the axis of life that is experienced with the policies observed in Turkish tourism. As a matter of fact, Turkey, which started its tourism activities with cultural tourism due to its rich cultural assets, started its planned process in tourism since 1963 and added sea-sand-sun to the travel motif based on cultural assets. In the mid-1980s, tourism, which has become an important title for the Turkish

economy, has evolved from this date towards an understanding of leisure and relaxation in the coastal regions. As a result of this mass tourism policy, culture tourism and faith tourism have lost their former priority (Gülcan, 2010) culture and belief has become the enriching elements of tourism centered on sea, sand and sun. On the other hand, the widespread all-inclusive system of accommodation has increased the time tourists spend in the hotel, especially the tangible cultural and religious heritage of tourists. Despite these developments, there have

been some moves in the 90's in the name of religious tourism. For example, in order to develop religious tourism, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism made the inventory of the works and places of worship which reached to the daily life of the three great religions in 1993 and identified nine centers (General Directorate of Investment and Operations [GDIO], 2017). The Alaşehir Church and the Akhisar Church in Manisa province, two of these nine centers, deal with Seven Churches. Today, the positions of these churches can be seen in Figure 6.

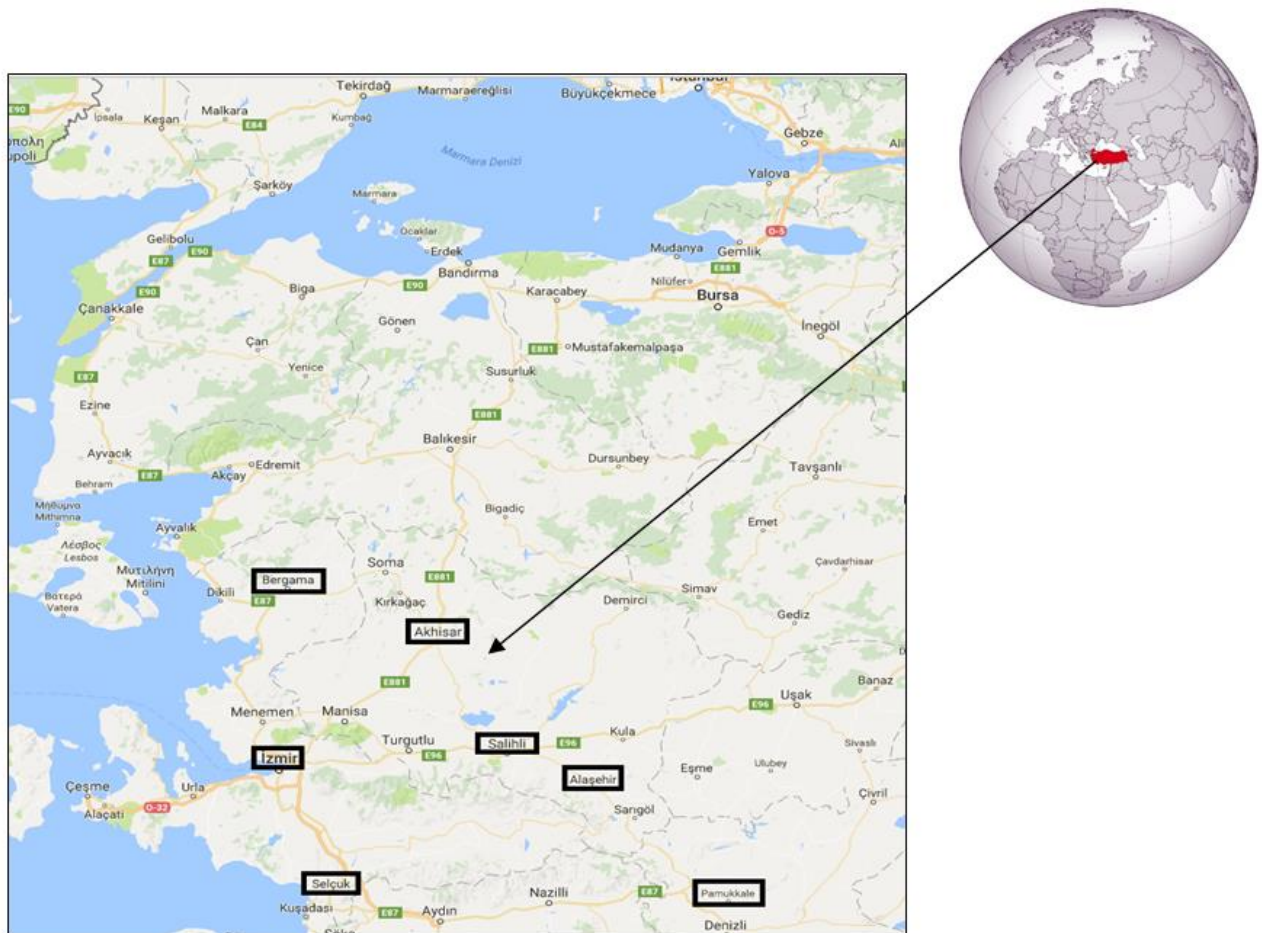


Figure 8 - Geographical Locations of the Seven Churches in Turkey
Source: Maps of Google, 2017

It is seen that in 1995, wider activities under the name of religious tourism started in Turkey. Organizing tours of "Religious Tourism" with the participation of a large number of tour operators,

members of the press and relevant experts in order to raise international awareness on religious tourism potential in Turkey during the

three years period between 1995 and 1998 (Sargin, 2006).

Studies on religious tourism continue to be conducted in Turkey. In the brochures prepared by the Directorates Provincial Culture and Tourism in Denizli, İzmir and Manisa where the Seven Churches are located, and in the introductions, the Seven Churches express an important attraction center in terms of religious tourism (IPDCT, 2017). Today it is observed that there is an existing demand especially by Christianity groups who came from Europe, America and the other country for Seven Churches. However, a limited number of studies have been reached that examine the Seven Churches in tourism discipline (Kunt, 2014; Kunt & Gülcan, 2017). It is thought that more empirical work is needed to determine the potential of the Seven Churches in Turkey's religious tourism.

Methods and Material

The aim of this study is to evaluate the route of Seven Churches in religious tourism in Turkey

The study is a qualitative study. In this study, a 6-step content analysis model, as described by Neuman (2014, p. 377-378), is used. Content analysis refers to "the content of a particular written text or other communication material (photos, movies, lyrics, advertisements); is a technique to identify and analyze words, meaning, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes or any message (Neuman, 2014, p. 49).

In the first step, the research question is defined. Research question: "How is the Seven Churches' Tour program?"

In the second stage, the resources to be analyzed are decided within the scope of the research. These sources are: websites of travel agencies and secondary sources.

In the third stage, a sampling framework with a purposeful sampling technique was developed. The data in the sampling frame were analyzed to determine the density of the provinces of the Seven Churches Tour organized, the frequency of name of the tour.

In the fourth stage, coding categories were created. These categories include; It consists of 4 categories as the locations of the agency that organizes the tour, the tour routes, the tour durations and the tour names. Agencies which organizing the tour are coded according to the locations. For example Aydın, 1; Istanbul 1, 2; Izmir 1, 2, 3 etc.

In the fifth step, the data are coded and the compatibility of the themes and data generated at the beginning are compared with each other. The codes were re-analyzed until a meaningful integrity was achieved. In the sixth stage, the prepared data coding system is finalized, the data are coded and analyzed.

A systematic method was followed in the study. The data were analyzed using a six-step content analysis method. An analytical point of view has been subjected to multi-dimensional and in-depth studies (collection, analysis and evaluation of data). Objective sampling method is preferred. Since this work is a qualitative study, the goal is not to reach generalizable information but to explore the situation examined. It can be said that the information expressed in this respect is a matter of reducing the concerns about the validity and reliability of the study.

The most important limitation of this study is the use of secondary data sources. Due to time, cost and labor constraints, it was not possible to go where the sites were, to observe them on site, to collect data from tourists and businesses. This study is limited with Seven Churches (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis,

Philadelphia and Laodicea). Seven Churches were evaluated in Turkey's religious tourism. The names of Seven Churches are given in some sources only saying for example Sardis Church Sart or Sard Church. This situation is a negative situation at the point of providing language association. For this reason, it was preferred to use the original names of the Seven Churches (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea) in the Roman period (Ramsay, 1904, p. 345). The last limitation of work is the preferred analysis. The analysis of the study is limited to visible / explicit content, but it is not possible to examine the implicit / implied meanings under the text because of the existing constraints.

Results and Discussion

The locations of agencies

In this study have been identified 24 travel agencies organizing the Tour of Seven Churches in Turkey and you can see the Table 1, 12 of agencies operate in the Aegean Region (Aydın, İzmir, Muğla) where Seven Churches are located. 8 of them are in the Marmara Region (Istanbul), 3 of them are in the Mediterranean Region (Antalya) and 1 of them is in the Central Anatolia Region (Ankara).

It is density seen especially in the Aegean region about the tour because of locating Seven Churches. Other regions such as the Marmara, Mediterranean and Central Anatolia also organize the tour. This shows that there is a current demand for Seven Churches.

The Routes of tour

The route of Seven Churches is changeable. For example Tarsus, Istanbul, Antalya, Cappadocia have been added to the Seven Churches tour routes places that are not related

to the Seven Churches (See Tutku tur, 2018). This can be interpreted in two perspectives.

At first is Tarsus, Istanbul, Antalya and Cappadocia were very important for History of Christianity in Anatolia. There are many valuable historical and cultural assets of Christianity such as St. Nicholas Church (Myra/Demre), St. Paul Church (Tarsus), Hagia Sophia (İstanbul) and Cappadocia Monasteries in these places.

Second is shows that these places are attracted and visited by tourists. So travel agencies add these places to the Tour of Seven Churches.

Durations of tour

The Tour of Seven Churches lasts at least 3 days and at most 14 days. Optional night/day can be determined, too. The remains of the churches are located on three city (İzmir, Denizli, Manisa). So duration of tour is normal at least 3 days. It is said that almost trip prices with 990-3,990 \$, it is a significant tourism revenue for destination marketers (See Tutku Tour, 2017).

Names of tour

9 of agencies define the tour "The Tour of Seven Churches", 7 of them define "The tour of Seven Churches of Revelation" this suggests that the Seven Churches were actively marketed in Turkey's religious tourism.

Another results

There are no logos, emblems or slogans that distinguish the Seven Churches from other cultural assets. The Travel Agencies only display the locations of the Seven Churches on the map or the Seven Churches are promoted with St. John. Moreover, a tour brochure prepared for the Seven Churches shows the picture of the Cappadocia Region, which is not associated with

the Seven Churches (see Appendix). This indicates a major problem. Seven Churches are a new dynamic in religious tourism in Turkey, have not a logo, emblem or slogan. In the study

present implications to distinguish, promote and contribute to the creation of an effective image of the Seven Churches from other cultural assets in Turkey.

The locations of agencies	The Routes of tour	Durations of tour	Names of tour
Ankara	The optional tour route can be determined about the Seven Churches	Optional night/day	The Tour of Seven Churches
Antalya 1	İzmir-Efes-the House of the Virgin Mary-Bergama-Thyatira-Sardis-Philadelphia-Laodikya	8 day	Seven Churches Seven Message
Antalya 2	Cappadocia- Tarsus- Konya –Perge-Lystra- Kolosse- Laodiceia-Milet- Ephesus- İzmir (Smyrna)-Pergamon- Thyatira-Philadelphia-Sardes	14 day	History of Christianity in Anatolia
Antalya 3	İzmir- Bergama – Akhisar (Thyatira) – Efes Sardes – Alaşehir (Philadelphia)- Pamukkale– Laodikya- Antalya– Citadel– Harbor- Arkeoloji Museum– Perge	8 day	Seven Revelation Churches
Aydın 1	İstanbul-Çanakkale- İzmir- Pamukkale- Kuşadası-Ayvalık-İstanbul	9 night/10 day	Seven Churches of Revelation in Turkey
Aydın 2	İstanbul-Smyrna-Pergamum-Sardis - Philadelphia – Pamukkale-Leodicea – Ephesus- İstanbul	7 night/ 8 day	The tour of Seven Churches of Revelation
Aydın 3	Ephesus-Laodicia-Sardis-Philedelphia-Thyatira-Pergamon-Smyrna	2 night/ 3 day	The tour of Seven Churches of Revelation
Aydın 4	Smyrna-Pergamum-Thyatira-Sardis-Philadelphia- Hierapolis-Laodicea-Ephesus	4 day	The Tour of Seven Churches
Aydın 5	Ephesus-Smyrna-Pergamum-Thyatira-Sardis-Philadelphia-Laodicea	Optional day/ night	The tour of Seven Churches of Revelation
Aydın 6	Istanbul-Izmir-Kusadası-Ephesus-Symrna-Pergamon/(Pergamum)-Thyatira-Philadelphia-Sardes-Laodicea-Denizli-Istanbul	4 night/5 day	The tour of Seven Churches of Revelation
İstanbul 1	İzmir-Bergama-Akhisar-Salihli-Alaşehir-Laodikya	4 night/5 day	The tour of Seven Churches in Turkey
İstanbul 2	Pergamum (Bergama) and Smyrna (Izmir)- Sardis (Sart)-Philadelphia(Alaşehir)-Pammukkale-Laodicea (Laodikeia) – Ephesus (Selçuk)-Thyatira (Akhisar)	4 day/ 3 night	The tour of Seven Churches of Revelation
İstanbul 3	Izmir- Ephesus – Laodicea-Sardis- Philadelphia- Thyatira-Pergamon, Smyrna or St. Polycarp-Istanbul	3 day /2 night	The tour of Seven

			Churches of Revelation
İstanbul 4	İzmir-Kuşadası- Pamukkale-İzmir- İstanbul	7 night/8 day	Revelation Seven Churches in Asia Minor
İstanbul 5	İstanbul-İzmir-Bergama-Thyatira-İzmir-Sardis-Philadelphia-Hierapolis-Laodikya-Pamukklae-Aphrodisias-Meryem Ana-Efes-St. Jean-Kuşadası Şirince-İzmir-İstanbul	3 night/4 day	Seven Churches in Anatolia
İstanbul 6	Efes-İzmir-Bergama-Tiyatira-Sardis-Filadelfiya-Laodikya	Optional day/night	The Tour of Seven Churches
İstanbul 7	Efes-Laodicea-Hierapolis-Philadelphia-Sardis-Thyatira-Bergama-İzmir	3 day	The Tour of Seven Churches
İstanbul 8	Efes-Laodicea-Hierapolis-Philadelphia-Sardis-Thyatira-Bergama-İzmir	3 day	Turkey Seven Churches Tour
İzmir 1	İstanbul-Ephesus – Kusadası- Magnesia – Tralles – Nysa – Kusadası- Priene – Miletus – Aphrodisias – Pamukkale-Colossae – Laodicea – Hierapolis – Pamukkale- Philadelphia – Sardis – Izmir- Thyatira – Pergamum – Assos- Alexander Troas – Troy – Bursa- Nicaea – İstanbul-	13 day/ 12 night	The tour of Seven Churches of Revelation
İzmir 2	The optional tour route can be determined about the Seven Churches	Optional day/night	The Tour of Seven Churches
İzmir 3	Ephesus Antique City –Celsius Library –The house of the Virgin Mary –Efes Museum - Şirince Village -Kuşadası Castle -İzmir-Agora-Kadifekale-Kemeraltı Bazaar -Homeros Kanyon-Bergama Antique City -Akropolis –Bergama Tiyatrosu-Thyatira Antik Şehri –Thyatiara Ruins –Sard Antique City -Sardis Ruins - Philadelphia Antique City –Philadelphia Ruins -Laodikeia Antique City –Laodikeia Ruins	3 night/ 4 day	The Tour of Seven Churches
İzmir 4	The optional tour route can be determined about the Seven Churches	Optional day/night	The Tour of Seven Churches
İzmir 5	Bergama-Thyatira-Smyrna(İzmir)-Sart-Filadelfia-Efes	Optional day/night	The Tour of Seven Churches
Muğla	Pamukkale- Philadelphia- Sardes- Pergamum- Efes (Ephesus)	4 day	The Tour of Seven Churches

Table 1 - Travel Agencies Organizing Seven Churches Tours in Turkey

Source: Table adapted from Web by authors

Conclusions

Turkey has been home to many civilizations from the past. Many civilizations have left valuable historical and cultural artifacts on the territory of Turkey through its respect and tolerance to different civilizations. Turkey has many historical and cultural riches belonging to

Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as well as "Gobekli-tepe", the oldest religious center of the world 11,500 years ago. Turkey is a unique geography thanks to the valuable assets of the Jewish, Christianity and Islam. Christianity, which is a universal religion, has grown and developed

in Turkey despite being born in the Palestinian Territory (Kunt and Gülcan, 2017).

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey, in order to develop religious tourism, in 1993 firstly the works of the three great religions reaching the daylight and the inventory of places of worship has been prepared, and within this inventory nine centers of Christianity (General Directorate of Investment and Operations [GDIO], 2017). Two of these nine centers are Alaşehir (Philadelphia) Church and Akhisar (Thyatira) Church on the borders of Manisa province belonged the Seven Churches.

The second section of the Bible known as the Revelation of the Apostle St. John. As mentioned in this book, the Seven Churches, which are sent messages, are considered to be the first churches of Christianity, and these churches are located in the borders of Turkey in the Aegean Region (Kartal, Tepeci & Atlı, 2013; Küçük, 2013, p. 283; Öter & Çetinkaya, 2016, p. 3). The names of the Seven Churches were in Roman Period; Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea (Ramsey, 1904, p. 345). The locations of the sites are in today, Selçuk / Izmir, Konak / Izmir, Bergama / Izmir, Akhisar / Manisa, Salihli / Manisa, Alasehir / Manisa and Pamukkale / Denizli.

Today it is observed that there is a current demand especially by Christianity groups who came from Europe, America and the other country for Seven Churches. However, limited number of studies have been reached that examine the Seven Churches in tourism discipline (Kunt, 2014; Kunt & Gülcan, 2017). The aim of this study is to evaluate the route of Seven Churches in religious tourism in Turkey.

In this study, a 6-step content analysis model, as described by Neuman (2014, p. 377-378), is used. Categories were created. These categories

include the locations of the agencies that organizing the Tour of the Seven Churches, the names of tour, the routes of tour and the durations of tour.

In this study have been identified 24 travel agencies organizing the Tour of Seven Churches in Turkey. 12 of agencies operate in the Aegean Region (Aydın, İzmir, Muğla) where Seven Churches are located. 8 of them are in the Marmara Region (Istanbul), 3 of them are in the Mediterranean Region (Antalya) and 1 of them is in the Central Anatolia Region (Ankara). The Tour of Seven Churches lasts at least 3 days and at most 14 days. The route of Seven Churches is changable. For example Tarsus, Konya, Istanbul, Çanakkale, Antalya, Cappadocia have been added to the Seven Churches tour routes places that are not related to the Seven Churches. Another finding in the study is that there is no logos, emblems or slogans that distinguish the Seven Churches from other cultural assets. The Travel Agencies only display the locations of the Seven Churches on the map or the Seven Churches are promoted with St. John. Moreover, a tour brochure prepared for the Seven Churches shows the picture of the Cappadocia Region, which is not associated with the Seven Churches (see Appendix). This indicates a major problem. Seven Churches are a new dynamic in religious tourism in Turkey, have not a logo, emblem or slogan.

It is thought that an introductory logos, emblems and slogans should be designed to ensure the effective image of the Seven Churches. For example, "Pine Cone" is considered to be a suitable emblem or visual symbol to identify the Seven Churches. Pine Cone has authentic and mythological meanings. The authentic meaning is known from the needles and multiplication. The Seven Churches

are the first churches of Christianity and they have spread to the world or have multiplied. The open pine comes from the seven layers. Seven Churches also come with Seven messages through Seven angels. For this reason, seven layers are thought to represent a symbolic meaning. Mythological meaning is that the pine cone is the symbol of the Moon God Men. The Moon god was also worshiped in the region where there were Seven Churches in Asia Minor (Büyükgün, 2006, p. 107). With these symbolic meanings, it is thought that the pine cone is an introductory and impressive emblem for the Seven Churches. It will be noted that the Seven Churches are in Turkey with the slogan "Explore Seven Churches with Turkey". Therefore, it is thought that the designed slogan will create an effective image.

There are letters in the revelation section of the holy book written in the Seven Churches. In these letters, icons and symbols are used extensively and present a visually rich content for reader. In this context, the establishment of 10-dimensional simulation rooms, where letters are converted into a scenario, will be a different experience for tourists visiting Seven Churches.

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These rooms can be located around the Ancient City of Ephesus, one of the ancient cities most visited by tourists. For a tourist who watches the simulation show in Ephesus, it may intend to visit Philadelphia and Thyatira Churches, whose name is not heard much. It is thought that this experience will create an image in the minds of the Seven Churches in Denizli, Izmir and Manisa.

It is recommended that the Seven Churches' visitor profile be identified for future research. The profile of a niche market with empirical data is thought to be determined at this point. Marketing strategies can be developed for the specified market profile. There is also a need for empirical studies to measure the image of the Seven Churches. Therefore, designing new ideas and products that destination stakeholders come together to make the image of the Seven Churches more effective in the national and international are among the suggestions presented in the study. Finally, it is also can be done on the determination of the effects of the created image elements on the intentions of the tourists visiting the Seven Churches is also beneficial.

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Appendix: Few of the materials used for the promotion of the Seven Churches in Turkey

Figure 1: Seven Churches



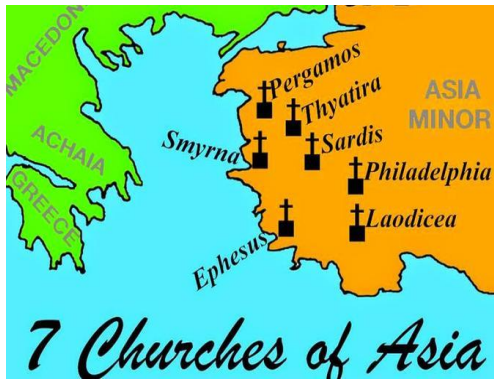
Source: MPDCT, (2017d).

Figure 2: The Tour of Seven Churches



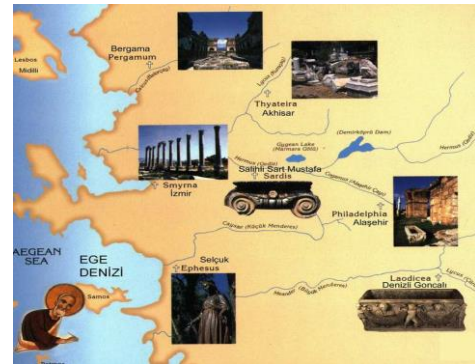
Source: Veritas Turizm, (2017)

Figure 3: *The Tour of Seven Churches*



Source: Wiz Tours, (2017)

Figure 4: *A Tour of Seven Churches*



Source: Anabatours, (2017)

Figure 5: *Seven Churches of Revelation*



Source: Tutku Tur, (2017)