

LUXURY TOURISM IN TURKEYCengiz DEMİR¹Özgür SARIBAŞ²**Abstract**

Tourism is becoming increasingly important as a source of revenue for many countries. Tourism sector is also increasingly important for the Turkish economy. There is always tendency to have more and more tourists in their own countries but now these ideas are changing and nowadays the trend is to have not more tourists but more income from each of them. Some countries expanded considerably in recent years after being declared a top tourism economic priority and these countries have prepared plans for attracting luxury customers to offer them high-priced products and to give a high quality service. This concept is called luxury tourism as a tourism type. This paper describes the term “luxury tourism” and gives the variety of its examples in the world and in Turkey.

Keywords: Luxury Tourism, Turkey, Luxury Hotels

JEL Codes: L82, L83

1. Introduction

The English word luxury derives from the Latin term *luxus* and means sensuality, splendor, and pomp; its derivative *luxuria* means extravagance, riot, etc. The major characteristics of luxury are exclusivity, high quality and high degree of scarcity, all of which justify the high price. Typically, the luxury tourists-shoppers are affluent and middle-aged (approximately 45-54 years of age). They are Baby

¹ Prof.Dr., İzmir Katip Çelebi University, Faculty of Tourism, Cigli Main Campus, Cigli/Izmir-TURKEY, cengiz.demir@ikc.edu.tr

² Res.Asst., İzmir Katip Çelebi University, Faculty of Tourism, Cigli Main Campus, Cigli/Izmir-TURKEY, ozgur.saribas@ikc.edu.tr

Boomers with high disposable income and available leisure time. Most of them have a household income of more than \$100,000. Luxury shoppers are experienced, informed, well-traveled and adventurous and differ across and within genders, ages, marital status or professions as well as income and psychographic profile (Reisinger and Park, 2008).

Although the world's economy is consistently fluctuating and even experiencing a significant downturn many consumers demand luxury and are prepared to pay higher prices for it. Despite the fact that the number of people who can afford to pay extra for luxury decreases, the number of people who want to experience luxury is consistently on the rise. The market responded to this trend by offering a wide range of luxury products and travel options. The luxury market is an important segment in the travel and tourism industry (Park et al., 2010). 'Luxury tourism', as a rapidly increasing mode of contemporary travel-by-choice, is surely as complicates in re-organizing the economic and semiotic landscapes anew (Thurlow and Jaworski, 2011). Luxury tourism marketers tend to assume that more money is earned by attracting tourists who can afford luxury goods and services, despite the fact that this often leads to a country's dependence on imported products, foreign investment, and expatriate skills, resulting in repatriation of resultant profits. But those financial benefits received from luxury tourism developments in the Third World very rarely "trickle down" to be of any significance to people at grassroots level. Nevertheless profit-oriented thinking says; "Luxury tourism was the way forward. Hippies and backpackers do not bring in enough money" (Scheyvens, 2002).

After giving the definition of the term “luxury”, “luxury tourism” and explanation of luxury tourism importance in tourism industry, aim of this study is to take a closer look into luxury tourism, to give some examples from the world and Turkey, to examine the development and role of luxury tourism in Turkey.

2. Tourism, Luxury and Luxury Tourism in the World

Tourism and luxury have always been linked. With a few exceptions, until the advent of mass tourism in the twentieth century, the bulk of leisure tourism was about travel by a very small affluent, educated elite social class. In the modern era many destinations have become popular for mass tourism after being initially a place of interest to elites looking for fashionable luxury experiences. This destination development pathway often results from a combination of two forces. The first force is the desire by tourists to seek luxury experiences as a temporary escape from their everyday realities (Moscardo and Benckendorff, 2010).

Who exactly is the modern luxury consumer? Specific definitions vary according to source and geography but research group The Affluence Collaborative classifies the “affluent” in the U.S. as having a household income of at least \$200,000 and the “wealthy” have an income of more than \$500,000. This general definition transfers to other parts of the world as well (Luxury Trend Report, 2012).

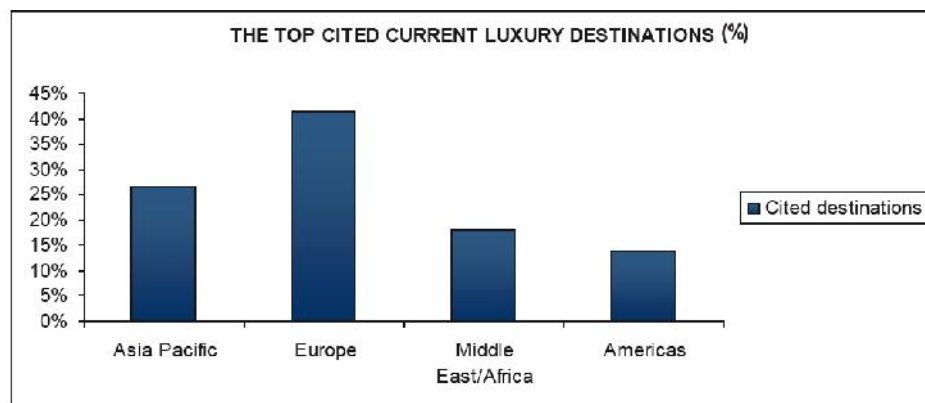
The world’s luxury consumption market reached 1 trillion Euros in volume last year, according to “The New World of Luxury” report conducted by the Boston Consulting Group, or BCG, a global management consulting firm. There are main trends in the luxury consumption market, according to the BCG report. Customers want

luxury experience instead of luxury products. Luxury consumption has also begun to shift to developing markets. Some markets such as China, Russia and the Gulf region have become luxury consumption centers, while the sector was previously identified with London, New York, Paris, Milan and Tokyo. The difference between luxury brands and non-luxury brands has begun to decrease, the report read, adding that the new media order has changed the luxury consumption communication (www.hurriyetdailynews.com: 24.10.2013). Another example, Brazil's five million luxury consumers are very demanding and have high expectations. Price is not the driver for them in the selection of a destination or property. Europe is a particularly popular destination for Brazilians but increasing in popularity are Africa, Asia and the Middle East as travelers become more informed and direct airlift routes open up. One hotel representation company with members around the world cited increases in business in Sao Paolo, Tokyo and Sydney, which reflects that leisure travelers are starting to think globally again in where they seek to vacation (Global Trends In Luxury Travel, 2010).

If we talk about Turkey, Turkey is famous for its genuine welcome and exceptional hospitality (www.simpsontravel.com: 10.10.2013). With each passing year there are more and more preferences for luxury tourism journeys and this kind of tourism potential is increasing in Turkey (www.hurriyet.com.tr: 02. 01. 2014). The same can be said about the world trends in luxury tourism industry. So where are the primary destinations for luxury travelers today?

The primary destination for luxury travel is Europe, listed as the top luxury destination by 41% of the interviewees. Two countries remain hot favorites: France (14%) and Italy (9%). Paris, the French Riviera, and Tuscany were specially noted. The Asia/Pacific region follows at 27%. Top destinations are the Maldives, Japan, India and French Polynesia, followed by Thailand and New Zealand. Destinations in the Middle East and Africa were favored by 18%, with Austral Africa and Mauritius noted by 12%. Turkey and United Arab Emirates (UAE) attracted 6%. In the Americas, the U.S. (especially California and Hawaii) dominates at 8%, followed by the Caribbean (Caribbean cruises, Bermuda) and Latin America (Argentina) at 6% (A Global Trends Report, 2011).

Figure 1. The Top Cited Current Luxury Destinations (%)



A Global Trends Report, 2011

Among these regions, the most popular cities include the following (A Global Trends Report, 2011):

- In Europe: Paris, Rome and London
- In Asia Pacific: Singapore, Hong Kong and Tokyo
- In Africa and the Middle East: Dubai and Cape Town

- In North America: New York, Miami and Los Angeles
- In Latin America: Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires

3. Luxury Tourism in Turkey

Turkey has a great potential with their own tourism values and geographical position to attract luxury tourism customers. Luxury manifests itself in many forms and defining a luxury hotel is a very challenging prospect. Luxury is constantly evolving and each individual creates an own sense and understanding of luxury. The hotel industry and the tourist industry are mutually inclusive (Rensburg, 2008) and Turkey has 267 5 star hotels in 2010 and 186 of them located in Antalya (www.emlakkulisi.com: 10.10.2013). Approximately 57 million tourists go to Spain and 11 million tourists coming to Antalya in a year. But the number of 5 star hotels in Antalya is more than the number of all 5-star hotels in Spain (www.turizmgazetesi.com: 11.10.2013). Approximately there are 362 5-star hotels in Turkey in 2011 and most of them in Antalya as mentioned before (www.ascihaber.com: 11.10.2013). There are 3 thousand 500 accommodation facilities in Turkey and Turkey has over the 670 thousand bed capacity in the end of the 2012 (www.igd.com.tr: 12.11.2013).

Table 1. Tourism revenue over the years	
Years	Tourism revenue
2001	10.450.728
2002	12.420.519
2003	13.854.868
2004	17.076.609
2005	20.322.111
2006	18.593.950
2007	20.942.501
2008	25.415.067
2009	25.064.481
2010	24.930.996
2011	28.115.694
2012	29.351.446
TÜROFED Bülten, 2013	

As shown in Table 1 tourism revenue with the accommodation facility and bed capacity increased. Tourism investments made in recent years boosted the quality of hotels. Deluxe and ultra-luxury hotels and resorts opened over the past ten years increased their spending per tourist. In addition to this, the number of tourists and revenues has raised. Turkey has receded tourism potential revenues from tourism sector, a growing trend in recent years, and the share of tourism receipts in GDP and its contribution to reduce the current foreign trade deficit has been increasing (İnançlı et al., 2012).

Average tourist spends \$ 48 daily, while cruise ship tourist spends 120 dollars in a transit port. This tourist spends about 150 dollars in main cruise port and ship's personal spends about 70 dollars. Cruise tourists

spend 3 times more than other tourists (www.wowturkey.com: 19.11.2013). Tourist expenditure per person normally is \$ 600 while expenditure of those who purchase luxury services reaches above \$ 2000.

During the last decade Turkish tourism companies had many international awards. The World Travel Awards are considered the 'Oscars' of the travel world and Turkey gained the greatest number of awards among all tourism nations by walking off with top honors at a ceremony hosted at the new Conrad Algarve on Saturday 6th October 2012 (www.turkeycentral.com: 20.11.2013).

World Travel Awards for Europe in 2012 (www.tanitma.gov.tr: 20.11.2013):

- Europe's Leading Tourist Board: Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism

- Europe's Leading Cruise Destination: Izmir

- Europe's Leading All Inclusive Resort: Concorde De Luxe Resort

- Europe's Leading All Suite hotel: Hotel Les Ottomans, Istanbul

- Europe's Leading Couples Resort: Adam & Eve Hotels, Belek

- Europe's Leading Design Hotel: Adam & Eve Hotels, Belek

- Europe's Leading Family Resort: Kemer Resort Hotel

- Europe's Leading Golf Resort: Cornelia De Luxe Resort

- Europe's Leading Luxury Hotel: Hotel Mardan Palace

- Europe's Leading Luxury Hotel Brand: Kempinski Hotels & Resorts

- Europe's Leading Luxury Resort: Cornelia Diamond Golf Resort &

Spa

- Europe's Leading New Luxury Hotel: Angel's Peninsula
- Europe's Leading Hotel Suite: Mardan Palace Antalya Royal Suite
- Europe's Leading Spa Resort: Mardan Palace
- Europe's Leading Tour Operator: GTI
- Europe's Leading Incentive & Incoming Agency: DE&HA Tourism, Turkey

Mardan Palace Hotel is a good example for the luxury service. This hotel is considered Europe's and the Mediterranean's most expensive luxury resort. It was opened on 23 May 2009. Mardan Palace cost \$1.4 billion. It has the Mediterranean's largest swimming pool (Mardan Palace Grand Opening in Antalya, 2009) within which is a sunken aquarium containing 2,400 fish (www.dailymail.co.uk: 12.11.2013). The hotel has 560 rooms (Five Star Alliance, 2012), a 12,000 sqft (1,100 m²) spa, and its own beach containing 9,000 tons of sand imported from Egypt (Travel, 2009). 10,000 m² of gold, 500,000 crystals, and 23,000 m² of Italian marble were used in the construction of the hotel (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism – Go Turkey, Gateway to Turkey: The Official Travel & Holiday Guide).

Mardan palace hotel took almost all luxury resort awards since its establishment.

2012 World's Leading Hotel Spa
2012 World's Leading Hotel
Swimming Pool
2012 World's Leading Luxury Leisure
Resort & Spa
2012 Europe's Leading Hotel Suite

2012 Europe's Leading Luxury Hotel
2012 Europe's Leading Spa Resort
2012 Turkey's Leading Resort
2011 World's Leading Hotel Spa
2011 World's Leading Luxury Resort
2011 Europe's Leading Hotel Suite

2011 Europe's Leading Luxury Hotel	2010 Europe's Leading Luxury Hotel
2011 Europe's Leading Spa Resort	2010 Turkey's Leading Hotel
2011 Turkey's Leading Spa Resort	2010 Turkey's Leading Spa Resort
2010 World's Leading Hotel Spa	2009 World's Leading Luxury Resort
2010 World's Leading Luxury Hotel	2009 World's Leading Palace Resort
2010 World's Leading Royal Suite	2009 Europe's Leading Luxury Resort

(www.worldtravelawards.com: 17.10.2013)

The luxury hotel industry places a large focus on the guest experience along with their satisfaction and guests have high expectations. Satisfying luxury hotel consumers can be a challenge because a luxury experience varies for each individual and is highly subjective. Considering that luxury is highly subjective and deeply related to each person's expectations, dreams, and fantasies about lifestyles, it is difficult to establish how a luxury hotel experience is formed. Marketing Executive of Four Seasons Hotels suggests that there are four key factors that contribute to a luxury hotel experience: style, comfort, service, and pampering (Backer, 2009). This is very important for the customers to deliver a luxurious holiday experience and also important for to make a sustainable hospitality for the luxury hotels.

4. Some of Luxury Tourism Segments in Turkey

There are different varieties of luxury tourism practices. New luxury market segments are emerging in addition to the traditional rich market (Park and Reisinger, 2009). Every region has their own values for creating luxury tourism types. Some countries have wonderful nature, some has hot thermal springs, also there are countries which have magnificent sea shore, and some countries, referred as quiet paradise.

Each country has a unique structure as shown in examples. There are also advantageous aspects of Turkey to develop luxury tourism. As explained below:

4.1. Thermal Tourism

Intelligent luxury has been used as a marketing slogan of Soneva Resorts and Six Senses Spas. This company runs small, expensive resorts in South East Asia, the Maldives and the Middle East. The concept of intelligent luxury in these resorts is defined as offering luxuries of the highest international standard in an environment that nurtures the indigenous feel in design, architecture and service, fusing nature with guest experiences.

While medical tourism and wellness tourism are growing and gathering increasing attention in countries around the world, both businesses and governments are grappling how to define, organize and promote these sectors. This conundrum is especially challenging for spa industry because spas can and do offer services and products that cut across both wellness tourism and medical tourism realms, and the integration of spas into these markets varies widely across different countries and regions (Global Spa Summit, 2011).

Wellness tourists are high-income and well-educated, 32 percent of these tourists in Europe earning over two thousand euro. These people are tired of business and they want to feel special and to relax in spa and wellness. In addition to this segment of tourists takes care of their own health (www.tourism.lifeinturkey.com: 11.11.2013). Due to all these aspects you need to ensure them luxurious and comfortable service.

1st International Luxury Thermal Product and Marketing summit was held in Turkey and important conclusions were drawn there. Here are some things that attract attention; Thermal tourism in Turkey attracts Europeans. Thermal, SPA and wellness products are on the way to achieve the goal of 50 million tourists in 2023 in Turkey. Turkey has master plan about thermal tourism and to act according to this plan. It's believed that Turkey should take a share of alternative tourism markets and investments are planned for it. With all this Turkey will win significant share in the world's thermal tourism share in the next 15-20 years (www.eventturkiye.com: 14.10.2013).

Treatments with thermal waters have always been a common method in Anatolia. Turkey is located on a major geothermal zone. There are over 1,000 thermal springs with mineral-rich content in Turkey. Turkey is in 7th place in terms of thermal resources in the World. Turkey receives about 1.5 million visitors from abroad in thermal treatment facilities. Due to the 2% increasing of world population ageing per year, thermal tourism becomes more reasonable and more reliable for investments. Thermal tourism attracts mostly elder people which can be considered a great advantage in terms of geopolitical position. If Turkey spends more time and money on thermal tourism facilities and investments, it can be the most popular destination among Middle East Countries and European Countries (Demir and Saribas, 2013). Turkey must support this potential with luxury service and high quality thermal hotels and cure centrum.

4.2. Cruise Tourism

Cruise tourism is a sector that develops rapidly all over the world which also benefits the related port cities greatly. Globally, the sector is not only considered as tourism, but also as an industry. The countries which are aware of cruise ship tourism and its opportunities are in competition with each other in order to get a share from this industry (www.eng.izto.org.tr: 17.10.2013). Many port cities have encouraged tourism-related activities as an alternative to port or shipping activities. While this has occurred in port cities throughout Europe, it has been particularly important in the Mediterranean area, which has significantly increased its importance for tourism on a world scale since 1991. Furthermore, on a more general level a further attraction of cruise terminals for 'host' cities is provided by the aesthetic image of the (large) ship, which may lend an enhanced image of modernity, leisure and luxury to the city (McCarthy, 2003).

Cruise tourism is developing rapidly all around the world and leaves foreign exchange income. Cruise tourism appeals to the middle and upper income groups. North America, South America and tropical islands are important in the cruise destination until recent years and today the Far East, the Poles, the Baltic Sea Region, the Arabian Peninsula, Red Sea, Black Sea and the Mediterranean Area are also important destinations for cruise tourism (Oral and Esmer, 2010).

Turkey understood the importance of cruise tourism and cruise companies that of Turkey and that the cruise sector is growing more and more every day as more and more new ships are being put to sea every year (Mersin maritime trade magazine, 2012). İzmir is the biggest city on

the Aegean coast is about to have a port for cruise ships that lives to its reputation in Turkey (www.hurriyet.com.tr: 02. 01. 2014). The number of cruise ships docked at Turkey's ports has increased 83 percent, while the number of passengers who came to the country on those ships has climbed 276 percent in last nine years. Cruise ship tourism, which attracts higher income people, has grown about 10 percent every year. The number of tourists coming to Turkey by cruise ship has recorded a year-on-year increase of 10.8 percent in 2004, 17.4 percent in 2005, 34.1 percent in 2006, 34.6 percent in 2007 and 17.3 percent in 2008. It recorded a 7.5 percent fall in 2009 because of the global economic crisis. The figure increased by 15 percent in 2010 and finally by 18 percent last year. The number of cruise ships visiting Turkey was 887 carrying a total of 582,000 passengers in 2003. The figures hit 1,623 cruise ships carrying 2.2 million passengers as of the end of 2011. Istanbul, the western ports of Izmir, Kusadası, Bodrum and Marmaris, and the southern port of Antalya are among the favorite destinations of cruise ships out of a total of 23 ports (www.hurriyetdailynews.com: 24.10.2013). The first three months of the year (2013), most cruise ship berthing port was the Port of Kusadası. January-March period, 14 ships visited the port of Kusadası. In the first quarter, 25 thousand 233 people were entertained with the Port of Izmir this was the highest passengers in Turkey for this period (www.cumhuriyet.com.tr: 07.09.2013).

5. Conclusions

The luxury travel market is the fastest-growing segment of the travel industry worldwide (www.companiesandmarkets.com: 11.11.2013). Italy, France and the UK remain the most popular destinations for luxury travelers. However, Cuba, Vietnam and Cambodia are emerging as new destinations for the wealthy. In North America, luxury travel produces almost a trillion dollars in annual sales. While a high level of comfort and service, and exclusivity are still key elements for luxury travelers, experiential travel and sustainability are playing an increasingly important role. Luxury consumers have embraced technology, with social media playing an important role for luxury brands in order to engage with their customers, receive valuable feedback and gain loyalty (www.companiesandmarkets.com: 11.11.2013).

Promoting the bespoke nature of luxury travel is an important part of marketing already. There has been a general rise in the number of travelers wanting unique experiences and personal service rather than traditional luxury hotels over the last few years. Travelers seeking luxury experiences are getting younger and more interested in travelling with their family. They want to introduce their children to new cultures and experiences at a young age with the intention of broadening their minds at a young age.

Countries and travel companies wishing to have high profits in luxury segment have to invest in tourism industry, to satisfy luxury tourist's needs and expectations. Turkey is not an exception, that's why Turkey is improving and upgrading its own quality service and luxury service. There are many investments made into luxury segment supported

by government's strategic plans. Turkey has a great potential for creating new luxury segments but there is not enough research in luxury tourism sector and advertisement of luxury tourism opportunities in Turkey are insufficient. If Turkey wishes to be a significant part of luxury tourist's destinations, it should change its own image of low-income tourists market.

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