

A Research about the Impacts of Economic Crisis on Destination Marketing: Istanbul Example

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Abstract: The objective of this study is to offer the alternative policies and strategies in the context of destination marketing which would be followed by the destination management organizations and touristic businesses in marketing their services and products to minimize the impacts of the economic crisis on touristic destinations when the probability of economic crisis is high, and to contribute to the studies that have been done on this issue. The questionnaire method was chosen to collect the data in this study. Sample questions were presented via Five-point Likert and Category Scales. The number of tourism agents operating in Turkey is 5,801, and 2000 of those, that is 33.6%, are in Istanbul. Therefore, considering the time constraint, number of travel agencies in Istanbul constitutes our study population. The study sample is 300 Type A, B, C tourism agencies in Istanbul selected by simple random sampling method and corresponding to 15% of the study population. The data obtained was analyzed in computer environment by using SPSS for Windows package program. Demographic data obtained from survey was subjected to frequency analysis; appropriate data was subjected to the Chi-square test.

Introduction

Being rich in tourist attractions just is not enough for a touristic destination to be successful nowadays. Due to tough competition in tourism sector, attracting tourists to touristic destinations is very complex and lengthy process, and requires planned destination marketing. The success of destination marketing efforts depends on accurate determination and implementation of policies and strategies, identification of target markets, and success of joint studies conducted by public and private sector organizations operating in the country with respect to planning of publicity and advertising activities for these markets.

As known, tourism industry can be affected to a great extent by the smallest socio-cultural, economic, political and business cycle of changes. Therefore, in times of crisis, especially in times of economic crisis, crisis management and destination marketing policies and strategies to follow have even greater importance. Because in times of economic crisis, touristic demand structure and consumer behaviors in the target markets should be analyzed very well, and destination marketing policies and strategies should be identified accordingly.

Definition and Characteristics of Tourism Destinations

World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines a local tourism destination as a physical area where a tourist spent a night at least. A tourism destination contains touristic products such as support services during a day trip, attractions and tourist resources. It does have physical and administrative boundaries with respect to management, images and perceptions with respect to market competitiveness. Destinations bring various hosts together, and they can combine to create a network for wider destinations (UNWTO, 2007).

Tourism destination is defined as a geographical location or region where tourists are located within the local community. First of all, the destination is considered as a system includes inputs and outputs, communities and services, and business areas (Özdemir, 2008, p. 4). Gunn is suggested that all destinations share certain common features, and knowing that facilitates the design and development of the destinations. He was referring the following key features of destinations listed in Mathieson and Walls study (Howie, 2003, p. 74):

- Natural environmental features and processes
- Economic structure and development
- Social structure and layout
- Political organization
- The level of touristic development

Destination Marketing

Destination marketing aims to make the identity of a destination, established in compliance with the characteristics of that place, more appealing via the effective communication studies for the selected target audience. Since the destination marketing is managed by the individuals and/or entities located within destination borders, and with wide knowledge about the destination, and with dreams and expectations about the future of destination, this type of marketing is a strategy that has a potential to offer more flexible, fast and creative solutions, and to minimize the potential risks (Yavuz, 2007, p. 40).

Development of an effective marketing management and strategy that has a clear vision and direction, marketing of destination in a effective and rational way, continuous checking of the brand image which is the most important component of a brand, are essential elements in destination marketing and branding to ensure the optimum benefits from the attractive aspects and different features of a destination (Demir, 2009).

Spain is one of the best examples shows how important destination marketing is in tourism development and increasing tourism revenues in a country. That is, Spain has significant role in many international organization and fairs, and has significant athletic facilities. It also plays an important role in tourism in terms of tourism infrastructure and number of hotels, and car rental services. It is ranked tenth in Europe in terms of air transport infrastructure. It is well known that the government in Spain has given priority to tourism industry, strong destination marketing studies have been conducted, and Spain has been presented in many international fairs (Aksu, 2009).

Definition and Characteristics of the Crisis

The crisis is a situation that creates tension and threatens the high-level objectives of an organization, sometimes endangering the lives of organizations, and requires immediate reaction, and the organization's crisis prediction and prevention mechanisms becomes insufficient (Can, 1999, p. 315).

In another source, the crisis is defined as follows; "The crisis is a situation which is unexpected and unpredictable, requires organization's quick and immediate response, threatens organization's current values, purposes and assumptions by making organization's prevention and adaptation mechanism inadequate. Stress, anxiety, panic, etc.. is the expression of emotions experienced in times of crisis" (Tağraf & Arslan, 2003, p. 150).

The features of the crisis can be listed as follows (Aykaç, 2001, p. 125):

- Organizational structures, values and norms to be affected negatively,
- Unexpected developments occur,
- Crisis situation can not be estimated,
- Inadequate mechanisms to prevent,
- Crisis, threatening the existence purpose of the organization,
- The lack of adequate information and time for the measures to prevent the crisis.
- Requires the immediate implementation of the measures taken
- Create tension in the management of the organization

Some crises are the results of the natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, volcanic explosions, hurricanes, and landslides. Other crises like environmental pollution, crime, war, terrorism, economic stagnation and strikes are caused by the people. Either short-term or long term, whether natural or man-made disaster, the common features of the crisis that has potential impact on tourism industry consist of three parts (Pike, 2004, p. 158):

- Any destination is not exempt from the crisis in the long term
- A crisis is rarely predictable.
- The causes of the crisis are outside of the tourism industry's control.

Definition and Characteristics of Crisis Management

In contrast to emergency and risk management discipline addressing natural disasters, crisis management concerns man-made or man-caused crisis such as child abduction, environmental pollution, sexual harassment, abuse, and defective products. Crisis management is the strategic planning done before and after the crisis to ensure the least damage out of unexpected situations (Otay, 2008).

Some features of crisis management are unique. Some of these features are listed below (Haşit, 2000, p. 65):

- Crisis management primarily aims to reveal the businesses those can predict the crisis in advance, distinguish between the types and take the necessary measures accordingly, learn new things, and recover in the shortest time possible.
- Crisis prevention varies according to managers' perceptions of the crisis. The probability of success in the prevention of crises is increasing when crisis managers perceived the crisis as threatening
- Crisis management has no beginning and end, and is an application that requires continuity.
- Crisis management is constituted according to the type of crisis. Crisis management is tailored to the type of crisis since each type of crisis contains its own signs and solutions.

Crisis and Tourism

The crisis in tourism in general can be described as follows; is an event which causes disruption in normal functioning of tourism-related businesses, damages all the reputation of the safety, attractiveness, and comfort of a touristic destination by negatively affecting the perceptions of visitors, as a result, negatively affects tourism economy and causes reduced tourist arrival and spending, delay doing business in the tourism sector (Glaesser, 2005, p. 6).

The crisis management in tourism is defined as information gathering, assessment, action planning, implementation and control functions carried out to eliminate the effects of an event or events emerged unexpectedly and negatively affecting the image of a product, organization, country or region, ultimately leading to social and economic losses. The crisis management is not an activity only covering the period after the emergence of the crisis. The crisis management in fact includes the activities such as determination of the warning signals, and establishment of protection and prevention mechanism to be carried out in the period until the emergence of the crisis. Therefore, the crisis management involves a long process (Köroğlu, 2004, p. 71).

Tourism is an economic activity in terms of bringing foreign currencies and creating employment; is a socio-cultural activity in terms of bringing together different cultures and meeting recreational needs of the people. It is also an activity field where demands have positive and negative impacts on the environment. Tourism, one of the world's fastest growing sectors, has significant problems today. The economic crisis in the world has negatively affected the tourism sector (Aymankuy, 2001, p. 109).

The businesses struggling to survive in an intensive competition environment, at the same time, are obliged to fight with the crisis which nearly turned into a chronic crisis in Turkey. In addition to all this, many economies around the globe have been affected by the increasing size of the problems that began as a credit crisis in the world's largest economy in the U.S. in 2008, and reflected in the financial markets, and as a result, the world has come to the brink of a financial downturn. The negative impacts of the global economic crisis are observed in all sectors in our country (especially at the beginning of the year 2009). As having its own crisis, tourism sector has been also significantly affected by this type macro crisis, and difficulties have been experienced in the management of tourism businesses operating in this area (Bahar et al., 2009, p. 28).

It is clear that despite the ongoing financial downturn, a variety of tourist products and services are provided. Meetings, incentive travel, conference or exhibition have been identified as the most affected touristic services in a variety of touristic destinations. Apparently, while shopping and entertainment jobs were reducing in coastal, urban and a variety of destinations, cultural attractions have suffered a severe decline in many coastal, mountain and urban destinations (UNWTO, 2009).

The strategy to be followed by Turkish tourism against the global economic crisis is very important. In this context, focusing attracting tourists from upper income segments to the country has become more important rather than the number of tourists arriving into the country. Bringing the service quality, customer satisfaction and innovation to the forefront, bringing the revenue to maximum level while reducing costs, and keeping the sound cash flow are extremely important to exit from the crisis with minimum losses and even making profit from the crisis (Demir, 2008).

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to offer the alternative policies and strategies in the context of destination marketing that would be followed by the destination management organizations and touristic businesses in marketing their services and products to minimize the impacts of the economic crisis on touristic destinations when the probability of economic crisis is high, and to contribute to the studies that have been done on this issue. Therefore, we believe that our study will be beneficial to our tour operators and travel agents, that have a significant role in obtaining foreign currency income needed in our country, by offering them different view and solutions in the context of destination marketing to minimize the income loss and the contraction in touristic demand especially in times of economic crisis.

Method

The questionnaire method is chosen to collect the data in our study. The reason for choosing this method is to obtain desired data from a large number of subjects in a short time, and analyze obtained data quickly and reliably with the help of computer-aided statistical data analysis programs. Questionnaire consists of two groups. The first group includes demographic questions; categorical style is used in design of the first group questions and the other questions that aim to assess the impacts of global economic crisis on destination marketing policies of businesses. The five-point Likert scale was created to resolve the main issues of this study.

The ideal study population consists of 5,801 A, B and C type of travel agencies in Turkey. However, considering the time constraint, 2000 A, B, and C type travel agencies in Istanbul have been determined as the realistic population of this study. The study sample is consist of 300 Type A,B, C tourism agencies in Istanbul selected by simple random sampling method and corresponding to 15% of the realistic population of this study. Questionnaires were administered to middle and upper level managers in travel agents. 350 questionnaires were distributed, 191 out of 350 questionnaires were received back, 157 out of 191 were subjected to analysis, the remaining 34 out of 191 were not subjected to analysis due to lack of proper data.

The data obtained was analyzed in computer environment using SPSS 15.0 for Windows package program. Demographic data and business-related data obtained from the survey were subjected to frequency analysis. In addition, the appropriate data was subjected to the Chi-Square test, an analysis technique for examining relationships.

Findings

The analysis of the demographic data in Table 1 shows that 61.2% of the participants' is male, 38.8% of the participants' is female, 30.5% of the participants' is in age group of 18-25, 41.4% of the participants' is in age group of 26-30, 21% of the participants' in age group of 31-35; % 5.7 of the participants' in age group of 36-40; 1.2% of the participants' is in age group of 41 and over. The analysis of the participants' educational status shows that majority of the participants are university graduates. 56% of participants' has undergraduate degree; 5.7% of the participants' has graduate degree. In parallel, such a large part, 44,6% of the participants', are tourism school graduates. A large portion of our audience (study sample), approximately 40%, is working in marketing and sales departments. Another noteworthy issue in Table 1 is, almost all of our audience (study sample), 92.3% of the participants', is consisted of middle and upper level managers, which increase the credibility of our work. In addition, 80% of our sample group has 1 to 10 years working experience in the sector, which also indicates the high working experience level of the participants.

CHARACTERISTICS	SAMPLE	
Sex	n	%
Male	96	61,2
Female	61	38,8
Total	157	100
Age	n	%
18-25	48	30,5
26-30	65	41,4
31-35	33	21,0
36-40	9	5,7
41 and over	2	1,2
Total	157	100
Marital Status	n	%
Married	60	38,3
Single	97	61,7
Total	157	100
Educational Background	n	%
Primary Education	12	7,6
Secondary Education	48	30,5
University	88	56,0
Graduate Education	9	5,7
Total	157	100
Have you received tourism education?	n	%
Yes	70	44,6
No	87	55,4
Total	157	100
Division	n	%
Purchasing	9	5,7
Human Resources	9	5,7
Accounting-Financing	8	5,0
Operation	54	34,3
Sales & Marketing	61	38,8
Management	16	10,1
Total	157	100
Position in The Business	n	%
Personnel	12	7,6
Middle Manager	88	56,0
Senior Executive	57	36,3
Total	157	100
Total Working Period in Tourism Industry (Year)	n	%
Less than a year	18	11,4
1-5	60	38,2
6-10	48	30,5
11-15	19	12,1
16 and over	12	7,6
Total	157	100
Total Working Period in The Business That You	n	%

are Working Now (Year)		
Less than a year	12	7,6
1-5	78	49,6
6-10	37	23,5
11-15	21	13,3
16 and over	9	5,7
Total	157	100

Table 1. Demographic Data

The data in Table 2 is of great importance for our study since it provides updated information of what extent travel agents are affected by the crisis in 2009, when the impacts of the global economic crisis are being felt the most in Turkey. The analysis of the data in Table 2 reveals the following conclusions, and is emerging as important; % 47.7 of the participating businesses' is Group A, % 12.1 is Group B, and % 40.2 is Group C travel agencies. The majority of businesses, that is 36.2%, have expressed that they had a bad year in 2009 in terms of economic situation. Likewise, in 2009, 61.1% of the participating businesses' could reach the number of customers purchased 0-5000 travel products; only 38.9% of participating businesses' could hit 5000-20000 and above. Again in 2009, 54.1% of the participating businesses' noted 00-10% decrease in service production; 67.5% of the participating businesses' noted 00-10% decrease in employment. All these data clearly shows the extent of negative impacts of the global economic crisis on travel enterprises operating in Turkey. However, it also shows that the participating businesses are more positive about economics situation in 2010. Indeed, 52.1% of the participating businesses' believes that 2010 will be better off in terms of economic situation. However, approximately 50% of the participating businesses' believes that the process of economic recovery in Turkish tourism industry has already started.

CHARACTERISTICS	SAMPLE	
Choose your type of business	N	%
Tour Operator (A Group)	75	47,7
Travel Agency (B Group)	19	12,1
Travel Agency (C Group)	63	40,1
Total	157	100
How many people are working in your business	N	%
1-5	88	56,0
6-10	22	14,0
11-15	18	11,4
16-20	15	9,5
21 and over	14	8,9
Total	157	100
What is the average number of customers that buy travel products in your business in 2009?	N	%
0-5.000	96	61,1
5.001-10.000	16	10,1
10.001-15.000	22	14,0
15.001-20.000	9	5,7
20.001 and over	14	8,9
Total	157	100
How was the economic condition in terms of your business in 2009	N	%
Very good	10	6,3
Good	27	17,1
Break-Even	63	40,1
Bad	36	22,9
Very bad	21	13,3
Total	157	100
What do you think about that; how will be the economic condition in terms of your business in 2010?	N	%

Very good	18	11,4
Good	64	40,7
Break-Even	63	40,1
Bad	9	5,7
Very bad	3	1,9
Total	157	100
Have you ever encountered economic crisis situation in your business before?	N	%
Yes	119	75,8
No	38	24,2
Total	157	100
Have the crisis management policies been carried out for Turkish tourism sector in 2009 successfully?	N	%
Yes	70	44,5
Partly	33	21,0
No	54	34,3
Total	157	100
Has the economic recovery process started in Turkish tourism sector so far?	N	%
Yes	76	48,4
Partly	48	30,5
No	33	21,0
Total	157	100
If your service production had decrease, to what extent has this decrease been?	N	%
Less than 10%	85	54,1
10-19%	27	17,1
20-29%	12	7,6
30-39%	9	5,7
40-49%	15	9,5
More than 50%	9	5,7
Total	157	100
If your employment was decreased, to what extent has this decrease would be?	N	%
Less than 10%	106	67,5
10-19%	23	14,6
20-29%	9	5,7
30-39%	12	7,6
40-49%	6	3,8
More than 50%	1	0,6
Total	157	100
Do you have a shortage in financing?	N	%
Yes	40	25,4
Partly	103	65,6
No	14	8,9
Total	157	100
Did you invest in tourism in 2009	N	%
We did not invest	36	22,9
We bought business	12	7,6
We invested in the modernization	75	47,7
We invested abroad	6	3,8
We entered to a new investment	28	17,8
Total	157	100
Do you want to increase capacity or invest in tourism for 2010	N	%

Yes. We want to invest in domestic	82	52,2
Yes. We want to invest in abroad	24	15,2
No.	51	32,4
Total	157	100
How was the change of your costs in 2009?	N	%
Increased	70	44,5
Unchanged	51	32,4
Decreased	36	22,9
Total	157	100

Table 2: Business Related Data

Table 3 shows the results of Chi-Square test. Chi-Square test helps to determine whether a systematic relationship between two variables exists. Chi-Square test, in other words, is used to test whether the observed relationship between variables is statistically meaningful (Altunışık et al., 2005, p.195). As noted in Table 3, in Chi-Square test, having the Asymp. Sig. values less than 5% shows a meaningful relationship between variables.

PROPERTIES	Value	Asymp. Sig.
* Type of business * In Turkey, an effective crisis management strategy, or strategies and vulnerable businesses directly affected the economic crisis .	89,397 ^a	,000
* Type of business * Cooperation between public and private sectors decreases the economic crisis devastating effects on the sector.	22,986 ^a	,003
* Type of business * In the tourism sector derivative financial instruments (futures, forwards, options, swaps, etc..) Gaining popularity in use, will increase the negative effects of economic crisis.	34,725 ^a	,000
* Type of business * Upgrades to banks' credit costs in the economic crisis, tourism businesses are left in the lurch financially.	23,672 ^a	,003
* Type of business * Destination marketing for different markets reduces the impact of economic crisis.	32,596 ^a	,000
* Type of business * The marketing of destinations as well makes the difference, in economic crisis, businesses can increase their foreign exchange income.	26,803 ^a	,001
* Type of business * In the economic crisis, businesses, high income levels of competition for the marketing efforts power is increased.	64,249 ^a	,000
* Educational Background * Businesses to reduce their prices, tourism demand is increasing by reducing the impact of economic crisis	233,001 ^a	,000
* Educational Background * Political tensions which lead to narrowing impact of demand, effect economic crisis increases.	322,025 ^a	,000
* Educational Background * Improving service quality, reduce the impact of economic crisis	145,862 ^a	,000
* Educational Background * Establishing crisis management team provides a business to get through the crisis with the least damage.	190,577 ^a	,000
* Educational Background * Building Turkey's own tour operator system , by reducing touristic demand recession in the economic crisis , increases competitiveness in the international arena	127,379 ^a	,000

* Educational Background * In the economic crisis, state's increasing the allowance for promotional campaign in different markets, remains a positive impact on tourist demand	217,537 ^a	,000
* Educational Background * During the economic crisis, increasing the incentives given to investors, the economic crisis may reduce the impact of the tourism sector.	167,923 ^a	,000
* Educational Background * During the economic crisis, tourism taxes to eliminate the impact of economic crisis by increasing tourist demand decreases.	166,876 ^a	,000
* Educational Background * Spread over 12 months of alternative tourism by developing tourism, the destinations reduces the effect of strengthening the economic crisis.	255,329 ^a	,000
* Educational Background * Against possible economic crisis faced by the tourism sector, preventive crisis management plans to make our country a significant competitive edge against rival offers destinations.	199,555 ^a	,000
* Total Working Period in Tourism Industry * Governmental support to Turkish tour operators ,in the medium term by increasing the demand for international tourists, especially could minimize the negative effects of the global economic crisis .	155,879 ^a	,000
* Total Working Period in Tourism Industry * To increase domestic tourism demand, global economic crisis by minimizing the effects of demand contraction to reduce working capital needs.	200,355 ^a	,000
* Total Working Period in Tourism Industry * Increasing advertising and promotional campaign for domestic tourism has a positive effect on destination marketing in times of economic crisis	239,396 ^a	,000
* Total Working Period in Tourism Industry * The use of different promotional and sales techniques, in times of economic crisis has a positive impact on destination marketing.	253,480 ^a	,000
* Total Working Period in Tourism Industry * Resources and reduction of operating costs, in times of economic crisis has a positive effect on destination marketing.	242,624 ^a	,000
* Total Working Period in Tourism Industry * Going to the integration of another business affects destination marketing positively in times of economic crisis.	274,542 ^a	,000
* Total Working Period in Tourism Industry * Postponing payments or extending the maturity of loans, has a positive effect on destination marketing in times of economic crisis.	320,185 ^a	,000
* Total Working Period in Tourism Industry * Removing the staff has a positive effect on destination marketing in times of economic crisis.	276,945 ^a	,000
* Total Working Period in Tourism Industry *Organizational downsizing has a positive effect on destination marketing in times of economic crisis.	200,148 ^a	,000

Table 3: Chi-Square Test Results

Conclusion and Recommendations

Global economic crisis emerging in the United States spread all over the world as the use of derivative financial instruments such as futures, forwards, options, swaps, etc. has been gained popularity in stock exchanges in the world. In Turkey, particularly with the establishment of Turkish Derivatives Exchange, the widespread use of these types of derivative financial instruments in tourism industry is one of the biggest reason that the businesses affected by the crisis. This crisis has shown that non-operating items in the balance sheets of the businesses should be under control, and any global financial crisis signs must be well analyzed. In addition to all this, as the increased

bank credit costs, businesses have been further weakened in this difficult time of economic crisis. Lowering the cost of resources and activities to relief of financial hardship stemming from the crisis is of vital importance. For this, all performed business activities should be analyzed in detail, and unnecessary and non-value-added activities should be eliminated. Thus, an increase on the profitability can be achieved by lowering the cost of goods and services by eliminating resource costs caused by non-income-generating activities.

The studies about crisis management are of great importance to minimize the demand contraction for destinations caused by the economic crisis. Therefore, strategies for crisis management for the Turkish tourism sector should be developed primarily at the macro level, and then preventive crisis management plan should be formed in line with these strategies on destination basis. Because the characteristics, the target market/markets, consumer demands and market needs are different for each destination. Therefore, while developing destination marketing activities in times of crisis, such matters shall be taken into consideration. In later stages, establishing crisis management teams on destination basis is of great importance to apply destination crisis management plans designed in line with crisis management strategies.

As the basic strategy in times of economic crisis, performing destination marketing studies targeting the upper income levels is of great importance to maximize the profits. Number of foreign tourists coming to Turkey in 2008 was 30.9 million, reached to 32 millions in 2009 increasing by 3.3%. However, total tourism revenue in Turkey in 2008 was 21,950.8 million dollars, decreased by 3.2% in 2009, declined to \$ 21,249.3 million (www.turizm.gov.tr). As shown, in spite of the increase in the number of tourists compared to the previous year, tourism revenues decreased in reverse. Therefore, it would be a much wiser strategy to perform destination marketing efforts focusing on increasing the number of tourist from upper income level rather than increasing the number of tourists via cheap mass tourism. The implementation of specific marketing activities such as performing destination marketing focused on different markets, marketing distinctive aspects of destinations, improving the quality of services, spreading to 12 months by developing alternative tourism, using different promotional and sales techniques, etc. are of great importance to successfully implement this basic strategy.

In addition, the destination marketing activities performed by the governments in times of economic crisis might be quite useful to minimize the impacts of the crisis on businesses. These are, increasing governmental funds for promotional activities in different markets in times of crisis, increasing the incentives given to investors, minimizing or eliminating the taxes in tourism sector, providing government support to Turkish tour operators, etc. In this context, establishing Turkey's own tour operator system is vital. Because by doing this, the dependence of the Turkish travel agents to foreign tour operators will be eliminated, and therefore, keeping more foreign currency in the country will reduce the negative impacts of the crisis on travel enterprises.

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