



Turizm Akademik Dergisi

Tourism Academic Journal

www.turizmakademik.com



Evaluation of the Effect of Festival Tourism on Urban Economy: The Case of Van Shopping Fest

Emin ARSLAN^{a*}, Hakan KENDİR^b

^a Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Zile Dinçerler Tourism and Hotel Management College, TOKAT, ORCID: 0000-0003-1592-8162

^b Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Zile Dinçerler Tourism and Hotel Management College, TOKAT, ORCID: 0000-0002-1356-1339

Abstract

Around the world, thousands of festivals are organized at micro and macro level. In terms of the participant number, crowded festivals offer serious contributions to the economies of cities. Since 2015, the “Van Shopping Fest” is held every year from 15 March to 5 April in Van. This festival, attracts the attention with creates positive influence on the urban economy thanks to its high number of participants. The festival date is planned according to the 25-day of Navruz holiday in neighboring Iran. In this way, it was ensured that Van attracted a significant amount of tourists from Iran, especially by road. While approximately 20.000 Iranian tourists arrived in Van in 2008, the number of Iranian tourists in 2017 exceeded 400.000. On the other hand, over 60,000 Iranian tourists visited the city during the Van Shopping Fest in 2018. With this rapid increase in numbers, the sales volumes of enterprises rised. In addition, new tourism investments in the city and new business opportunities have begun to occur. From this point of view, the aim of this study is to examine and evaluate the contribution of festival tourism to urban economy in Van. SWOT method was used within the scope of this study's purpose.

Keywords: Festival Tourism, Van, Van Shopping Fest, Urban Economy.

JEL CODE: Z32, L83

Article History:

Received : 06 September 2019

Revised : 01 November 2019

Accepted : 15 November 2019

Article Type Research Article

Arslan, E. & Kendir H. (2019). Evaluation of the Effect of Festival Tourism on Urban Economy: The Case of Van Shopping Fest, Turizm Akademik Dergisi, 6 (2), 299-306.

* Corresponding author e-mail: emin.arslan@gop.edu.tr

INTRODUCTION

The fact that the mobility of tourists is concentrated in coastal areas or in certain centers and particularly in the summer stands out as a major problem in terms of the tourism sector in Turkey. Turkey has broken the all-time record in 2018 by hosting more than 46 million visitors (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2019a). However, almost half of the visitors arrived in the summer. On the other hand, 2/3 of the total tourists are concentrated in Istanbul, Antalya, Mugla and Izmir provinces. Spreading tourism activities which are ongoing for 12 months throughout the entire region is an important targeted consideration in the 2023 Tourism Strategy of Turkey (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2007). In this context, it is planned to develop and support different types of tourism. Festival tourism, which creates an important tourism movement during certain dates and in different regions, stands out among such types of tourism.

In recent years, the number of academic studies on festival tourism has increased. It is seen that the satisfaction and loyalty levels of the participants in the festivals are examined in some studies in the literature (Tayfun & Arslan, 2013; Saçlı et al., 2019). Some studies have focused on the contribution of festival tourism to the city economy and local development (O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002; Stankova & Vassenska, 2015; Girish & Chen, 2017). On the other hand, some researches focused on issues related to the development of festival tourism (Smith & Jenner, 1998; Çulha, 2008; Ma & Lew, 2012). The mentioned studies show that "the contribution of festival tourism to the city economy", which is the subject of this research, is worth considering in the literature of tourism. Therefore, it is estimated that the number of academic research will increase as the importance of festivals in tourism increases.

Thousands of different festivals are held at micro or macro levels around the world. In terms of the number of participants, the crowded festivals make a significant contribution to the economies of the cities. The 'Van Shopping Fest' which has been held in Van since 2015 between 15 March and 5 April, attracts attention with its positive impact on the city's economy thanks to the high number of participants. Planning the festival to coincide with the 25-day "Navruz Feast" holiday in neighboring Iran has enabled Van to attract a significant amount of tourists from Iran, especially by road. Approximately 20,000 Iranian tourists visited Van in 2008, while the number of Iranian tourists arriving in 2017 exceeded 400 thousand (Kendir, 2018). On the other hand, over 60 thousand Iranian tourists visited the city during the 'Van Shopping Fest' held in 2018

(Anadolu Agency, 2018). With this rapid increase in numbers, sales volumes of enterprises have increased and new tourism investments and new business opportunities have started to emerge in the city. From this point of view, the aim of the study is to examine and evaluate the contribution of festival tourism to the urban economy in Van.

CONCEPTUAL FREAMWORK

Festival Tourism

Although the concept of the festival has several different definitions according to the Turkish Language Institute (TDK), a festival is defined in general terms as follows: "An event of special importance for which the period, the environment in which it is held, the number or quality of its participants is determined with a program" (TDK, 2019). However, festival tourism is a term used in the related literature for the last 30 years. Festival tourism, which defines festivals of different sizes, festivals, events and the participation of tourists into these, has become an important academic issue today (Getz & Frisby, 1988; O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002).

Festivals encourage people to see new places, while reinforcing friendship among the people of the world and by fostering curiosity for new cultures and lives (Çulha, 2008: 1828). Especially, one of the most important strategies to be used in creating an urban image from scratch and coping with a negative image of a city is to override the prejudices. This strategy aims to persuade nationally or internationally renowned people, decision makers, public opinion leaders and the like to come to the city and to see the city with their own eyes (Avraham, 2004: 471-479).

Touristic destinations compete with each other at national and international levels in order to get a bigger share of the tourism pie. As a result of intense competition between destinations, the organization and development of activities such as festivals has become a very important sector. Particularly festivals that are held in destinations that lack the sea-sand-sun trio, which is considered mass tourism, are important factors that stand out in attracting tourists to a region. Events such as festivals provide many benefits in terms of tourism in the regions where they are held. The diversification of tourism, extending the tourism season, ensuring a balanced distribution of tourism demand to different regions within the country, increasing the attractiveness and recognition of destinations are among these benefits. On the other hand, another benefit of festival tourism is to the urban economy and planning. Increasing the business

capacities of sectors operating in the city, developing new or existing infrastructure, intensifying media interest in the city and branding of the city through cultural themes can be given as examples of this situation (Tayfun & Arslan, 2013).

Special events such as festivals emerge as an alternative model and a differentiating factor in the branding of destinations. Furthermore, special events such as festivals and artistic / cultural / sporting activities have become one of the most important tools used to create a positive image in contemporary tourism (Smith & Jenner, 1998, 76). The Rio Carnival, Cannes Film Festival, Spain Bullfighting Festival, Valencia Tomato Festival, Chinese Dragon Boat Festival, Nevada Burning Man Festival, Sino-Harbin Ice and Snow Festival are among the most well-known festivals worldwide (Green Global Travel, 2019). The Rio Carnival, which dates back to the 16th century and has become traditional, is held every year in February or March. Every year, a large number of people come to the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro to watch this festival live. 1.1 million foreign tourists who attended the carnival in 2017 generated 3 billion dollars of foreign exchange inflow into the city's economy (The Rio Times, 2017). In 2019, the number of foreign tourists attending the carnival reached 1.5 million (Statista, 2019). The city of Rio de Janeiro is so integrated with the carnival that the Rio Carnival comes is envisaged in many people's minds wherever Rio is mentioned in the world (Rio Carnival, 2019). Therefore, this carnival which qualifies as a festival makes a significant contribution to both the city's economy as well as the promotion of the city.

In light of the outstanding festivals organized in Turkey in terms of tourism Kırkpınar Oil Wrestling Festival, Manisa Mesir Paste Festival, Edirne Kakava-Hidirellez Festivals, Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival, Traditional Ordu-Perembe Plateau Wrestling and Culture Festival, Istanbul Film Festival, Alaçatı Herb Festival, Adana International Orange Blossom Carnival, **Van Shopping Fest**, Zeytinli Rock Festival, Kastamonu-Taşkoprü Garlic Festival and Traditional Artvin Kafkasör Culture Tourism Art Festival can be mentioned. Among the above mentioned festivals, "Adana International Orange Blossom Carnival", which is organized regularly between 3-7 April each year, has made a major impression in the national and international media. Approximately 1.5 million tourists and local people attended the festival in 2019 and generated a significant mobility to the city's economy during 5 days (TRT News, 2019). Furthermore, Saçlı, Ersöz & Kahraman (2019) determined that the tourists coming to attend the Adana International Orange Blossom Carnival had a high level of intention to

visit the city again. This can be viewed as a concrete example of the contribution of festivals to the image and promotion of tourist destinations. Likewise, the Van Shopping Fest, which has contributed significantly to the city's economy in Van for the last 5 years and attracts Iranian tourists to the city, supports this phenomenon.

METHOD

The aim of this study has been to examine and evaluate the contribution of festival tourism to the urban economy in Van province. Statistical data obtained from public institutions (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, DAKA etc.) associated with the tourism sector in Van province have been presented as graphs and the SWOT analysis method was selected to evaluate these data.

The reason why the SWOT analysis was preferred is because it is a structured method which helps to formulate a strategy. Furthermore, the SWOT analysis is also called situation analysis. The purpose of the SWOT analysis is to identify the "Strengths and Weaknesses" of a situation as well as the "Opportunities and Threats" that develop around the same situation. As a result of defining these factors, it is possible to develop strategies that highlight the strengths of the relevant situation, minimize their weaknesses, take advantage of the opportunities in the environment and counter the threats (Dyson, 2004: 632). The views of experts in the field were also taken into consideration to evaluate the effect of festival tourism on the urban economy in Van province which was carried out with the SWOT analysis method to this end.

Evaluation of the Effect of Van Shopping Fest on Urban Economy with SWOT Analysis

Tourism, especially in regions where industrialization is inadequate, balances the level of development between regions, generates employment and prevents migration from rural areas to cities. Because Van province is in an undeveloped area of eastern Turkey, the concentration of tourism activities in the city is of great importance in the economic development of the city and preventing migration to developed provinces in the west (Kendir, 2018).

It is noteworthy that the number of domestic and foreign tourists visiting Van province has increased in recent years. Almost all of the foreign tourists visiting Van come from Iran, which is a border neighbor. Figure 1 shows the graph of the number of foreign tourists visiting Van in the last five years. While 85 thousand foreign tourists visited Van in 2013, this number increased to 154 thousand in 2015, when

the Van Shopping Festival started. The number of tourists rapidly increased to 420,000 by 2017, and at the beginning of 2018 when the Iranian government significantly increased its departure fees it receded to 230,000. On the other hand, the economic difficulties experienced in Iran also have a small effect on the decrease in the number of tourists.

1 in 2014 respectively, the number of 2-star hotels increased to 3, the number of 3-star hotels increased to 7, and the number of apart hotels increased to 3 in 2019 (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2019c). Furthermore, it is recognized that the increase in tourism enterprises generates added value to other

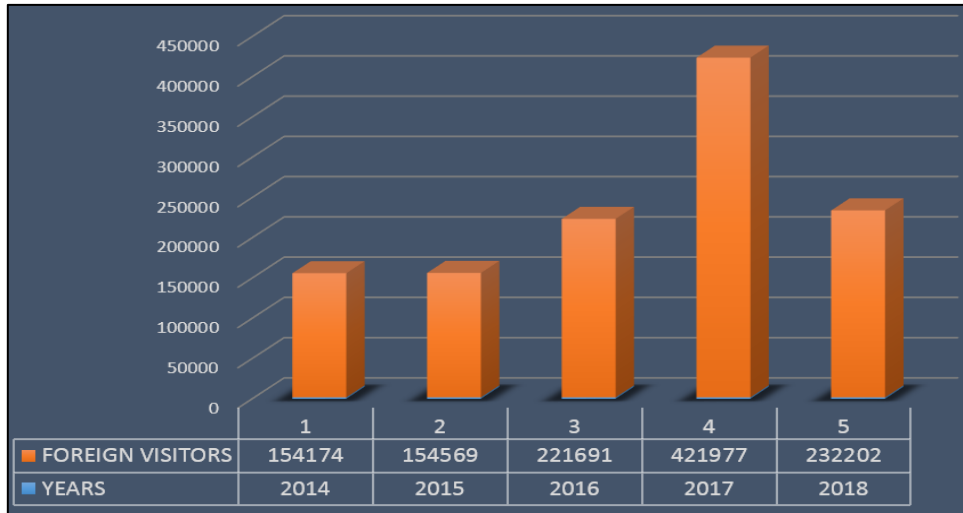


Figure 1: Number of Foreign Tourists Visiting Van

Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2019b.

The number of hospitality businesses has increased in parallel to the increase in the number of tourists visiting Van. Figure 2 shows that in terms of hospitality businesses, a significant capacity increase has been

tourism related sectors (such as construction, garment, souvenir, food industries).

According to the ‘Research on the Contribution and Expectations of Iranian Visitors to the Economy

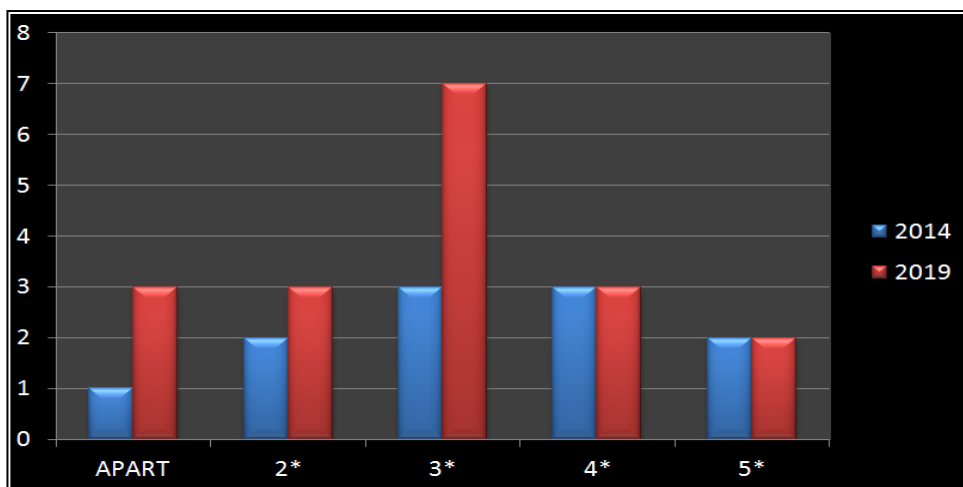


Figure 2: Change in the Number of Hotels with Tourism Operation Licenses in Van

Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2019c.

realized in 2019 compared to 2014. While the number of hotels with tourism operation licenses was 11 in 2014, the number reached 18 in 2019. While the number of 2-star, 3-star and apart hotels was 2, 3 and

of Van Report’ conducted by TURKSTAT (TUIK), it is known that tourists visiting in 2018 stayed for 3.3 nights on average. It is also seen in Figure 3 that these accommodations are concentrated in hotel

establishments. On the other hand, the same graph shows that those who stay in their own homes or rented houses also spend a significant number of nights. Especially in recent years, Iranian citizens have been buying homes in Van province and this contributes economically to the real estate sector as well as subsidiary sectors. Furthermore, those staying in their own homes spend 14.5 nights and stay longer in the city and spend more and provide foreign exchange inflow to the city's economy (DAKA, 2018).

Report' prepared in 2018, foreign tourists spent 1.247 TRY per person. According to the graph in Figure 4, these expenditures were mostly realized by shopping in the garment sector. These expenditures are mainly focused on clothes and shoes. On the other hand, the same graph also indicates that accommodation and food and beverage expenditures are also significant. The total tourism income from foreign tourists visiting Van in 2018 is calculated as 231.942.605.- TRY (DAKA, 2018).

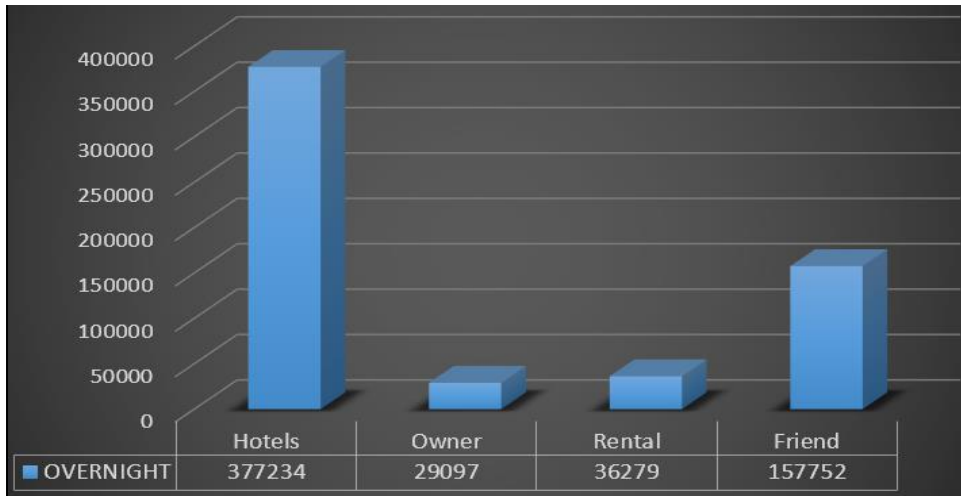


Figure 3: Number of Overnight Stays of Tourists Staying in Van According to Type of Hospitality (2018)

Source: DAKA, 2018.

The domestic and foreign tourists coming to Van province generate an important amount of revenue to the city's economy by spending significant amounts. According to the 'Research on the Contribution and Expectations of Iranian Visitors to the Economy of Van

Iranian tourists visiting Van province spend not only on accommodation and shopping, but on urban transportation as well. Figure 5 shows the distribution of vehicles preferred by Iranian tourists visiting Van in 2018 in terms of urban transportation. According



Figure 4: Van's Tourism Income According to the Type of Expenditure (x1000 TRY)

Source: DAKA, 2018.

to this distribution, tourists mostly spent on vehicles such as taxis, minibuses and buses. According to the figure, while 45.9% of the tourists walk around the city on foot, 54.1% preferred at least one means of transport in discovering the city.

In the SWOT analysis matrix in Table 1, the strengths and weaknesses of Van province and the opportunities and threats related to festival tourism were evaluated by taking into consideration the economic structure of

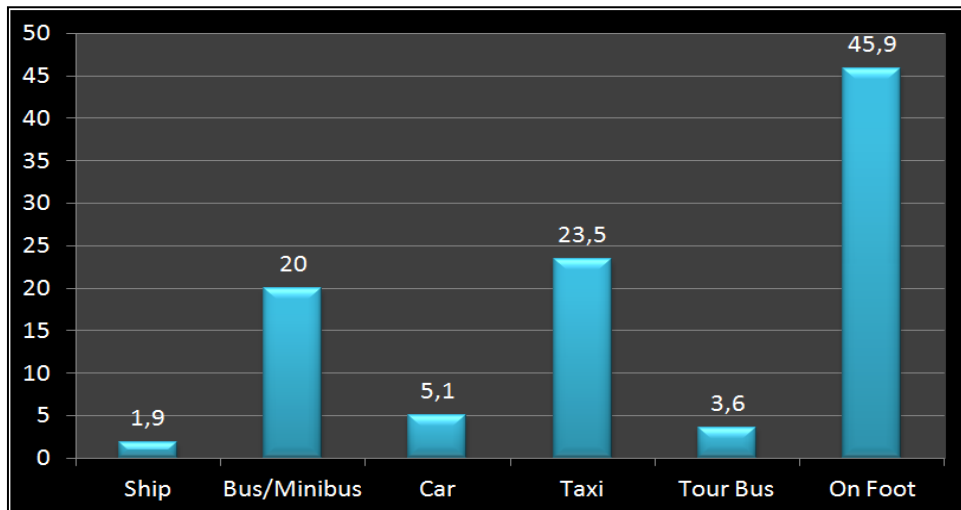


Figure 5: Preferred Transportation Means of Tourists in Van (%)

Source: DAKA, 2018.

Table 1: SWOT Matrix on the Contribution of Festival Tourism to the Urban Economy in Van Province

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a land border with a country with a large population like Iran. - Having Van Ferit Melen Airport with a capacity of 2 million passengers (planned to increase to 4 million passengers in 2023). - Lake Van provides an important advantage for the city. By the lake, it is possible to organize concerts, sporting competitions and shows for tourists especially in the summer months. - Increase in the number of accommodation facilities and their relevant contribution to employment. - Resumption of the Tehran - Tabriz - Van train services which were suspended in 2015 as of June 2019. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It only addresses the Iranian market. - There is only one festival in Van province for tourists coming from the region. - The perception regarding the security image of Van province, which was compromised due to terrorist incidents in the past years remains to become positive. - There is no "Destination Management Organization" for tourism in Van. - Van Shopping Festival is not promoted enough.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tourists coming to Van prefer the hotels for accommodation and provide foreign exchange input to the city's economy. - The fact that tourists coming to Van prefer the garment and shoe sectors especially during their festival shopping contributes to the city's economy. - The fact that more than half of the tourists prefer at least one means of transportation in Van contributes to the city's economy. - Continuing of the works for the modernization of Kapıköy Border Crossing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of tourists which has been increasing for the past 5 years declined in 2018. - Iran has significantly increased overseas travelling fees for its citizens as of mid 2018. - Approximately 25% of tourists visiting Van do not contribute to the urban economy because they stay with friends.

the city. In the making of these evaluations, secondary data such as articles, theses, news and statistics of public institutions published about Van province were studied and a compilation was prepared. As a result of the compilation, prominent SWOT cases were added to the matrix.

It is known that the foreign tourists in Van, mainly from Iran, are interested in the Van Shopping Fest organized during the Navruz Feast. Furthermore, the Iranian tourists intensify their spending especially during their shopping in this period. Therefore, it can be stated that festival tourism contributes significantly to the city's economy in terms of shopping, increases the economic activity in the city and this situation makes the city a center of attraction.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The attraction factors of a touristic destination are of great importance in terms of the preference of that destination by tourists and gaining a competitive advantage over competing destinations (Dönmez & Türkmen, 2018). An examination of Van's touristic attraction factors reveals that having a border with the Islamic Republic of Iran, the historical-cultural values in the province and natural beauties such as Lake Van which is tantamount to a sea for tourists stand out. Furthermore, the "Van Shopping Fest" which has been organized during the Navruz Feast in recent years and attracts more and more attention, has become one of the most important attraction elements of the city. The following recommendations can be developed especially in view of the fact that this festival creates mobility in the economic structure of the city and provides a significant amount of foreign exchange inflows to the city's economy:

- In order to ensure the sustainability of Van Shopping Fest, the decision makers and stakeholders in the province should coordinate the promotion and dissemination activities of this festival in an effective manner.
- It will be beneficial for all stakeholders in the province, especially public institutions and NGOs, to come together in order to develop tourism in Van more and in a more proper way and to form an institutional structure which qualifies as a "Destination Management Organization".
- The increase in Iran's departure fees since mid-2018 led to a significant decline in the number of arriving tourists. In order to overcome this negative situation, a part or the whole departure fees of the tourists could be countered by the Governorate, Municipality, Chamber of

Commerce and Development Agency in the city and this would accelerate the mobility of tourists again.

- Van Shopping Fest should not be introduced only to Iranian tourists but also to local tourists and tourists from other neighboring countries. Tourism fairs, TV programs and social media tools should be used effectively to promote this purpose.
- Increasing the number of trips made by the Lake Van Express, especially qualifying it as a tourism train like the Orient Express, and introducing it on social media, especially in terms of the transportation of local tourists during the Van Shopping Fest, has the potential to increase interest and participation in the festival to a significant extent.

In conclusion, the contribution of festival tourism, which is an alternative tourism type, to city economy has been examined within the scope of this study. In this context, the impact of Van Shopping Fest on the city economy has been explained. From this point of view, the aim was to contribute to literature for future studies. The subject of future studies could be to measure the opinions and attitudes of tourists coming to Van for the festival, to evaluate the marketing activities of the festival and to determine the risk perception of the destination.

REFERENCES

- Anadolu Agency. (2018). *Van, Nevruz'da 100 Bin İranlı Turist Bekliyor*. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/van-nevruzda-100-bin-iranli-turist-bekliyor/1080003>. D.A.: 22.05.2019.
- Avraham, E. (2004). Media Strategies For Improving an Unfavorable City Image. *Cities*, 21(6): 471- 479.
- Çulha, O. (2008). Kültür Turizmi Kapsamında Destekleyici Turistik Ürün Olarak Deve Güreşi Festivalleri Üzerine Bir Alan Çalışması. *Journal of Yasar University*, 3(12), 1827-1852.
- DAKA (Eastern Anatolia Development Agency). (2018). *İranlı Ziyaretçilerin Van Ekonomisine Katkısı ve Beklentileri Araştırması Raporu*. <http://www.daka.org.tr/panel/files/files/yayinlar/%C4%B0ranl%C4%B1%20Ziyaret%C3%A7ilerin%20Van%20Ekonomisine%20Katk%C4%B1s%C4%B1%20ve%20Beklentileri%20Ara%C5%9Ft%C4%B1rmas%C4%B1.pdf>. D.A.: 23.05.2019.
- Dönmez, Y. & Türkmen, F. (2018). The Relation Between the Landscape Design and Brand Image in Purchase Preferences of Tourists: The Case of Safranbolu and Nevşehir, in Turkey. *Applied Ecology and Environmental Research*, 16(1): 629-643.
- Dyson, R. G. (2004). Strategic Development and SWOT Analysis at the University of Warwick. *European Journal of Operational Research*, (152): 631-640.
- Getz, D. & Frisby, W. (1988). Evaluating Management Effectiveness in Community-Run Festivals. *Journal of Travel Research*, (Summer): 22-27.
- Girish, V. D. & Chen, C. F. (2016). Authenticity, Experience, and Loyalty in The Festival Context: Evidence From The San Fermin Festival, Spain. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 20(15): 1551-1556.
- Green Global Travel. (2019). *20 Best Festivals in The World*. <https://greenglobaltravel.com/top-10-festivals-in-the-world/>. D.A.: 25.05.2019.
- Kendir, H. (2018). *A Rising Destination in Turkey: Van*. Rusev, M., Straus, E., Avcıkurt, C., Soykan, A. & Parlak, B. (Ed.), *Social Sciences Researches in the Globalizing World in* (pp. 499-509), St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, Sofia.
- Ma, L. & Lew, A. A. (2012). Historical and Geographical Context in Festival Tourism Development. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 7(1): 13-31.
- Ministry of Culture and Tourism. (2007). *Türkiye Turizm Stratejisi 2023: Eylem Planı 2007-2013*. <http://www.kultur.gov.tr/Eklenti/906,ttstratejisi2023pdf.pdf?0>. D.A.: 25.05.2019.
- Ministry of Culture and Tourism. (2019a). *Turizm İstatistikleri*. <http://yigm.kulturturizm.gov.tr/TR,9851/turizm-istatistikleri.html>. D.A.: 07.05.2019.
- Ministry of Culture and Tourism. (2019b). *2018 Aralık Ayı Sınır İstatistikleri*. <http://yigm.kulturturizm.gov.tr/TR-211023/2018.html>, D.A.: 20.05.2019.
- Ministry of Culture and Tourism. (2019c). *Turizm İşletme Belgeli Tesis İstatistikleri*. <http://yigm.kulturturizm.gov.tr/TR-9579/turizm-tesisleri.html>. D.A.: 22.06.2019.
- O'Sullivan, D. & Jackson, M. J. (2002). Festival Tourism: A Contributor to Sustainable Local Economic Development. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 10(4): 325-342.
- Rio Carnival. (2019). *Rio de Janeiro Carnival Guide*. <https://www.rio-carnival.net/EN/EN>. D.A.: 25.05.2019.
- Saçlı, Ç., Ersöz, B. & Kahraman, C. Ö. (2019). Etkinlik Katılımcılarının Destinasyon İmajı Algılarının Tekrar Ziyaret Etme Eğilimleri Üzerine Etkisi: Portakal Çiçeği Karnavalı Örneği. *Ç.Ü. Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 28(1): 178-190.
- Smith, C. & Jenner, P. (1998). The Impact of Festivals and Special Events on Tourism. *Travel and Tourism Analyst*, 4: 73-91.
- Stankova, M. & Vassenska, I. (2015). Raising Cultural Awareness of Local Traditions Through Festival Tourism. *Tourism & Management Studies*, 11(1): 120-127.
- Statista. (2019). *Number of Tourist Arrivals During Carnival Season in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from 2017 to 2019 (in millions)*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/977203/number-tourists-carnival-brazil-rio-de-janeiro/>. D.A.: 25.05.2019.
- Tayfun, A. & Arslan, E. (2013). Festival Turizmi Kapsamında Yerli Turistlerin Ankara Alışveriş Festivali'nden Memnuniyetleri Üzerine Bir Araştırma. *İşletme Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 5(2): 191-206.
- The Rio Times. (2017). *Brazil Reports Surge in 2017 Carnival Tourism Attendance*. <https://riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/rio-business/brazil-registers-surge-in-2017-carnival-attendance/>. D.A.: 25.05.2019.
- Turkish Language Institute (TDK). (2019). *Güncel Türkçe Sözlük-Festival*. http://www.tdk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_gts&arama=gts&guid=TDK.GTS.5ca654cc0e85a9.04559843. D.A.: 25.05.2019.
- TRT News. (2019). *Portakal Çiçeği Karnavalı'na 1,5 milyon kişi katıldı*. <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/kultur-sanat/portakal-cicegi-karnavalina-15-milyon-kisi-katildi-411335.html>. D.A.: 25.05.2019.