



EITOC-2015

I. Eurasia International Tourism Congress: Current Issues, Trends, and Indicators

Konya / TURKEY

28-30 May, 2015

I. Avrasya Uluslararası Turizm Kongresi Güncel Konular, Eğilimler ve Göstergeler

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Vol. I

Bildiriler / Proceedings



I. Eurasia International Tourism Congress: Current Issues, Trends, and Indicators (EITOC-2015)

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Semih BÜYÜKİPEKÇİ

978-605-9119-15-3 (Tk)

ISBN: 978-605-9119-17-7 (1.c)

Aybil Yayınevi Sertifika No : 17394

Aybil Basımevi Sertifika No : 20781



www.aybilonline.com

Baskı & Cilt:

Aybil Dijital Baskı Sistemleri ve Matbaa Hizmetleri

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TURKEY IN UNESCO REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HUMANITY AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR TURKISH TOURISM

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Abstract

Intangible cultural heritage is practices, representations, expressions that communities, groups and, in some cases individuals, recognize as part of their cultural heritage. UNESCO represents the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity to help demonstrate the diversity of this heritage and raise awareness about its importance and in this way ensuring the sustainability of this heritage. Even though tourism purposes are not at the center of intangible heritage lists, being inscribed on these lists can affect tourism demand in a positive manner. In this study, which performed theoretically, intangible cultural heritage and its categories related to tourism are described. After description of the intangible cultural heritage, relationship between intangible heritage lists and tourism demand is explained via UNESCO World Heritage List and its impact on tourism demand because of its similarities of intangible cultural heritage lists and World heritage List. Finally, assets from Turkey which inscribed on Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity are introduced and, their importance for Turkish tourism is discussed.

Keywords: Intangible cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage and tourism, intangible cultural heritage lists, Turkey in representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity, tourism.

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the most important industries of globalizing world. All countries want to take a part of world tourism. Cultural tourism has an important place in tourism activities. Natural and cultural assets have been attracting tourist attention and the subject of tourism all the time. As McKercher and du Cross cited (2012) cultural tourism is first and foremost a form of tourism. Although the travel for leisure or pleasure purposes began in the post-industrial era of the 20th century; pilgrimage, educational travel and cultural tourism already began by the 15th century (Timothy, 2011, p.1-2) and, today cultural tourism attractions are recognized widely as being an important element of the tourism mix of any destination (Richards, 1996). Today cultural and natural assets constitute major attractions for international tourist (Bille & Schulze, 2008; Bonet, 2003; Cooke & Lazzaretti, 2008; Deng, King, & Bauer, 2002; Dritsakis, 2004). Nearly all packaged tours have some cultural elements (Timothy, 2011, p. 3). Even in destinations where heritage sites and cultural assets are not the major elements of tourism, these sites and assets provides diversification for its products and nearly all types of tourism can include some of these assets (Gülcan, 2010, p.103). As Timothy cited (2011) “*It is safe to assume that a majority of tourist attractions and destinations in the world today are based on elements of cultural heritage*”.

In 1972 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted the World Heritage Convention (WHC) which full name is Convention Concerning the Protection of World Natural and Cultural Heritage and then has established the World Heritage List (WHL) to identify, protect and preserve cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of “Outstanding Universal Value” (UNESCO-1, 2015). WHL compiled by UNESCO is often seen “as the most effective international legal instrument for the protection of the cultural and natural heritage” (Strasser 2002, p. 215). Although tourism development is not at the center of listing World Heritage Sites (Su & Lin, 2014, p. 48), Many World Heritage Sites are major attractions for cultural tourism and they represent national identity of their location

(Shackley 2006, p. 85). Years after the adoption of WHC and WHL began to criticized related to including only tangible cultural heritage assets and after several international establishments and projects such as “the Recommendation on Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore” in 1989, “Project of Living Human Treasures” in 1993, “the Proclamation of Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 1997 and, “the Istanbul Declaration” in 2002 (Aikawa, 2004), Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage finally adopted by UNESCO General Conference at its 32th section on 17 October 2003 and The Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity established by UNESCO in order to ensure better visibility of the intangible cultural heritage and awareness of its significance (UNESCO-2, 2015). Today convention has 161 states parties and the representative list includes 257 items. From 257 items, with the inscription of Ebru, Turkish art of marbling in 2014 Turkey has 12 items in the representative list.

The aim of this study is to introduce the assets from Turkey which inscribed on the representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity and discussing its importance for Turkish tourism.

2. The Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and Tourism

2.1. Intangible Cultural Heritage and its Categories

In recent decades, the term of cultural heritage has changed, partially due to the instruments developed by UNESCO. It is understand that cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts (UNESCO-3, 2015).

“Intangible cultural heritage” is defined in the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) as the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals, recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This heritage is transmitted from generation to generation and is constantly recreated by groups in response to their environment, their interactions with nature and their history, providing them a sense of identity and continuity (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2012, p. 1-2).

Intangible heritage is traditional culture, folklore, or popular culture that is performed or closely related to “place” and with little complex technological accompaniment. If tangible heritage assets represent the hard culture of a community, its places, and things, than intangible heritage assets represent its soft culture, the people, their tradition, and what they know (McKercher&du Cros, 2012, p. 83).

Intangible cultural heritage sources can be listed as follows (UNWTO, 2012, p. 3-5):

- *Handcrafts and visual arts that demonstrate traditional craftsmanship:* These are the mainstay of the material culture of communities and form the majority of souvenirs purchased by travelers, especially in new destinations.
- *Gastronomy and culinary practices:* This category consists of all foods and beverages that have the special significance for cultural groups or are associated with certain geographical places.
- *Social practices, rituals and festive events:* This category covers the secular and sacred, every day and extraordinary all practices and rituals as cultural expressions.
- *Music and performing arts:* This category includes cultural expressions such as music, dance, theatre and others.

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- *Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of intangible cultural heritage*: This category includes tales, legends, myths, epic songs and poems, prayers, chants and other elements that are orally transmitted to generation to generation.
- *Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe*: This category includes beliefs about the workings of the physical universe, land use, traditional farming practices and maintaining harmony with nature.

The category of gastronomy is not mentioned directly in the 2003 UNESCO Convention. However, it is a major part of cultural tourism activity in many countries and thus has been separated from the social practices category, for the purposes of this study. Tourists may be deeply interested in a particular category or they may only want to experience it as part of a broader visit to the living culture of a destination (UNWTO, 2012).

2.2. Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists and Importance for Tourism

UNESCO Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage comprises two lists. First one is the “Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” (Article 16) which is the main issue of this study, comprises cultural practices and expressions that help demonstrate the diversity of this heritage and raise awareness about its importance. And the second one is the “List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need Urgent Safeguarding” (Article 17) which composed of those intangible cultural heritage elements that concerned communities and countries require urgent measures to keep them alive (Wikipedia, 2015).

To be inscribed on the representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity state parties who adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage have to prepare a nomination file. In nomination file, the submitting State(s) Party(ies) is (are) requested to demonstrate that an element proposed for inscription constitutes intangible cultural heritage as defined in the Convention, inscription of the element will contribute to ensuring visibility and awareness of the significance of the intangible cultural heritage and to encouraging dialogue, thus reflecting cultural diversity worldwide and testifying to human creativity, safeguarding measures are elaborated that may protect and promote the element, the element has been nominated following the widest possible participation of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned and with their free, prior and informed consent, and finally the element is included in an inventory of the intangible cultural heritage present in the territory(ies) of the submitting State(s) Party(ies), as defined in the Convention. After the preparation, the nomination file received to the secretariat to process. If a file is found incomplete, the State Party is invited to complete the file. Files that remain incomplete are return to the State Party that may complete them for a subsequent cycle. Completed nomination files evaluate by the Subsidiary Body and evaluation reports transmits to the members of the Committee, and finally the Committee examines the nomination and makes its decision (UNESCO-4, 2015). For more information related to procedures see also Operational Directives (UNESCO-18, 2015).

Tourism purposes are not at the center of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists by UNESCO. And because an asset is listed does not mean that it will be attractive to tourists. As cited McKercher and du Cros (2012) “*a temple is a temple, unless it offers something unique or unusual for the tourist that entices a visit*”. But it can be thought that being listed can provide some advantages to tourism. For instance UNESCO offers technical and financial support to State Parties which means proper protection for these elements of tourist attractiveness. In addition being listed provides free advertisement for the destination.

Although there is no empirical study on being listed in intangible cultural heritage lists and tourism demand, to develop insight WHL by UNESCO can given as a good example because of the similarities with our interest. Just like intangible heritage lists; tourism purposes are not at the center of WHL. While main purpose of the WHL is to identify, preserve and protect “outstanding universal values”, assets which are inscribed on the list, are extremely attractive for

tourists all around the world. Although there is few empirical studies, these studies confirm the positive relation between WHSs and tourism demand (Lazzarotti, 2000; Van der Aa, 2005; Yang, Lin & Han, 2010; Su & Lin, 2014). As Lazzarotti cited (2000) there is a positive relationship between the number of world heritage sites and the number of tourist arrivals per country. Van der Aa (2005) confirms the positive effect of WHS on tourism. Although there is no significant increase in the number of visitors at sites, which were already established visitor attractions, there is a significant increase at less established sites, Yang et al. (2010) empirically shows that being in the World Heritage List has a significant enhancing effect on tourists. And Li, Wu, and Cai reported (2008) the ancient city of Pingyao in China experienced a dramatic growth in tourist traffic and tourism facility development in 2 years after the inscription of the WHL in 1997. There was no public transportation network in around the ancient city before 1997, but only 2 years later the number of roads had increased by 13; the number of tricycles, which are the major transportation vehicle in that city, also increased dramatically from 100 to 300.

As Yang et al suggested (2010) at least two possible reasons why being inscribed on the WHL would increase the demand for tourism. First, the WHL is widely used to promote or advertise by travel agencies and governments. Since the WHL attract the attention of international tourists, the demand for international tourism rises. Second, UNESCO is prepared to assist developing countries which lack of the resources or ability to repair and maintain their WHSs.

2.3. Turkey in Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

12 assets from Turkey have been inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage List between 2008 and 2014. These assets can be listed by inscription years as below (UNESCO-5, 2015):

- *MevleviSema Ceremony (2008)*: The Mevlevilik is an ascetic Sufi order found in 1273 in Konya and renowned for the whirling dance. Sema ceremony symbolizes the degree of ways to reach God. Following a recommended fast of several hours, the whirlers begin to rotate on their left feet in short twists, using the right foot to drive their bodies around the left foot. The body of the whirler is meant to be supple, with eyes open but unfocused so that images become blurred and flowing. At their dancing ceremonies, or Sema, a particular musical repertoire is played. Based on four sections of both vocal and instrumental compositions, it is performed by at least one singer, a flute-player, called neyzen, a kettledrummer and a cymbal player. Dancers used to receive 1,001 days of reclusive training within the melevi-houses (mevlevihane), where they learned about ethics, codes of behaviour and beliefs by practising prayer, religious music, poetry and dance. After this training, they remained members of the order but returned to their work and families (UNESCO-6, 2015). Mevlana and Sema are constitute the major tourism attractiveness of city of Konya. According to data from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (2015) in 2014 Mevlana Museum in Konya with 2 million and 75 thousand visitors is the third most visited museum in Turkey after the Istanbul Ayasofia and Topkapi Museums and, in 2014 101.127 domestic and international tourists have participated Sema Ceremony organized by Konya Metropolitan Municipality in every Saturdays ([Habercinizbiz](#), 2015).
- *Arts of the Meddah, public story tellers (2008)*: Meddahlik was a Turkish theatre performed by a single storyteller called a meddah. Meddahs were expected to illuminate, educate, and entertain. Performing in social places such as caravanserais, markets, coffeehouses, mosques and churches, meddahs transmitted values and ideas to mostly illiterate population by songs and comic tales from a repertory of popular romances, legends, and epics, and adapt his material according to the specific venue and audience (UNESCO-7, 2015). Meddahlik is the predecessor of the stand-up shows

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of today. It can be found today in performance halls and malls as recreation shows and can be used as diversification items for main tourism products.

- *Nevruz (2009)*: Nevruz marks the New Year and the beginning of spring across a vast geographical area covering, inter alia, Azerbaijan, India, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan. It is celebrated on 21 March of every year, a date originally determined by astronomical calculations. The rites that accompany the festival vary from place to place, ranging from leaping over fires and streams to tightrope walking. Nevruz promotes the values of peace and solidarity between generations and within families, as well as reconciliation and neighbourliness, thus contributing to cultural diversity and friendship among peoples and various communities (UNESCO-8, 2015).
- *Karagöz (2009)*: Karagöz is a form of shadow theatre in Turkey in which figures made of camel or ox hide in the shape of people or things are held on rods in front of a light source to cast their shadows onto a cotton screen. The usually comic stories feature the main characters Karagöz and Hacivat and host of others, including an cabaret chanteuse called Kantocu, and illusionist-acrobat named Hokkabaz, and abound in puns and imitations of regional accents. The puppets are manipulated by one lead artist named Hayali, who may have one or more assistants who are learning the craft by helping to create the figures and accompanying the action with music. Once played widely at coffeehouses, gardens, and public squares, especially during the holy month of Ramazan, as well as during circumcision feasts, Karagöz is found today mostly in performance halls, schools and malls in larger cities where it still draws audiences (UNESCO-9, 2015). Karagöz is a very good recreation activity and can be used to entertain tourists.
- *Aşıklık (Minstrelsy) tradition (2009)*: The Aşıklık (minstrelsy) tradition of Turkey is performed by wandering poet-singers known as aşiks dressed in traditional clothes and plucking a stringed saz. The aşık is a common performer at weddings, in coffeehouses and during public festivals of all sorts. The poems they recite, usually about love, are written in rhymed syllabic meter and with a quatrain in which the aşık utters the Mahlas, his pseudonym. Their improvisational performances may also include riddles, folk tales, verbal duels of wit and creativity with other aşiks, and verses sung while the minstrel holds a needle in his mouth to force him to recite poems avoiding B, P, V, M and F sounds. Aşiks to traveling between communities, help to spread cultural values and ideas and to facilitate a robust social dialogue, in part through topical poetry and social and political satire (UNESCO-10, 2015). Aşıklık tradition is a good example of Turkish musical culture, it can use as a tool of entertainment and through musical festivals it can be also used as a main tourism product.
- *Traditional Sohbet meetings (2010)*: Turkish men meet regularly indoors, especially in winter, to discuss local social and cultural issues, safeguard traditions, and encourage solidarity, mutual respect and a sense of community. Meetings may include music, dances and plays, all enjoyed while consuming local dishes. A traditional Sohbet meeting may last until the early morning. Meetings are open to men above the age of 15 or 16, regardless of ethnicity, religion or status, with the basic requirement that members be of honest families, be trustworthy and respectful of their elders, and not gamble or display public drunkenness. Members may be penalized with a fine for missing a meeting, except under extenuating circumstances. Mothers and wives encourage male members to attend because of the associated social and cultural benefits. Communities usually comprise five to thirty persons and are guided by leaders, appointed by election or proposed by elders. Members of the community all have equal rights and commitments. Traditional Sohbet meetings fulfill an important educational function by transferring ethical values such as social justice, tolerance, benevolence and

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respect, and play a crucial role in transmitting Turkish folk literature, folk dances and music, village plays as well as societal values (UNESCO-11, 2015).

- *Semah, Alevi-Bektaşî ritual (2010)*: Semahs can be described as a set of mystical and aesthetic body movements in rhythmic harmony. They constitute one of the twelve main services found in Cem rituals, religious practices performed by adherents of Alevi-Bektaşî, a belief system based on admiration for Ali, the fourth caliph after the prophet Muhammed. Semahs are performed by semahçîs (Semah dancers), accompanied by devout musicians playing the saz long-necked lute. Various forms of Semah exist in Alevi-Bektaşî communities across Turkey, each with distinct musical characteristics and rhythmic structures. One consistent characteristic is the performance of the ritual by both men and women, side by side. Semah rituals are founded upon the concept of unity with God as part of a natural cycle: people come from God and return to God. Semahs are the most crucial means for the transmission of the Alevi-Bektaşî tradition. All practices, traditional motifs and teachings are passed on orally, and distinct genres of art and literature associated with the tradition continue to thrive. In this way, Semahs play a crucial role in fostering and enriching the traditional music culture of Turkey (UNESCO-12, 2015). Semah is a good example of Turkish musical tradition and heritage like as the aşıklik tradition, and this heritage can be used for tourism purposes as diversification item.
- *Kırkpınar oil wrestling festival (2010)*: The Kırkpınar oil wrestling festival takes place in Edirne, Turkey. Thousands of people from different age groups, cultures and regions travel every year to see Pehlivan (wrestlers) fight for the Kırkpınar Golden Belt and the title of Chief Pehlivan. Each festival is launched by its patron, the Kırkpınar Aga, in a ceremony featuring forty bands of davul drums and zurna double-reed pipe. The golden belt is carried through the city in a procession, followed by prayers recited in the Selimiye Mosque. The wrestling bouts customarily take place at the Men's Field. The master of ceremonies introduces the Pehlivan to the audience, reciting in verse their names, titles and skills. Next, the oil man oils the wrestlers assisted by the towel holder, before the warm-up exercises and greetings. The wrestlers each wear kışpet, thick trousers made of water buffalo or cow leather. As the wrestling takes place, the davul and zurna bands play the traditional repertoire of the festival. Kırkpınar oil wrestling is open to men from all cultures, regions and ages without discrimination between religion, language or race. Pehlivan are considered exemplary figures in society with attributes such as generosity, honesty, respectfulness and adherence to traditions and customs. All Pehlivan are trained in the master-apprentice tradition (UNESCO-13, 2015). Kırkpınar oil wrestling festival is subject to domestic and international tourists as a main tourism event for city of Edirne.
- *Ceremonial Keşkek tradition (2011)*: Keşkek is a traditional Turkish ceremonial dish prepared for wedding ceremonies, circumcisions and religious holidays. Women and men work together to cook wheat and meat called 'Keşkek' in huge cauldrons, then serve it to the guests. The wheat is washed with prayers the preceding day, and then carried to a large stone mortar, to the accompaniment of music from the davul drum and zurna double-reed pipe. At the mortar it is hulled by two to four persons using gavels in a fixed rhythm. Cooking is usually carried out outdoors: hulled wheat, chunks of meat on the bone, onions, spices, water and oil are added to the cauldron and cooked all night. Towards noon, the strongest of the village youth are called to beat the Keşkek with wooden mallets, while the crowd cheers and zurna players perform musical pieces, announcing the thickening of the stew with a specific melody. Numerous expressions associated with the dish – used during the selection of wheat, the blessings, praying and carrying the wheat, as well as preparing and cooking it – have become common

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expressions in daily life. In addition, the tradition encompasses entertainment, plays and musical performances. Neighbouring towns and villages are invited to feast collectively in the ceremony premises. The cooking tradition is safeguarded and transmitted by master cooks to apprentices (UNESCO-14, 2015). Keşkek is a very good gastronomic item to use tourism purposes. It can be served at restaurants and hotels as well as festivals as a cultural item.

- *MesirMacunu festival (2012)*: The MesirMacunu festival of Manisa, Turkey, commemorates the recovery of Hafsa Sultan, mother of Suleiman the Magnificent, who was cured of a disease by the invention of a paste known as mesirmacunu. The Sultan then ordered that the paste be disseminated to the public. So, every year from 21 to 24 March, the paste is prepared by a chef and apprentices from 41 fresh spices and herbs according to traditional practice. A team of 14 women wrap the paste in small pieces of paper, and 28 imams and apprentices bless it before scattering the paste from the top of the minaret and the domes of the Sultan Mosque. Thousands of people come from different regions of Turkey to compete to catch the pieces as they fall. Many believe that by so doing their wishes for marriage, work and children will come true within a year. A 45-piece orchestra dressed in traditional clothing perform historical Ottoman music during the preparation of the paste and throughout the festival. Inhabitants of Manisa have a deep emotional attachment to the festival. The strength of tradition creates a strong sense of solidarity among local communities, and the city welcomes guests from almost all regions of Turkey (UNESCO-15, 2015) and number of international tourists grows year by year.
- *Turkish coffee culture and tradition (2013)*: Turkish coffee combines special preparation and brewing techniques with a rich communal traditional culture. The freshly roasted beans are ground to a fine powder; then the ground coffee, cold water and sugar are added to a coffee pot and brewed slowly on a stove to produce the desired foam. The beverage is served in small cups, accompanied by a glass of water, and is mainly drunk in coffee-houses where people meet to converse, share news and read books. The tradition itself is a symbol of hospitality, friendship, refinement and entertainment that permeates all walks of life. An invitation for coffee among friends provides an opportunity for intimate talk and the sharing of daily concerns. Turkish coffee also plays an important role on social occasions such as engagement ceremonies and holidays; its knowledge and rituals are transmitted informally by family members through observation and participation. The grounds left in the empty cup are often used to tell a person's fortune. Turkish coffee is regarded as part of Turkish cultural heritage: it is celebrated in literature and songs, and is an indispensable part of ceremonial occasions (UNESCO-16, 2015). Today Turkish coffee is served all around Turkey as both cultural and gastronomic item.
- *Ebru, Turkish art of marbling (2014)*: Ebru is the traditional Turkish art of creating colourful patterns by sprinkling and brushing colour pigments onto a pan of oily water and then transferring the patterns to paper. Known as marbling, the designs and effects include flowers, foliage, ornamentation, latticework, mosques and moons, and are used for decoration in the traditional art of bookbinding. The practitioner uses natural methods to extract colours from natural pigments, which are then mixed with a few drops of ox-gall, a kind of natural acid, before sprinkling and brushing the colours onto a preparation of condensed liquid, where they float and form swirling patterns. Ebru artists, apprentices and practitioners consider their art to be an integral part of their traditional culture, identity and lifestyle. Their knowledge and skills, as well as the philosophy behind this art, are transmitted orally and through informal practical training within master-apprentice relationships. Achieving basic skills in Ebru takes at least two

years. The tradition is practiced without barrier of age, gender or ethnicity, and plays a significant role in the empowerment of women and the improvement of community relationships. The collective art of Ebru encourages dialogue through friendly conversation, reinforces social ties and strengthens relations between individuals and communities (UNESCO-17, 2015). Through the art festivals Ebru can be considered as main tourism event, and it can be also offered to tourists as souvenirs.

3. Conclusion and Discussion

The main purpose of this study is to introduce assets from Turkey which are inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and discuss their importance for Turkish tourism. To develop tourism industry in a destination, the constructions of infrastructure and service facilities are very important, but these are not enough to attract tourist attention. As Dritsakis suggested (2004), popular destinations have “raw materials” related to the tourism demand. These raw materials are unique for the destination and, thus they cannot be transferred or reproduced in another destination. While intangible cultural heritage assets can be used as these raw materials for a destination, they can also be used as diversification items for raw materials of other destinations. Turkey with 12 assets inscribed on Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity can be suggested as a rich country related to the intangible cultural heritage. While assets such as Mevlevi Sema Ceremony and Kırkpınar oil wrestling festival constitute the major tourist attractiveness of destinations where they belong, assets such as Turkish coffee, Keşkek, Ebru and Karagöz can be used for additional items of gastronomy, souvenirs, and recreation to major attractiveness of destinations. From this point, it is assumed that intangible cultural heritage assets in Turkey can be used both as raw materials and diversification items. When these assets are used as tourist products, an important issue that should be given attention is commodification. It is very important to safeguard the core values of these heritages while using them as products. To avoid too much commodification, it is crucial for contacted with the stakeholders and prepared special places to display these heritage assets. For further researches an empirical study on intangible cultural heritage and tourism demand is recommended to better understand of the issue and fill the gap that exist in the literature.

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