Assessment of World Tourism from a Geographical Perspective and a Comparative View of Leading Destinations in the Market

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As a result of changing social, cultural, and economic conditions tourism has become one of the key industries developing globally with increasing impacts on the concerned geographies. Developments in information and communication technologies, transport system, and globalization in brief have accelerated growth of tourism. Travel has been a long, tiring, and dangerous activity until 19th century. In the last two centuries travel became a global phenomenon, but the rapid growth of travel took place mostly after the Second World War. In particular, during the last decade Internet started to play greater role in shaping travel industry as many experts of the domain reiterate. Not only information or data, but also physical elements and human beings are transported faster, in greater amounts, and to further geographies than the past. Several factors influence tourist decision making on travel according to existing studies. From a supply side point of view, the geographical characteristics of the destination and its attractions is one of the important factor. After a developing phase that continued more than a half century there is need to question spatial aspects of this development. Leading world tourism destinations and their geographical characteristics should be understood with comparative statistical data to forecast better the future of tourist flows.

This paper intends to analyze top destinations of world tourism from a geographical perspective and understand the role of geography in visitor attraction process. Elements of physical geography such as climate, spatial distance, and land area along with elements of human geography will be discussed in relation with tourist destination arrivals and revenues generated. The method followed in this study is qualitative basic research. Published statistical data will be gathered from secondary sources about the problem areas. Top ten global tourism destinations will be analyzed by their income and arrival figures together with their geographical characteristics. Based on the interpreted secondary data, recommendations will be provide for Turkey's destination marketing strategies.

Keywords: *Geography, Location, Tourism, Turkey, Destination Marketing.*